

U.S. Amateur Championship

Saturday, August 17, 2024

Chaska, Minnesota, USA

Hazeltine National Golf Club

Jose Luis Ballester

Quick Quotes

Q. First Spaniard to ever make a U.S. Am final. Not even Sergio did that. Put that in perspective.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I think I'm still not conscious what just happened today. It's still an unbelievable feeling. Super grateful for the opportunity to compete in the U.S. Amateur Championship. Just grateful that I'm living this moment.

Q. Have you heard from any of the Spanish guys overnight, texts from Sergio or Jon Rahm?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Yeah, a couple buddies texted me, David, Sergio's been following really close all week. He just called me and said congrats. It's pretty sweet seeing all those players rooting for you.

Q. Talk about today. You guys got off to a pretty good start. You went birdie, birdie, birdie the first three holes. You really got into it right away.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I again striped it today. Missed a bunch of putts on the front nine, but again I kept trusting on my swing. And yeah, I made a couple of wrong putts on the back nine and hit really good tee shots on 14, 15, 16 to kind of close the match. So again, I was pretty calm all the way, feeling super confident with my swing, and that made it easier.

Q. Describe what it's like to play a teammate. I don't know if you've had that situation in a big golf championship before at this level.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: It honestly made it a little bit easier. I felt like I was more nervous yesterday and the previous day than what I was today. Even with all the people in the crowd, I was super calm all the way, and I think that's because I had a great buddy next to me.

Just super thankful that I could share that moment with him today.



Q. Did you think at all what the ramifications are at all from winning today's match? Did that enter your mind at all today?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: A little bit, yeah. Again, just trying to stay in the present. Today it's a big day, and we're going to play tomorrow, and then when I go back to Arizona, sit down and think about this week and what just happened.

Q. Do you know anything about your opponent tomorrow?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: No, not really. Not really besides that he's been playing really good this week.

Q. What do you think it will be like next April when you see these Masters champions from your country, Sergio, Jon Rahm, Jose?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: It's amazing. Again, having the chance to learn from those guys, you know, with time maybe building a good relationship, it's just super cool. So again, pretty thankful to have those relationships.

Q. Ever play with any of them?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Yeah, I play with Sergio quite a lot because we're from the same town. And with Jon Rahm I played a little bit as well. Had a chance to play with him a bit before coming back to Spain for the summer.

I honestly learned a couple things from them, so happy with that.

Q. What did you learn?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I learned that a player like Jon with how confident he is and the mentality he has, you got to bring it. Nobody's going to give it to you. If you want to win, you've got to play aggressive, and that's what I got from him.

Q. You seemed to have another gear today even over the last couple of days. Did you consciously change anything going into today?



JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: What do you mean?

Q. Another gear, you played even better today.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I don't know. I think probably because I was playing with a friend maybe made it easier. Again, I felt like I was making really good swings, stripping the ball really good.

Yeah, I didn't make the putts at the beginning, which made it a little bit harder. Again, I kept giving myself opportunities, and that was the mindset for the tournament.

Q. Who's here supporting you this week? Obviously tomorrow you're going to face a guy who's got basically the entire state of Iowa out here rooting for him. Do you have any other than --

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I have a couple of friends, really, really close friends, so that's enough.

Q. That's all you need?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: And all the guys back home I know are rooting for me.

Q. I think we talked a little bit about this yesterday. If the whole crowd is maybe going for him tomorrow, where do you pull your motivation from tomorrow?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: It's even better for yourself. Not like the underdog, but feeling like nobody wants you to win, and you grab that roll. Guys, I'm going to show you what it's all about. And I try to play my best.

So maybe if I can get on a roll early in the morning knowing that there are going to be more cheers for him than for me, maybe it can work.

Q. You're ranked 10th in the world. You've had a crazy successful amateur career. I know you have one more year at Arizona State. How do you rank this week and what you have the opportunity to do tomorrow against everything you've done the last couple of years?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I had an amazing experience last year winning the European Amateur Championship, but this is above everything.

Coming into this week, it's always exciting coming to the U.S. Amateur, and it's always exciting to come to the U.S. Amateur, and as soon as you see yourself moving forward in the match play, you're like, okay, this is actually getting better and better.

Right now we're in the final, and I know that whatever happens tomorrow, it's probably the best week of my life so far.

Q. You have CVA on your head cover. What's that for?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: It's a sad story actually. I don't know if you guys know this, remember this, but in 2018 a Spanish girl, really great player, was murdered in Iowa State.

Q. Iowa State. Yeah, that's right.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I had a chance to play with her once, and I'm pretty close to the family she had in Spain because we are from the same area. So it's just in her honor. Those are her initials.

Q. And your sister plays against Iowa State, right? She goes to Kansas State, is that right?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Yes.

Q. How long have you had the head cover?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Since the moment it happened, five, six years.

Q. Are you aware of the history, 18 years ago, a European won here, and he beat an American and almost got the same thing going here.

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: I didn't know that. Who was the European?

Q. Richie Ramsay from DP World Tour, yeah.

Q. It's fairly well documented that Rahm looked up to Seve growing up. Do you have a certain Spanish player that you idolized?

JOSE LUIS BALLESTER: Probably because of how close we are, Sergio. He's always been my mentor, and his dad has been my coach for the past seven years. So the relationship I developed with him the past few years made me almost like idolize him more.

So it's pretty cool. Again, Sergio, Jon Rahm, to have all these guys rooting for you and sharing moments with you so you can learn, it's amazing.

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