

U.S. Amateur Championship

Friday, August 16, 2024
Chaska, Minnesota, USA
Hazeltine National Golf Club

Jose Luis Ballester

Quick Quotes

Q. Congratulations. Made it to the semifinals. First Spanish semifinalist since Sergio. What are you feeling right now?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: It's amazing, just an incredible feeling, especially tomorrow morning I'm going to be competing against a really good friend. So it's not just me, but two Spaniards in the semifinals, which is incredible.

Q. How long have you known Luis?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: We've known each other for at least six, seven years, but we've gotten really close the over past three, four because because we've played together a lot with the Spanish National Team, many European team championships together, many victories together. It's going to be a really fun match to watch.

Q. Is it a moment of pride that no matter what, you're going to have a Spaniard in the finals?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Yes. Obviously I hope it's me, but it's amazing that we're going to have one Spaniard in the final.

Q. In the second half of the front nine, it looked like he kind of took the momentum back from you. What was going through your head that allowed you to take it back from him on the back?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Actually, I thought it was pretty similar to the match I had yesterday. I was playing really good, wasn't making putts, and I just had one mistake on 6 that kind of cost me a hole that I should have won.

But besides that, I kept trusting in my swing that has been feeling really good all week. Yeah, the putts wouldn't drop in today, but again it was playing harder today with this wind and the direction change. So we had to make some adjustments.



Yeah, I just kept believing in my swing.

Q. I know Luis didn't go to college, right? You said you guys have become good friends over the last few years. What's it like -- how do you try to put it in perspective that you guys get to face off tomorrow? Obviously it's a friend. Do you enjoy that or not?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I mean, I wish I could face him in the final, but just the fact that we're going to be competing for a spot in the final at the U.S. Amateur is just amazing.

Q. You know all that comes with a win tomorrow. Do you allow yourself to think ahead at all on that?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Not really. Again, tomorrow is a new day, new match. Hopefully I can pull out my best game. If I don't, I'll try to fight as hard as I can.

Q. How did you get started in the game?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Well, it's been a while. It's been a long journey. When I was 4, both of my parents were great athletes, and somehow I got into the game early. From that to today.

Q. Do you still work with Victor?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I do.

Q. How long have you worked with him?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: For seven, eight years. It's pretty funny because right now in Spain it's like around 1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m. maybe.

Q. 3:00 a.m.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: 3:00 a.m., sorry. He just sent me a text that he's been following really closely all week. It's really cool when you have a 74-year-old guy watching and rooting for you for a distance.

Q. What are some of the biggest things that he's taught you over the years?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: He's always pretty basic with



drills and the swing practice we have. He's always been a big believer in every player has his own swing. It's all about small details.

A cool thing that I'm going to tell him today that I've been thinking under pressure is that, when I have all the people behind, I just think it's him watching me hit balls on the range. Personally I don't like when people stand behind me, but he's been doing that for seven years and I kind of got used to it. So it's that thought of having Victor behind me.

Q. Do you feel the crowd is behind you? You've obviously been around college golf for a little bit, so some people may be familiar with your name. Did you feel the crowd was pulling for you today or against you?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I could see that maybe, but honestly I didn't really pay too much attention to them. I was just trying to stay in the present with my caddie and try to not get affected by the crowd at any point. I think I did a good job with it.

Q. Jon Rahm and Phil are a couple of guys that had really good amateur success that also played at ASU. Did you talk to them at all about situations they faced in amateur golf ever?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Not with Phil. I don't know him personally. But I've had a chance to play with Jon Rahm multiple times. When I'm with him, I honestly don't talk that much about amateur and things or like how he handled some sort of competitions. Just try to like learn from his game or from other games outside his game.

Q. Is Sergio a mentor?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Sure.

Q. What are some of the things he's taught you that you've picked up from him that you admire?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Again, it's more like outside the course, I feel like. I've gotten really close with Sergio for the past -- especially the last three years. I think the thing that I've been -- the thing that I got from him especially last year is that I have to trust myself a lot.

I'm a really good player, and sometimes I feel like I underestimate myself in certain situations. It's just believe that I'm a really good player enough to pull the shots off when it matters.

Q. How has your parents' athletic success helped

you? Like what have they shared with you in terms of competing?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Well, we knew -- in my family we knew that sports or athletic life was going to be something really important in our lives. And what they taught to me since I was very young, it's like no matter what you do, always give your best. It doesn't matter if you don't win, but if you fight as hard as you can, you should be proud of yourself.

Q. Coach Thurmond says you're carefree, pretty laid back, never stressed. Have you always been like that?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Pretty much. I would say I'm more like that way in terms of school. I don't get stressed. In golf I would say that I'm kind of similar, but it's my passion. So I don't get lazy with it.

Q. Why do you think you're like that?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I don't know because I've been pretty successful in school and I've never got any worries with it. So I just think that -- I always thought that, until I get that big wakeup call, I won't do anything. I'm still without problems.

Q. One last thing, you talked about your relationship with Sergio. Has he messaged you at all this week?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Yeah, he's been following closely, like Victor. It's pretty nice having a guy like Sergio rooting for you and texting you every day. It's great.

Q. What are some of the things he's told you?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Like I said before, believe in yourself, you're great. You deserve to be here.

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