

Alfred Dunhill Links Championship

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland

Victor Perez

Press Conference

CLARE BODEL: We welcome Victor Perez, defending champion here at the Alfred Dunhill Links Champion. How have you enjoyed holding onto that title for an extended time?

VICTOR PEREZ: It's great. It's a little bit unusual obviously to not have played. Obviously last year was one of the events where you end up keeping your defence for a couple years, which is actually quite cool in a sense. It doesn't happen often. It's been fun. It's great to be back. The weather is supposed to be a little iffy through the week, so we'll see how it all plays out.

Q. Obviously this win two years ago set you on a path that might have led to The Ryder Cup. How did you feel about how it all panned out for you in the end that the extra year didn't work in your favor?

VICTOR PEREZ: Yeah, I guess it's all part of the game in a sense. It was the same for everyone. I felt like I had a great run which was obviously fantastic and a great run of events. Obviously didn't quite capitalise.

I think it was a difficult decision for everyone to play, not play. I think everybody tried to make the best out of the situation, and you know, it is what it is at the end of the day. It's sports. It happens throughout the world. I think it happened for me in golf but there's obviously great learning that I would have not learned if I qualified. So I think that you always have to look at the whole thing full and try to take the best from it and move on.

Q. How determined are you to be in a Ryder Cup, hopefully the one in two years' time?

VICTOR PEREZ: Yeah, of course. I think there's things that I can reflect on and maybe that I could have done different, as far as scheduling, I was trying to play in America for a while and try to get my card there, but also limited with the number of events being a non-member. There's definitely a bunch of learning things along the way that people can tell you all they want, this is what you should do.

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At the end of the day, you have to make it your own story, and I think there's things that I will take on. Obviously super motivated, two years, the qualifying is not starting this week like it was last time I was here, which is kind of interesting. Usually the qualifying process is just one year. Basically last two years ago when I won, it was the first qualifying event and The Ryder Cup was just last week. So if you take this time frame, it was really long.

So it will be different. But obviously very motivated to make the team in Rome and play on home soil.

Q. Obviously you would have made the team if it had not been for COVID and there's nothing you can do about that. But did COVID make it more difficult for players like you to break through The Ryder Cup qualification barrier? I'm thinking of Bob and Rasmus, players that found it more difficult because of COVID?

VICTOR PEREZ: Maybe. The stats speak for themselves because none of us did qualify. You could argue your point and say yes, but at the same time I'm not the one to make excuses. I think at the end of the day, the best players qualify. I think, yeah, the best players end up making it regardless.

I think it was difficult in the sense that I believe golf is a lot -- has to do with momentum and feeding off your good results and kind of riding the wave for as long as you can, and sometimes you don't really know why you're playing well. Just as much sometimes you don't really know why you're playing poorly.

So I think I was off a good stretch and then COVID happened and you kind of like take the win off our sails in a sense and you have to restart with the focus point being on you because every board says you're on the team and you're going to make the team and stuff, and you have to kind of manage that without necessarily the confidence and the momentum that you got just off the wins and the good results in WGCs.

I guess I didn't manage it the way I could have managed it, but at the same time I've learned things in an atmosphere and scenario hopefully we'll never have to see again. I probably learned it the hard way but at the same time I think it's great because everything should be easier from

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now on as far as managing the outside of the golf in a sense.

Q. Are you still a Dundee-based Frenchman?

VICTOR PEREZ: Yes.

Q. And in the last two years, do people recognise you a little bit more around even St Andrews?

VICTOR PEREZ: Yeah, a little bit. I think the golfing community around here is obviously massive and people love the golfers, and especially the people that live here. I know whether it's me, whether it's Connor, I know it's great to have people recognising you. I'm fortunate to practise here on the back of the range at St Andrews and you have got people walking and playing the 17th and waving and saying -- I think it's always cool to give back, and people are obviously cheering you on.

Q. As a non-European and non-British, seems to me there's a very emerging presence of European players, including yourself, the Højgaards from Denmark and other players in Europe making their presence felt more so than the English who made their presence felt for so long, do you see that coming and maybe many years to come in Ryder Cup appearance, etc.

VICTOR PEREZ: Yeah, I mean, I didn't -- I think it's interesting because as a player, you're so in your own little bubble and your own little world, and you are kind of just doing your things and often you're just looking at what you're doing, so I haven't necessarily paid attention to that. It's interesting you mention it but I think it's great.

Obviously the Højgaard brothers have had fantastic results this year. I think, yeah, I think throughout the world, it's great that Guido has been playing well from Italy. I think there's definitely a generation of us that are coming, from being non-British, if you say so. Yeah, I think it's great.

Q. I was just going to ask Victor a question, he talked about momentum and confidence. There's that cliché that as soon as you see yourself driving home to get back, you travel all over the world and you get that warm feeling of coming back to your safe place. This is now a local course to you. Do you get that same warm feeling driving into St Andrews knowing that you can play some really great golf here?

VICTOR PEREZ: Yeah, for sure. I think obviously being here and having your little inner world with your -- driving your own car, going only every night, I think there's a plus and advantages to that, which is great.

On the other hand, I would say, you know, generally when you travel, wherever the tournament is, you're very much -- it feels very much like a golf tournament. Whereas this week might feel a little bit different because you are home, because everything is so familiar. I mean, I drive here every day basically to come practise, and you know, so I think it's definitely hard in a sense to differentiate the two.

So there's some good to that. There's some bad to that because, you know, you might be a little bit too relaxed but at the same time is relaxed being a bad thing? Time will tell. I think it's, again, every situation is different, and it's just a matter of making the most of it.

Q. And just a final supplementary. Do you enjoy the pressure of being the defending champion, if you like, that kind of extra set of eyes on you saying, oh, yeah, that's the guy that won here last time?

VICTOR PEREZ: Yeah, like I was saying, I think you know, with everything that has happened with The Ryder Cup over the last year, I've been in that spotlight for quite some time now, whether, you know, you -- I came up from Challenge Tour and you play your first season and it's kind of just like, oh, you know, you're playing well and nobody is really looking and obviously.

I've had a first decent very good first year and then went on to the second year and played even better, and then all of a sudden I was in The Ryder Cup conversation, there was things, I was playing in majors, there's just more things that happen over time, and you start to be under that spotlight where you have a little bit more pressure, which is generally just self-inflicted anyway, because you know, at the end of the day, you always think it's a much bigger deal than it really is, but that's always the case as a player.

So yeah, I think it is always nice. I think you always kind of like -- you should enjoy as a player to be a little more under the spotlight anyway because that's how it's going to be when you come into big events, and you're in the lead on the final round of a major, the Saturday night, they are going to always ask you how is it going to feel if you win tomorrow. You know, I think you have to get comfortable early on with those talks and being able to express yourself whichever way makes you feel good in a sense.

So yeah, I think it's fun. I think it's great and hopefully I can have the trophy again in four days.

CLARE BODEL: Thank you, Victor. Thank you, everyone.

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