

Chubb Classic presented by SERVPRO

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Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Justin Leonard

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Justin, thank you for joining us here at the Chubb Classic. Can we just open with your thoughts on being here this week?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yeah, it's fun to be on somewhat familiar grounds. Played the Shark Shootout here for a number of years. I think I remember playing maybe nine holes on the Black Course in one year.

I got out yesterday late. Got in and drove around. Hit a shot here and there. Golf course is in great shape. It's tight. It's fun. It's kind of what I remembered. As I was driving around I remembered the holes that we got to play. You know, nice feel to hop in the car and drive over here two and a half hours or so.

And so kind of close to home, and, yeah, excited to get things going.

Q. The last time we saw you was at Hualalai in a top 10 finish. What was your takeaway from at that week and how have you felt the last few weeks?

JUSTIN LEONARD: My takeaway from that week was that my game is pretty good, but I overtrained, overpracticed. I was pretty tired when I got there. You know, I finished my last event at the Presidents Cup, so end of September. I think between like the beginning of October until I got to Hualalai I think I might have taken five or six days off in total.

Every time I was going to take a day off I thought, I took six years off. I need to practice. So I kind of overdid it. So you know, the last three weeks I've been at home I didn't touch a club for a week, which felt great. Then I started getting back into it.

I think having a decent finish at Hualalai, I kind of know where my game is now, so able to maybe be a little bit more specific about things I'm working on. Not being at the golf course five or six hours a day every day, kind of more



managing my practice time, my time in the gym, time with my family, to where I got here this week and like I know where my game stands and I feel pretty good.

I felt pretty good when I got to Hawaii. You know, it's hard when you're starting the first event of the year kind of tired. I think part of it was necessary and part of it is still a learning process.

So I think I'm probably in a better state physically and even game-wise than I was in Hawaii.

Again, that's a great place to start the year. Not just the beauty, but to have a good result and kind of understand, okay, I have a good sense of where my game is.

Q. Jumping back into the competitive arena, is it a bigger challenge physically or mentally?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I think it's big in both respects. I would say it's easy to put -- not easy -- but you put the time in physically, range, gym, whatever it may be.

But then it's the mental piece. That's probably the harder part, because for six years I've kind of been analyzing what players do, and now I've got a kind of analyze myself and make those decisions in real time.

Some things have come back naturally, and then others it's like oh, yeah, I forgot about that. I don't have anything specific, but, I mean, I just gave you an example where I kind of over did it and on the those kind of things.

Something that I used to do that I didn't feel like necessarily because I had so much time off that I had the luxury of taking some time off, but actually it's part of playing well. That's one of the things I love about the spacing of the events, is that you can take some time off and try and be fresh each and every week.

Q. What's your mix have TV and playing? How's the schedule look?

JUSTIN LEONARD: It's a little heavy on the playing side. I don't -- you'll probably see me at one event this year as far



as doing television, NBC. We haven't solidified anything yet, but I think it looks good. It's much later in the year.

Q. Let you concentrate on that.

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yeah, so I'm going to focus on this, and it's been nice. Last year was hard trying to do both and find time to practice and play and all those things and still keep one eye on what's going on on the regular tour.

Since October it's been nice to narrow my focus on one person's game rather than 150 guys.

Q. You mentioned the gym couple of times.

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yeah.

Q. How important is that to you now that you're -- well you're not my age yet, nor will you ever my age -- but how important is that to you now, and have you ramped it up as you got older?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I ramped things up, but in different ways. I didn't do nearly as much cardio in my younger days because just it was more kind of dynamic stuff and weight lifting and power moves.

Now, you know, I do the Golf Forever stuff and use our swing training. I do a lot more cardio. I think that's probably from living in Colorado for seven years. It's kind of necessary up there if you want to be able to keep up with anyone doing any kind of activity.

And I really enjoy it, so I do a lot more cardio now. The movements that I do are very golf specific. They're very kind of low weights, but just a lot of core stuff, mobility things that I do. I try and do saunas and cold plunges, all of those things.

It's very different, to be honest. I still do a few things that I did years and years ago, but the big heavy power moves and those kind of things, I'm just not down with that anymore. It hurts too much.

Q. Well, you look good.

JUSTIN LEONARD: Thank you.

Q. You did a marathon once, didn't you?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I did. I ran a marathon way back in like 2001, so I was obviously doing a lot of cardio then. I remember I was playing in whatever it was called then, the Hero World Challenge; it was out in California.

That Saturday after my round I had a 15-mile training run, and so I was -- that was a long day.

Q. Yeah.

JUSTIN LEONARD: To play and then go on a 15-mile run, I wouldn't recommend that for anybody who wants to play good golf, but it was fun.

Then I did a couple very short distance triathlons in Colorado. I figured out quickly I'm not much of a swimmer and that's fairly important, so no races or anything like that. I just kind of love the training aspect of it. You know, just mixing things up. Getting in the gym, being outdoors, going to a few classes here and there that I like, and then my Golf Forever stuff.

Q. You had been away from this for a while. Jumping back in, any part of your game that's really been a real pleasant surprise?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Well, people say, oh, short game is the first thing to go and this and that. I haven't experienced that. I feel like maybe -- I don't know -- maybe being in Colorado it's kind of one of the things that I can kind of work on even when the weather was still -- there was some snow here and there.

I think also now being in Florida and the places where I get to practice and play, bound to have a good short game. The facilities are great. So being able to work on it there, I think really it's been kind of hitting some of the little shots where I'm trying to take a few yards off an 8-iron or that kind of thing. That's what I've really been focused on.

I figured that that was -- I was kind of lacking in that area through the four events that I played last year, so that's something I spent a lot of time in the off-season working on. You know, it's been fun.

I've always enjoyed the process, and I tell people as long as you're enjoying the process, the results will come. You don't worry about that stuff. You'll always love the game as long as you enjoy the process.

Q. Where did you end up landing here in Florida?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Tequesta, just north of Jupiter.

Q. Was it basically for this?

JUSTIN LEONARD: No, but this was a big part of it. My wife grew up down there. She has family there. The travel in and out of a mountain town is not easy. Weather certainly now more of a factor than it was.

So it's been great. Our kids are really enjoying it. We are as well. So it's been a good move for us.

Q. What do you look forward to most about the return to a regular playing schedule?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I'm enjoying being my own boss again and kind of deciding my schedule the way I want to divide my time, the things, you know, that I like to do with my family.

You know, obviously playing and traveling, you know, we're always going to miss things, whether it's lacrosse games or tennis matches or those things, but the big things I don't have to miss.

Look, NBC was great. I missed the first day of the BMW to help my daughter move into college. They're wonderful in that respect. They understand there are certain cases where family has to come first.

But now I got total control over my schedule and what I want to do and when I want to play, so that's been fun.

Then just being able to like narrow my focus in on myself and the game and I'm enjoying playing with my son, Luke. You know, then just doing one thing with playing, I do have more freedom at home.

Although it has been interesting the weeks when I'm off I'm still working now that I'm playing, whereas when I was doing television, you know, my work was reading some information daily and maybe tuning into the tournaments, especially the week before I was going to work to see what was going on.

So I had more free time but I enjoy putting the work in as I said earlier.

Q. What's the best thing you learned from the TV piece?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Oh, I can't tell you that. I can tell a couple things. Yeah, watching, being able to watch the best players in the world compete against each other, watching them warm up. Now at home I watch these guys practice and I see how they practice and what they do.

Look, there is not a ton of it that I can apply to my own game because of the distance the guys hit the ball, but there is certainly things that I'm trying to incorporate, pushing the ball further down the fairway, whether it's hitting a driver off the tee or a par-5, those kind of things.

You know, the recovery, you hear a lot about guys recovering and taking care of their bodies before rounds, after rounds. You know, and a bit more of an aggressive mindset I would say.

You know, the golf courses that we play, while difficult, they're not as demanding as PGA TOUR events. Our hole locations aren't three from the edge every hole. You look at the scores that the guys shoot, yes, the golf courses maybe are a bit easier, but the level of competition is really good out here and the level of play is really high.

So I think there hasn't been much of a drop off in that respect, from watching Steve Stricker and Steven Alker and Ernie Els and Jerry Kelly and these guys play out here. Yeah, on a different golf course, but the level of play is extremely high.

So, yeah, then there are a couple other things, but I'll keep those to myself.

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