

CME Group Tour Championship

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Marina Alex

Quick Quotes

Q. All right, here with Marina after her first round. A great round to open this event. Just talk about your round today.

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, it was -- I feel like it was tough conditions. Wind kind of up and down, some strength at the beginning of the round.

Made a silly bogey honestly on my second hole. Hit two good shots and came up short. Didn't judge the wind correctly and didn't get up and down from the front of the green, which maybe kind of lit a little bit of a fire in the fact that I was just like, what are you doing? Come on, silly. You've been practicing this stuff all week. Just walk away with a dumb bogey.

Hit some great hybrids on 3 and 4. One was five feet; other was six; converted those. That first stretch of the golf course is hard. To get through the sixth hole as a reachable par-5, was able to just get front edge of the green, two putt birdie.

To get through that stretch then under par I think was like a little bit calming. Just kind of get me going. And I felt like I putted pretty nicely today. Made a good like, I would say, seven-footer for par on 11, which kind of kept me going.

Nice birdie on 13.

14 was playing so long. It was a really tough par-5. Not really -- I don't know how many birdies you'll see out there today.

Then 17 just like classically in the worst place I could have been, left and slightly long of that particular pin. I mean, it went in like with probably a lot of the speed. I don't know. To be fair I didn't have a ton of options from there.

I thought I hit a nice chip. I was expecting it to be, I don't know, 10 to 15 feet, which was what I was going to be happy with trying to convert, and hit the pin and went in. Just you need some good breaks. Occasionally that kind



of stuff happens.

Q. Back at the CME Group Tour Championship; what do you remember about coming back here every year?

MARINA ALEX: I love this place. I love Naples. I really do like the golf course. I know statistically it probably doesn't favor me as a shorter hitter, but I feel like I've had good success out here. Not every year, but in certain years I've played well.

When you play a place over and over again you get really familiar with what I'm capable of doing, me and my game. Where to hit it. Where not to hit it. When to be like nope, that's not a birdie hole for you or that pin specifically lends itself to trouble if you don't have a short club.

So I think just over the years learning from my mistakes out here has kind of been helpful, you know, and I'm just going to try and carry that into the next three days.

Today was generous I felt like with hole locations as far as accessibility. Didn't matter if you were a long or short hitter, I felt like you had options to get to pins.

I'm not sure that will be the case for the next three days, as I'm sure they're going to probably want to get it a little bit faster and a little bit tighter to the edges of the green.

So I'll just need to be really patient, stick to my game plan, and just maximize what I can.

Q. And last I saw you in Japan.

MARINA ALEX: Yes.

Q. Really awesome finish, and then two weeks in a row after that. How do you reset heading into this week?

MARINA ALEX: Oh, yeah, I've been not -- it's been a mess. I went to Hawai'i and I was like, uh-oh, I'm just tired. Time change. I actually didn't play bad there. I felt like I was in a complete daze for the first four days I was there.

Almost in like -- you never want to miss a cut, but I was like, I really could use these two days off. I flew home. Then it was a five-hour time change.



Got to Tampa. That course played really hard. I feel like even for me, even though it is probably a shorter course, some of those green complexes are tricky if you don't have short irons in.

I almost feel like out here I can do a bit more from the distance that I hit it than I could at Pelican. So I just wasn't in a -- wasn't firing on all cylinders.

Again, it's fine. Got good rest and prep. Had a bunch of my coaches out here earlier in the week -- week. I had three guys out here which is kind of crazy. It was all kind of needed and coming together, so it was good, yeah, just to get ready.

The last push of the season, so off we go.

Q. I know last year was frustrating, but this year it's been -- you've been more consistent and had a lot of stellar results.

MARINA ALEX: Absolutely, yeah.

Q. How have you managed to mitigate that year into this year and really kind of keep it rolling this season? What's been so critical?

MARINA ALEX: Nothing is ever an overhaul with me. I'm not really big on making massive changes. I'm also not unwilling to make changes.

So I sat down with my coach, Claude, at the end of the season, and we looked at statistically like how bad certain things were, things that were easy fixes.

I've been really fortunate to work with a guy in the Jupiter area, Nico Darras, who's a performance guy, stats, really focuses on stats.

We just took a really hard look at where I was coming up short relative to the rest of the Tour out here in strokes gained, and worked hard on that in the off-season.

Majority of it was wedges. I really had no idea how far I was hitting certain clubs and how to hit certain shots, which is crazy when you think about it. You've been out here ten years.

It's just really areas that I felt like I wasn't capitalizing on par-5s because wasn't close enough to the hole, and then I don't hit it far enough. So then when you're having 7, 6, 5-hybrid into the other par-4s, you're just not making enough birdies.

Worked very hard on that in the off-season.

Also met a great putting coach who helped me revamp a little bit of my putting. I think all of that together I would say took through about May to get any really kind of consistency out of that.

And, yeah, I guess all that hard work from last December up until this week, just still working on it, it's really helped me.

Q. At this point in your career, at this point in your life, what's continuing to motivate you and to push you to work that hard to get there?

MARINA ALEX: \$4 million. (Laughter.)

Q. Besides this week obviously.

MARINA ALEX: I know, I'm kidding. I'm kidding. No, I do think that there is a lot more at stake to play for in the majors, this week.

Just knowing that there is that a little bit of effort to get better. Even in the gym and with my PT guy out here, Tom. Like we made so much improvement in that regard, too, outside of just the golf stuff.

But then also to be consistent week in and week out. Feel like I can play four days and stay strong. You know, that's important for me. I don't have nature length, so if I feel like I can't keep up, at least my distance for four days, I'm definitely going to get lapped out here.

There was a lot going into it. I just try and ride that physically as long as I can.

Q. Off to a good start. How do you build going into the next three rounds knowing it's likely to get harder out here?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, it's going to get harder. I think I just need to be patient with myself, understand that I've been out here a long time now. Pick and choose the battles. Don't get ahead of yourself.

Pars don't hurt you. They never do. Even though sometimes they seem like they do when everyone is 4-, 5-, 6-under day in and day out, doesn't mean that I can't step out there on a day and shoot 7-under.

Just my other day, if it's even par or 1- or 2-under on my bad day, that's the most important thing. It's just knowing that I can grind those out and not maybe mentally make something more than it is and put myself behind. It's the

grind of trying to scrap out the days that it's just maybe not the best day.

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