

CME Group Tour Championship

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Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Atthaya Thitikul

Flash Interview

THE MODERATOR: Welcome inside the media center here at the CME Group Tour Championship. We're here with two-time LPGA Tour winner and our Louise Suggs Rolex Rookie of the Year, Atthaya Thitikul. We were just talking about it. What award haven't you won yet? Clinched Rookie of the Year last week, and I know that was something that meant a lot to you, but what did it feel like to finally get that award and clinch it and win your second rookie of the year title on two different tours in two years?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Yeah, I mean, all the things that's happened in this year is really crazy to me. I reached World No. 1. Being able to get two wins here and get the Rolex Rookie of the Year is really crazy. It's really amazing.

At the same time I think, like, it's because all the people surrounding me are pretty good support and get me to this moment. Hard work as well at the beginning of the year.

I have been through, like, changing a lot of my swing. I'm not talking about now, but I mean four, five years ago. I had a really big-time change.

Yeah, like I say, it's really amazing, and it really means to me and my team.

THE MODERATOR: You've represented Thailand well. Obviously joining Patty Tavatanakit as the second Thai player in a row to win that award in 2017. I feel like the Thai legion out here is very close. To celebrate that with your fellow Thai players, I'm sure you got to do a little celebrating, what was it like to celebrate that success?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: I haven't celebrated anything yet (laughing). Our schedule is pretty tight on the LPGA Tour, I will say that. It's because it's my first year. As you can see, rookies always play most of the event on the LPGA Tour in the first year.

But maybe we'll go celebrate it after this week in Thailand



because I know we really need it to celebrate.

THE MODERATOR: Just reached World No. 1 for the first time in your career. What was that like? I know we talked at BMW a little about it, and it wasn't on your radar. But when it finally happened, what were some of the emotions that you felt?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: I think it's the biggest goal to, like, all players that we want to really be No. 1 in the world, but at the same time that's I know the news that I'll be No. 1, it's just, like, it's crazy, and it's so means a lot.

Also proud of myself at the same time, but when the time passed, but, I mean, like one or two days that I know that being No. 1 and just, like, I just think it's still the same, I guess.

You know, you have No. 1 under your belt, but I'm still thinking I am the same. I am the person that I have to improve a lot. I'm just 19 years old, who didn't have that much experience as they had because this is my first year. Still young still. Still a lot to go.

I think No. 1 gets me more humble. Like, oh, my God. I know, but, guys, I'm not that good.

THE MODERATOR: And you're here now. Obviously, being a rookie, first time playing in the CME Group Championship. Seeing the golf course, what do you think of Tiburón so far?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: It's really good. I mean, the golf course is in good shape and in really good condition out there. It's been pretty nice for me, I guess for today. Hopefully for the tournament as well. I do like it, the course, the way it looked.

But I think it has something to working on the greens as well. I think the fairway, it's wide. It's not pretty narrow, but I think it's because if the wind is picking up, because I just had a practice round, and the wind is picking up pretty much and then we have to work on that on the putting greens as well because I haven't played this course before. I mean, like, in the past year.

Yeah, that's all I think about the course, but I pretty like it, though.



THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Just a fun one. How do you get the nickname Jeeno?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: I think most of -- like, every Thai had a nickname when we were born. Normally my nickname is Jeen, not Jeeno, without the O. It means like China or Chinese people. In Thai it means like that. Then my coach called me Jeeno, and I thought, Oh, that sounds good. I just take it from that time.

Q. So why did you originally get Jeen? Do you know why that nickname originally?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: My mom give it to me. Like I said, everyone in Thai has a nickname because our name is too long to call (laughing). First name or last name are pretty long to call.

Yeah, every Thai people they have nickname. It came up when they were born for everyone. Jeen is, like, my mom give it to me because she is 100% Thai, but my dad is Chinese for a little bit. She's, like, oh, I give it for, like, your father is going to like it.

Q. Gotcha. You were mentioning the major swing change that you made several years ago. Could you give us some insight on that and how long it took for it to really sink in?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Actually, I change it. I don't really know the exact time, but I think it's when I was 15 or 16. Something like that, I guess. Not sure about the exact time.

I think it's because I just started, you know, being with my coach. Chris is my coach now from that time. I just started with him and he was came up to me, like, do you know you had a really good future and really bright future out there, but this swing -- if you go out and play on the LPGA Tour, I know you can be there, but you're not going to be on top.

Like you said, the course that LPGA set, the pin position, everything, it's not easy as you're thinking. You have to, you know, like -- it has to have so many shape shot or so many shots that you can play to get it on the pin. Not just, like, one ball flight or something like that. Just, like, oh, yeah. Maybe because of my swing it just one ball flight, just one. I couldn't shape anything at that time. Yeah, maybe I change.

This is the biggest time I have to make a decision of shanking or not shanking. I am pretty -- had a really good

year that time as well with my old swing. I mean, won the (indiscernible), won the gold medalist in youth Olympics in Argentina as well.

But it's so -- it's a huge challenge to like change my swing. I just realized his word or what he was saying to me, and it's just, like, oh, yeah, maybe you're right. I just only hit just one shot, and then I don't think I can be on the top with this shot, this one shot at all on the LPGA Tour.

Then just decided, and then, yeah, I came up to him and, like, yeah, let's go. Let's change it together. Yeah, we changed pretty much everything (laughing), my whole swing starting from the grip.

Q. (Off microphone.)

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: The old swing?

Q. Yeah.

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Yeah, just draw. I couldn't hit the fade. I couldn't hit it high, hit it low. Just one, like (indiscernible.)

Q. Are you surprised at all you have been able to achieve these in your first year on tour, or did you expect all of this?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Pretty surprised I would say. My goal on the LPGA Tour, the first goal, is to be able to win whatever majors or just general tournament, that's fine. But like be able to win on the LPGA Tour, I think it's pretty cool because it's really hard to get it. As you can see, some people be out here for a while, but they didn't get it once, because I know it's really hard.

You play against the best players in the world every week, and then you don't know who going to came up, because like everyone can shoot really low score every day.

Q. There's a lot up for grabs this weekend, and you're in the hunt for some of the big awards. What would be a successful end to the season this weekend for you?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Actually, I would say, like, I had a really great year already. I would say this week it's just only, like, a bonus week for everyone that came up to, you know like -- came up here and just had four more rounds to end our season.

I think it's such a bonus week for us and for me as well. I just want to go have fun and enjoy because, like, I really need -- I really need to rest (laughing).

Q. To \$2 million for Player of the Year would just be icing on the cake at this point?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: I'm sorry?

Q. So if you win \$2 million or win Player of the Year, it would be icing on the cake at this point?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: No, no. The players of the year? Yeah. The points have so many caps on it, and I have to win the tournament, right, to win the players of the year, isn't it? Yeah.

It's tough, though, guys. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: You make it look easy.

Q. Once you won, how did you reset your goals? What was your next goal?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Yeah. Once I won, my first one in Carlsbad, it's just a dream come true. And at the same time it's mean like -- and, again, my coach say this to me. Okay, you won, and you want to be the winner just today or tomorrow or the next day at all. When you win it today on Sunday and the next day is Monday, so you're not a winner at all.

Just, yes (laughing), okay. He is just, like, you have to continue doing your thing. You're not going to stop just only one, but you have to do your thing to improve yourself, and then, you know, like be able to be grateful already.

But you have to know what you have to do to improve. I was just, like, oh, yeah, it's right. Okay. Keep your head down and be humble and doing your thing. Not thinking, like, you're a winner or something like that. Just keep being you. You know, like be able to win or be able to be on top.

Q. Now that you've had the success this year, what do you set as a goal for next year?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: It's hard. That's a hard question, I guess because I think what I set it for now after since maybe, like, be able to win some majors, because I think it's really cool how we got just -- in one year we have just five majors.

To be able to win a major is one. It's, like, a really cool experience. I think it's mean a lot to us as well and my caddies and my team. Yeah.

I don't know. I don't know if it will come next year or not, but hopefully it happens (laughing).

Q. Just a quick one. You know, when you were younger, were you always very focused and very happy to pursue this goal of golf, or was there ever a point where you wanted to quit or where you had doubts about whether you wanted to do this for a career?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Sure. I started playing when I was 6 years old. Then when I was, like, 9 or 8, kind of like, oh, my God, I went straight from the school to the driving range and straight from the school to golf course every time.

I saw my friends playing on the playground and they had some fun. I'm just, like, oh, my God. It seemed boring at the same time. I mean, I was young.

Yeah, I'm kind of like, I want to quit. I just want to be able to play with my friends or something like that. But I kind of realized to my families or my grandfather at that time, like, you are doing this for your future. And then, you know, for my family as well, for yourself as well.

Do it first and then you can rest later (laughing). Something like that. I'm just, like, oh, it makes sense. Yeah, when you do the hard work, but, like, I think it's worth it when you have achieved so many, like, success.

Q. It's hard sometimes for an 8- or 9-year-old to be that wise. Most would say, too bad, I want to go to the playground.

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Yeah, I want to be able to play when I was 9 as well.

Q. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Just one more for me to wrap it up. Sunday, \$2 million, the largest first place prize in women's golf. Hypothetically if you were to win the \$2 million, what would you spend it on?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: I think I'll buy a house. I didn't have my own house in the States yet. I have planned to buy some, but yeah, if I win, it's going to be right now.

THE MODERATOR: Where would you go? Where would you live?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: I just decided between Dallas and Vegas.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. Athaya, thank you so much.

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Thank you.



