

Zurich Classic of New Orleans

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

Tony Finau

Cameron Champ

Press Conference

RACHEL NOBLE: We would like to welcome Tony Finau and Cameron Champ, Team Sendit, to the virtual interview room here at the Zurich Classic. You guys are teammates here for the first time.

Tony, tell us how this pairing came to be.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it's a pretty authentic team. We have the same manager. So I actually met Cameron through my manager, Chris Armstrong, and played a practice round together, I think Cameron's rookie year, and ever since then have been friends. We help each other's foundations out. I respect a lot of his game. But I think a lot of the work we do outside the golf course with different foundations and then obviously I think we're both fans of each other's game. We both competed together in the QBE Shoot-Out last December, and I think after that we both kind of simultaneously agreed we got to do it again. So here we are for the Zurich Classic and we're excited to play this week.

RACHEL NOBLE: What do you think it will be like to partner with Tony this week in this setting?

CAMERON CHAMP: It's always nice to have someone to lean on every once in a while. So Tony's game is, obviously, we have seen it for years and years. Tony's an amazing player. And like you said, we just kind of mixed well in this year at the QBE. We played and it was kind of a more relaxed event, but we just enjoyed each other's time and company and definitely our games, I think, meshed well together. So it will definitely be a fun week.

RACHEL NOBLE: With that we will open it up to questions.

Q. Just wondering, the relationship the two of you. Cam, has Tony mentored you at all or done anything to help show you the ropes? Obviously you know a lot about how to play competitive golf. But I guess just maybe some more details on the friendship and what



that's like.

CAMERON CHAMP: I have a lot of respect for him, his family, and what he does a lot of outside of golf. We have very similar backgrounds, kind of how we got brought up in the game, how we got through it. So I just think that's just kind of where we meshed well together. So I respect him greatly. He's an amazing player. So for even guys like us on TOUR, it takes a lot of stress off, especially a week like this, you can just play freely and just have fun and make as many birdies as we can.

Q. Michelle Wie sent you one of the LPGA hoodies. Have you gotten it yet and your thoughts on that program and the success it's had?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, really cool initiative that she's doing. I was happy to be a part of it. I think she's going to send me a couple sweaters and once I get them, I'm sure I'll post about them and kind of her push that. But big advocate for women's sports and especially for women's golf. We have a lot of amazing players on the LPGA Tour. I know a lot of them, grew up with a lot of them, so happy to support that.

Q. You've obviously played in team events, Ryder Cup, Presidents Cup. When you guys strategize this week how is it different than a week-to-week basis out here as individuals? How will you put together a strategy? If you can maybe walk me through that this week as teammates.

TONY FINAU: I think the biggest difference is just emotionally it's a little bit different. You got, as Cameron mentioned earlier, you have a partner to lean on. I think it's important, though, to have some type of relationship with your partner beforehand so he knows you're trying your best and I know he's trying his best and a lot of times that just helps take the pressure off. Sometimes having a teammate could be less pressure, sometimes it could be more. As long as we both agree that we're doing our best to not put each other in a tough situation, then we'll play the ball as it lies.

So the great part for us, again, I think is that we have



experience playing together. He was a great partner at the QBE. I was amazed at how well he drives the golf ball and his all-around game. So to be able to see it up close again this week and to compete with him is going to be fun.

But I would say the biggest factor, I think playing as a team, is just the emotions involved. You're not playing for yourself anymore. You got a teammate now, and his caddie and your caddie, so you it's a real team. Four guys out there inside the ropes and you guys are all cheering for each other. So it just, I think emotionally it's a little different. But, again, I think it's to our benefit that we're friends and that we just know we're not going to put too much pressure on each other. We're both high-level golfers and we're going to do our best this week to try and make some birdies and compete at a high level.

Q. Cam, anything to add? I imagine you probably haven't played a lot of alternate shot and things like that before.

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, I played obviously some in college and stuff like that. But kind of what Tony said, it's more the emotional side. It's being comfortable with your partner and again not feeling like there's added pressure to, oh, I need to make this putt or he hit it in the woods, I better hit the fairway. It's just more of a, to me, that basis just makes it a lot less stressful because, again, we're obviously trying to do our best we can. And then throughout the week we just play our own game. You can't, just because it's a team format I'm not going to tell Tony how to play or vice versa. He has his own way he goes about his game and it obviously works very well for him, so we're just going to play our games and just mesh them whenever we can, whenever we can help each other in certain spots.

But, again, I think it's just, the major factor is just kind of having that comfort level as him being my partner.

Q. Wondering if each of you could tell me which one of you is longer.

TONY FINAU: He's pointing at the wrong guy.

CAMERON CHAMP: No, no.

TONY FINAU: On the PGA TOUR --

CAMERON CHAMP: Tony takes it all the way back. As people notice, he takes it back a little bit shorter than normal, but when he takes it back full, he is the longest on TOUR.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I will say, though, at the high speeds

Cameron knows where it's going a lot more often than I do. I might have, maybe a little bit more on the take. I still don't know. He can get it up in the 200s as well, but he probably has a better idea where it's going at that speed. I have a lot of speed but not quite sure where it's going.

Q. There aren't 30 guys, there's -- you're 30th right now this year, Tony in driving distance. Are there 29 guys longer than you?

TONY FINAU: (Laughing) No, there's not. But the driving distance stat, to me, just seems, it doesn't mean as much to meaning maybe as it does to some other guys, as far as their ego. I'm not big on the driving distance stuff. I think your scoring average and winning golf tournaments is ultimately why we're out here and I've played a lot of high-level golf and I'm more interested in that, I think, than the whole distance debate deal.

Q. How much does this being a Ryder Cup year increase your interest in wanting to play in this event and do you see this as a week to show Stricker something?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think -- the way I look at it, I think every week is an opportunity to show the captain and the captains who you are, the game, the state of your game and the state of your overall self in certain situations. So this is definitely another week where we have the opportunity to shine in front of our captain and the co-captains, and who knows, you could be looking at a team that is representing the U.S. in the Ryder Cup later this fall.

Q. Cam, what about you? Do you see you guys as a potential pair in the future?

CAMERON CHAMP: No, definitely. Like you said, for me, it's always been more so, like, Walker Cup stuff, I was always teamed with somebody I knew and I, like I said, respected and felt comfortable with and I played very well. So, yeah, I definitely, I think this week's going to be fun regardless of how we play. Even though I just, like I said, it's very stress-free. So whenever you can play golf stress-free with your partner it makes things a lot easier and obviously a lot more fun too.

TONY FINAU: Yeah.

Q. Curious, with a partner, do you see you guys unleashing it all this week? Tony, off the tee, taking it all the way back or hitting it as far as possible?

TONY FINAU: Well, in the best ball, there's no reason for me to hold back on certain holes where Cameron has got it

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

out there in the middle of the fairway. So I'll definitely crank up my ball speed on a few shots this week. Some of the holes allow us to do that. Number 13 is a drivable par-4 that I can see myself letting it rip. And there's, yeah, there's definitely some opportunities where I think I definitely will do that. We're Team Sendit, so we're going to, I'm sure we'll be sending some good drives this week, no doubt.

Q. Have you guys determined yet who will tee off on the odds and the evens for alternate shot?

CAMERON CHAMP: No, we haven't. But today, I'm sure we'll figure it out. And, again, it's not rocket science. It's just, like, do you want odds or do you want evens? Plus there's certain holes that might fit his eye better than me and that would make sense to go vice versa. But, again, we haven't played today so we're going to go out after this and then we'll kind of decide.

Q. Do you know, have you guys decided on an intro music? I think they're still doing that there, right?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, we have. We actually have a band playing, a local band playing, so we're going to have a little bit of jazz music, actually, just to kind of pay homage to New Orleans. So we're going to have some jazz music playing and, yeah, so we're going to have a local band music playing in the background. I thought that would be pretty cool for our squad.

Q. How did you guys decide to do that?

TONY FINAU: Our manager kind of helped us with it and, yeah, we, I think just on, through a text, he sent it to us and both kind of gave him the nod, like, yeah, I think that would be pretty cool. So hopefully the people of New Orleans and everyone here in the state of Louisiana kind of respects it and likes it.

Q. Do you have, what's your favorite food to eat in New Orleans?

TONY FINAU: You have to go with the oysters, the char-grilled oysters, either at Acme's or Drago's, some creole with rice.

CAMERON CHAMP: We're big crawfish people too, so.

TONY FINAU: Yeah.

CAMERON CHAMP: I was never a crawfish guy until I came to Texas, when I went to Texas A & M. And now I live there, so my father-in-law can cook up some pretty hot batches of crawfish, so I'll be definitely getting me some of

that this week.

TONY FINAU: There's no seasoning like the Cajun seasoning here. The taste is just, it's unbelievable really, it's hard to explain. But some of the best food in the world is right here in Louisiana, so very good question.

RACHEL NOBLE: How have you seen inclusion in the game grow and evolve over the past few years?

CAMERON CHAMP: I think it's slowly starting to transcend in the proper direction. I think last summer really brought a lot of light to a lot of things for a lot of people. Especially the TOUR. I know I was one of the first to speak up, I know Tony has. Things, I think they're going in the proper direction. Obviously the stuff my foundation's doing, what the TOUR has done on top of that and multiple other people. Again, it's creating the next foundation for the next generation of golfers and obviously including all, everybody, it's not just mainly Caucasian out here, you have minorities, you have Asians you have everybody, you have every ethnicity out here playing, but I think it's definitely going in the proper direction.

Is there still a lot, like on a long ways to go? Yes. We're nowhere near the finish line. But this is a great start and again for me personally I'm going to do everything I can in my power again to help my community, but also help others around the world.

RACHEL NOBLE: That you both for the time this week and have fun.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports