

RBC Canadian Open

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Ancaster, Ontario, Canada

Hamilton Golf and Country Club

Nick Taylor

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the 2023 champion of the RBC Canadian Open Nick Taylor to the interview room. Nick, hard to believe a year has passed since that dramatic finish last year. How does it feel to be back in Canada to defend your title?

NICK TAYLOR: It feels great. Yeah, I agree, it's, Dave and I walked in, saw the big mural of us hugging, we still can't believe it's been a year. It's been a fun ride. It's been great to come back to Hamilton, been here twice, most recently in 2019, and I'm excited for the week.

THE MODERATOR: How different does it feel coming back to a tournament obviously you love coming to every year, but to be coming back as the defending champion?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's special. I wish I could be defending probably a little bit longer, but this tournament always means a lot to me and every Canadian in the field. The fans are so passionate. It's been a lot of fun. Just walking around obviously practicing, but playing, there's a lot of people out already and it's been fun to engage with 'em. Hopefully we can put on a show again.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take some questions.

Q. What's been the reception like from the crowds as you've made your way through the nine holes this morning?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's been great. The biggest change I would say since last year is obviously being recognized more in context of a golf course. Now especially at the Canadian Open. So, yeah, a lot of pictures and signatures. It's been a lot of fun. I think our crowds are going to be pretty big the next couple days with Rory, obviously, who always kinds of has that following, and playing with Pandy. So I'm looking forward to that a lot.

Q. Is it something when you're walking out there today where you're obviously anticipating those reactions, were you nervous about it, were you excited about it, it just had to be a much different day than any other

pro-am you've ever played, I would imagine.

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I feel like the whole year's been a build up for this potentially. Looking forward to coming back. Yeah, I think tomorrow is probably the big day of anticipation, I would say. I didn't assume I was going to play with Rory, but I kind of had an inkling that they would probably put us together with another Canadian. Again, being able to play with Pandy is going to be a lot of fun. There's going to be a lot of energy out there which will be great. Yeah, looking forward to that. I think Friday will probably be pretty crazy tomorrow. I'm sure people will show up in the morning, but looking forward to the next four days obviously, but the next couple for sure.

Q. With all that being said, obviously you're very much the focus of attention this week. How do you stay focused on your game and having another solid performance?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, trying to manage time, which there's obviously more obligations this week being in Canada on top of that, but being defending. So really trying to manage that, trying to manage rest, which I feel like I've done decent job, but still for the rest of the week I got to be smart with for where I spend my time. It's hard to say no at times, but that's important, and just get as much sleep as possible. The game feels pretty good, had a week off last week to kind of recharge. I'll do a little practice today, but kind of most important right now is just kind of stay as restful as possible.

Q. When you won in Phoenix earlier this year what did that kind of do for maybe your mental psyche, just to know that it wasn't just going to be the Canadian Open and that was going to be it, you were able to win again on the PGA TOUR.

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I think it was huge for my confidence. If you want to call it validation to myself or anything, but -- and again, kind of the fashion that it was, being in a playoff, kind of do or die, getting into those situations, I felt more and more comfortable, and being able to perform has been great. It was nice to get the season off -- obviously it's a new format with it just starting in January -- so getting off to a nice start was great. Yeah,



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it gave me a lot of confidence, especially coming off a great year to kind of continue it has been great.

Q. What kind of feedback have you got so far this week from the logo and does it ever get old looking at the logo?

NICK TAYLOR: No, it's been -- so when everything kind of came out last fall I've definitely got my handful of logo-type stuff, which is actual really cool. To be on-site, seeing it on flags and posters and stuff, it's one of those things I don't know if I'll ever fully grasp probably the magnitude of that. It's so neat to have the idea, but to come to fruition is very cool. It's been really fun to see that, to see the big mural of Dave and I and our celebration, a lot of the stuff is kind of "pinch me" stuff that's been fun.

Q. I'm sure as a sports fan you always have these, I was there, where was I moments, you know, a lot of 'em are when Mike won the Masters in 2004, for example. What have been some of those experiences like as you've kind of traveled around, and I'm sure people are stopping you, and I was doing this when that putt fell or whatever it might be, what, any of 'em stick out and what's it like fielding those all the time?

NICK TAYLOR: I've said it recently, that's probably one of the coolest things probably in the past year of people just coming up and telling their story and the emotions that have been tied to it. They came out with a story last night that we had been working, but his name's Brian, he's a farmer from Saskatoon, and kind of told his story, and took two, three months to track him down. Just stuff like that where people really remember and remember that moment. I think, like I said, the logo stuff, that as well as stuff where I don't think I've probably fully grasped yet, but it's just, it's, you know, it's hard to think of words instead of obviously saying, you know, how cool it is, but it's, I appreciate all the people that come up and tell those stories because it is a lot of fun to hear.

Q. You mentioned after you won last year going back home to Abbotsford and speaking with junior golfers. I'm curious, in the year since you won, what those conversations might have been like with young golfers, the future generation of Canadian golf, now that you're a Canadian Open champion?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I don't take that role lightly. With our charity event last year I did a little clinic the day after at Ledgeview and was able to interact with a bunch of 'em and do little clinics, do some putting, did some pictures and autographs and stuff. I try to remember myself in that position, not only golf, but I remember I did a hockey camp and Naslund came out and how big of a deal that was for a

Canucks captain to come out and do that stuff. So I try to think back to then, if I can have any sort of impact to get somebody into the game of golf and grow the game, it's definitely important.

Q. You Canadians you obviously have leaned on each other every year --

NICK TAYLOR: What do you mean, you Canadians?

Q. I'm one of 'em too. Us Canadians. You guys on TOUR. I wasn't going to loop myself in with that. What does it mean to have those guys to share the weight of this week? Nobody knows what it's like to be you, but Mac, Corey, Pency, we could sit here and name 'em all, what does it mean to, not share the burden, but share the weight of this week with, with those guys?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I think we've -- a lot of us have done it the last five to eight years. Adam and I came on TOUR at the same time. He's played phenomenal in a lot of Canadian Opens dating back to Shaughnessy in 2011. Mac's had great weeks. Corey, I played with him last year. Like, I don't think we talk about it a whole lot of the weight of the week, but we all know that we obviously desperately want to play really well. We know how important it is to us but also the fans to root on the Canadian players. I think I saw 28 Canadians here this week, which is obviously a record, but just really, really cool. Yeah, we're all desperately trying to play well, and I think it's one of those where we've tried to learn over time that you take the expectations away, you can try to perform at your best. You try too hard, it's tough in that way. I think if I relate it to myself, last year the first round would probably be a big part of that, trying too much, trying too hard, and really being able to let it go and kind of have that comeback made it even more special.

Q. For years we heard the stories of Mike Weir taking you guys on practice rounds at the Masters. What does it mean for you that you're going to be that Mike Weir figure for a generation, if not more, of Canadian golf fans who that putt's going to be the biggest moment -- I mean, feel free to give 'em another one -- but for now that putt's the biggest moment they have got. What does it mean to you for you to be that Mike Weir figure for your generation?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's obviously very special. Like I said, a lot of the stuff, I think the year's gone by so quickly it's hard to probably grasp all of that. Again, when I think of myself with all the Canadians out here, I'm one of the oldest now, I guess, of all of us. But we're all so close and we play so often together I don't see it in that light with all of us together. But I'm not getting any younger being 36,

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so there's going to be a crop of Canadian players coming up here hopefully soon that are in their 20s, and if I can help them out as much as I can, as much as Mike Weir and Stephen Ames helped me and others in the past, like it's the more the better. Yeah, I'm not feeling any younger, but hopefully I can have a few more in me.

Q. Looking forward a bit here, you have, it's looking like you're summer's going to include an appearance at the Paris Olympics, and then possibly coming back to Montreal for the Presidents Cup. Just what does it mean for you to be able to represent Canada, especially in light of sort of the past year where you've kind of become a national icon?

NICK TAYLOR: That's nice, thanks. Yeah, that was a huge goal of mine really to start the year when it was more within reach, not there yet. It's some good golf over the next three weeks will definitely put me in a good spot to do that. I would love to represent Canada. I think we were actually at an outing yesterday and Rory I was talking with -- Lindsay Hamilton had a Canadian bag, and I was complimenting her on her bag, and Rory said, I wish I had as much passion as Canadians do about their sport, and just being united and stuff. It's just, yeah, I really hope I can represent Canada at the Olympics. The Presidents Cup was also later than that, but also at the top of the list to start the year. So I'm doing everything I can to do that. I said earlier in the year and I need to continue to do that, but if I focus on it, it's taking me and distracting me from things that I can't control. So I just got to do everything I can in my own power.

Q. Obviously last year's win comes in an intense four-hole playoff, and then you win again in a playoff in Phoenix. What is it about your demeanor or your game that allows you to have success in those sort of crucial moments?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's taken work to be able to get in that mental state of focusing kind of on that present moment. I've done work with that over the years and so I think when I've, when I look back at the Canadian Open I take confidence from that, which only helped me when I was at Phoenix. Yeah, I think that the combination of work or just enjoying that moment and being able to stay in that present situation, which we're trying to do Thursday morning all the way to Sunday, and for whatever reason I've been able to do it really well in those situations. So I hope for less dramatic finishes in the future if I win again, but it's been a lot of fun to be in those scenarios.

Q. 10 years ago you had a final round 63 at KFT Championship to clinch your card. Talking with Adam Hadwin, and he drew a through line of that kind of

setting up or being indicative of the clutch gene that you've had the last 18 months. Where, when you think of your career and the progression, where does that round at Dye's Valley Course kind of come into your mind?

NICK TAYLOR: It's huge. You know, even Cam Young yesterday was talking about kind of through his career what is he most proud of, and he just mentioned about playing well at the right time. That was definitely the top of the list for me. Even the Q-School the year before, having, it was six rounds then, but I think it was a 67 the final round to kind of clinch some starts on the Korn Ferry Tour. I knew going into that week that final round I needed a good one. It's one of those things where it doesn't happen very often where you kind of get in that state, that zone, and you just let it fly and stay out of your own way, essentially. That round, who knows where I would have been, I might not even have got my card if I shot even. If, so, no, that was definitely a career moment in a sense where it got me going in the right direction that I was trying to get.

Q. With Presidents Cup coming up, what's your relationship like with Mike Weir and the conversations you have with him kind of with the Presidents Cup imminent?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, whenever I see him we obviously chat. We've had dinners together with a bunch of players that are probably going to be on the team, or hopefully on the team. So I'm looking forward to it. A lot of it is, he's like, you guys just stick to your own game and do it and everything will take care of itself. That's sometimes easier said than done for us because we desperately want to be on that team. So I think he knows how much we want to be on that team and how much it would mean to us, so I think there's not much to talk about. He knows how much we want it. So his best advice is keep your head down and continue to do what you can control and results will definitely follow.

Q. Did you ever go watch him play as a kid?

NICK TAYLOR: You know I remember watching him a bit, my dad volunteered at the Air Canada Championship when it was out west at Northview. I remember watching one or two years there. It's probably about it. Just because of the Canadian Open hasn't been out west very often. U.S. Open, I played kind of later 2008, 2009 and got to hang out with him a little bit, so, no, he's always been a big influence.

Q. Speaking of the putt last year, what was the putter that you have in the bag, and what's allowed you to find so much comfort with it?

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NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, speaking of actually big rounds, ironically I started using that putter about six or seven years ago, and I had a great final round at Wyndham to keep my card, shot a 63. That was one of the first few weeks that I actually used that putter. It went out of the bag for maybe a month, three or four years ago, but it's been in my bag for about six, seven years. So, something I'm comfortable with. I'm not someone that changes equipment very often anyways, but I've had enough great putting rounds and successful events years with it that it's going to be in the bag for a long time.

Q. Then lastly, last year's moment it can kind of and blur when we think back on things like that, wondering, when you think back, what do you remember, what sticks out, maybe mental images, things like that?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I think I remember most the chaos probably of the controlled chaos of the scene. I think the putt, specifically of it going in, I feel like my distinct memory is seeing Dave charge at me, kind of his face. Then the rest of it is kind of a blur. I've seen the replay enough now that I kind of have that visual almost now instead of my own perception. Yeah, I've seen so many angles now, it's really cool to see different people's reaction. I feel when my wife and I see it we find a different person to look at and see how they reacted, which is pretty fun.

Q. You were just speaking about the Presidents Cup International Team. Right now you are in the top 6 in the International Team standings, so you would be an auto selection if it were tomorrow. How important is it to make Mike Weir's job easier and have more Canadians in the top 6?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, that's all of our goals, right, to take it out, you know, put it on yourself to be in that six where you don't have to worry about a phone call, good or bad. Yeah, I haven't been in that position, so, yeah, good golf, good results in the next couple months will take care of that, and hopefully I'm the one kind of waiting to find out who is on the team with me. So that's the goal, to not have to worry about that. But there's a lot of tournaments left, a lot of huge tournaments left, so that's the goal and good golf will kind of take care of that.

Q. You mentioned your putter. How much of an impact has Gareth Rafflewski had on your short game overall?

NICK TAYLOR: Massive. It's been about two years now, maybe just over two years since we started working together. He's been very clever in a sense of like slowly

implementing certain things. We went to that claw grip at the start of January of last year, which has been made big changes. Results-wise, so much out here, if you make one more putt a round it's going to make a world of difference. So it's trying to find the lowest hanging fruit of trying to get some gains in there. So, the biggest thing is a lot of fundamental stuff, setup, but also speed control's been huge and he's been able to come up more and more and just kind of keep me inside the railway tracks there and not get off. So, yeah, he's been a huge influence.

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