

Senior PGA Championship

The Concession Golf Club

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Justin Hicks

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning and welcome to the 2026 Senior PGA Championship. We're pleased to be joined now by Justin Hicks. Justin, welcome to The Concession. You are certainly no stranger to major championship golf. How are you feeling about your game heading into your first Senior PGA?

JUSTIN HICKS: Well, it's a little different these days now for me coming at it from the working side of things, working in the PGA at a club, Stonebridge Country Club in Boca Raton, Florida. Preparation is a little bit different than maybe years ago when I was playing full-time.

You know, majors are always exciting because you know that you're going to have the best players in the world at those events. The courses are going to be immaculate like this one is this week. It's going to be a really good test. You know, there's just more excitement I feel like to the air with these types of events as opposed to just your standard tour events.

So, yeah, I came out, drove over last weekend and had a look at the golf course on Sunday. I had a chance to kind of see the course and then came back over again this Sunday. We've been here for a few days now preparing, you know, getting to know the greens, the surrounds.

There's a lot going on here, for sure. I feel like guys that maybe live in this area might have a little bit of an edge in that regard because this course has a little bit more than the average golf course. There's a little bit more strategy I think this week to this course than a typical week, and then there's just a lot going on, whether it be on the greens or just off the greens.

Balls are not always going to stay on the greens, and even if you do hit it on the green, there's a chance with some of the slopes that it will kind of funnel off, much like maybe a Pinehurst. You have got a green area, but certain parts of the green if you just were to drop a ball, it would roll off the green from there. So there's going to be a lot of challenges for the players this week.

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

Q. I know it's been a while. Those nine majors that you played, I mean, how do they inform or how do they help you in situations like this with handling the pressure, with pacing yourself with a tournament like this?

JUSTIN HICKS: Last year I played in two majors with the young guys, so seeing as how I have nine, seeing two last year, and they were two of the more memorable ones for me just because both golf courses were absolute beasts, especially Oakmont. Quail Hollow there in Charlotte, I mean, everything about your game was really tested.

That's the interesting part about this week. We don't have maybe as much rough as you would think of in a big major championship event. There are some areas out there where there is some rough in play, but it's more so just keeping it out of the pine straw and hitting the fairways and keeping it out of the fairway bunkers.

In some ways it feels a little bit more like The Open Championship, the one that I played in, where you were just trying to avoid bunkers off the tee in that regard, but the greens just have so much more going on.

Yeah, I don't know if I look at this field, so to speak, there's not too many guys playing a lot of the regular majors still. I think in some ways having to go out there and compete with these guys that fly it 340 and they're half my age and they've got -- you know, I don't know. It's a different world out there in golf I think for a lot of us.

Q. Talking about those memories and maybe your memories as a tour pro, playing on tour in the past, so the fact that you made money this year playing at the Champions makes you want to go on tour, makes you want to change your career?

JUSTIN HICKS: It's one of those things for me that with the Champions Tour, I look at it as if something like that were to happen where I have the opportunity to play again, I'd gladly give that a shot, but I'm not looking at it as, like,

my only avenue.

I kind of got into teaching and the working side of things back in the end of '18/'19 there. So it would be great to play again. I mean, I love playing golf for a living. Certainly it's hard to beat, quite honestly. Every week you come out, you've got cars, you've got cores, you've got volunteers. Everyone is there wanting to help you out. Paychecks are awfully nice too.

There's a lot of good to playing golf full-time, and there's also good for me now with my work schedule. I'm at home. I've got a son that's 15 and my wife, you know, so we've had to kind of readjust my lifestyle to that in the last ten years because I was on the road a bunch, and now it's like I'm home all the time.

You kind of have a little bit of good with either side of it, but certainly if good things happen and I can get back into playing full-time, I would love that opportunity, but if I end up working on the range and teaching people golf, I'm enjoying that as well too.

My Section events keeps me busy as well. That's kind of the beauty of when I got into going back into the Section. When I first came out of college, I worked in the Section and then got status on the Korn Ferry TOUR. I think it was, whatever, the Web.com back then.

Now it's like I'm back in the Section here, and it's something that I enjoy. Golf has been such a big part of my life. I couldn't really imagine taking a job where golf wasn't a part of my life, so...

Q. At the James Hardie you played really well. I thought you got into the top 5 late in the second round, and I know it probably didn't finish the way you wanted, but what did you learn about with your game that week, and what did you learn that you needed to work on to come out here?

JUSTIN HICKS: Well, I think in some ways when you play out here and you have success early, it's kind of like a confidence builder. Much like when I turned pro out of college and I had some success early, it was just a confidence thing to know, hey, I can play golf at this level and be competitive.

It's in the midst of our season where I'm doing a lot of hours at the office there. So in some ways some of these shots, like, and I take a few weeks off and now I'm here, it's hard, because when you're not playing golf all the time, if I count out the number of rounds that I'm playing versus what these guys are playing, it's not a very fair fight in that regard.

I mean, I'm going to practice. I'm going to have some time to hit a few balls. I'm going to go out at the end of the day and maybe play a couple of holes before the sun goes down with two or three balls alternate night. You know, that's kind of what I do and just do my best with it.

Our playing season as a PGA professional with our Section is more in the summertime. It's a little bit difficult in that regard, because it's, like saying, all right, this is basically like my preseason. You're asking the NFL teams to basically play the playoffs and the Super Bowl before the season starts. It's a little bit of the situation that I'm in with golf right now with these tournaments here in the spring.

I'm having a lot of fun with it, doing my best with it, but the way I look at it is I've been playing some pretty good golf in the preseason be, so it's, like, all right, this will be a lot of fun. Next week I have the National Club Tour event and Bandon Dunes. The weather forecast is quite different than here, to say the least. I'm leading into some bigger events and then into my regular season.

You know, every year there's changes of equipment that go on in January, and it's like I'm getting new golf balls and new clubs and everything else. Meanwhile, I'm just trying to figure out time to just test the stuff out really. There's a little bit of that that goes into it too.

Yeah, playing well in Boca I think definitely gives me a lot of confidence to say, all right, look, you've got the abilities. It wasn't that I didn't think that I could compete, but I think when you actually go out there and you walk it and see that you're competitive, it helps your own mind understand, hey, look, we've got some tools that we can probably do some pretty good stuff with. Then if we can maybe put it all together, who knows what can happen.

There was a couple of maybe tactical errors, I guess you could say, that took place towards the end of my second round when I actually got into the top 5. In the third round I think it was just more of an issue of trusting kind of myself a little bit there too.

It's tough. These guys battle those types of things every week, and they're playing a lot of golf. So for a guy who is doing it more in a very part-time capacity, you know, I'm doing my best with it.

Q. Do you set goals for yourself from a competitive golf standpoint? If so, what does success look like for you this week at Concession and the Senior PGA?

JUSTIN HICKS: You first have to start with dreams so to speak. Dreams would be, like, winning senior majors,



winning senior tournaments for that matter. Then from there trying to -- goals are more like just having opportunities out here.

It's interesting, going from the regular tour to out here, Monday qualifiers from years ago out there and now some of the qualifiers I'm doing out here. A lot of the conversations amongst most of these guys -- because when you go to these qualifiers, the vast majority of the guys out there had some form of tour experience. Typically in the States. A lot of them even have like a win.

You are looking at these guys thinking, wow, none of these guys are in the field. The conversations, they're kind of dominated about who is getting in, why they think they should get in, and how the rules should be. I hate to say, it's a little bit of a negative kind of a vibe amongst these players. You have to kind of really tune that out a little bit and just understand, you know, there's a small group of people that are able to play out here on a regular basis.

If you're fortunate enough to be a part of that group, you want to have your fun with it as much as you can, because staying out here, it's tough for guys that don't have that 25-year career with Ryder Cups and Presidents Cups and all those majors and all that stuff. There have been some guys that have done some awesome stuff. It's a tough place to get into just to play. But, yeah, I'm looking forward to that challenge this week.

I'm sorry. What was the second part of that?

Q. What does success look like for you this week specifically?

JUSTIN HICKS: This week specifically I try not to really have expectations, quite honestly. I mean, a lot of this stuff kind of goes back. I work with bob Rotella, Dr. Bob Rotella, for years when I was playing. I still see him throughout the year. I saw him at Cognizant. He plays a couple of places in South Florida where I live, and I'll run into him from time to time. We'll exchange texts from time to time. I think he's out there working with Rory nowadays too.

His books are wonderful. The stuff that we've talked about is wonderful. I try to really remember it. I'll go back, and I took notes during some of our time together. I'll read some of the books and re-read some of the books. He spoke at one of our Section events last year, and it was like every word he said I just was captivated by it.

The stories he tells and the things he talks about for me I feel like are very helpful. Maybe not for everybody, but I think they're great ways of looking at things. He's a big

proponent of not really having expectations. He wants you to kind of have dreams and have goals, which is what we're all about, and then come to that first tee, you got to let the expectations go.

So from my standpoint I'm going to just try to go out here this week and play great golf and see where that lands me and know that in the past when I've done that, I usually end up pretty good. If I try to think too much on this, like I should make the cut and I should finish in the top whatever, that's usually when I kind of fall flat on my face.

I try not to go too far down that side of things. You might talk to somebody else, and they might say something totally different. I guess it's all about figuring out how you work your best.

Q. From a player's point of view, the Senior PGA is different from many of the other majors in that it repeats the venue sometimes. Benton Harbor of every other year, for a lot of years. This case now for the next three years, is that easier from a player's point of view? Do you like that better?

JUSTIN HICKS: That's a good one. I guess if you like the course that we're at for three years, yeah, obviously. You know, there's going to be some people here this week that are going to say they love this place. There will be some guys here this week that will say, boy, I don't know who if I want to go back there again. It's a tough test. I think they're all tough tests.

That revolving kind of every year change can be good sometimes, because you're not going back to the same place where maybe you have, like, a skeleton or two with a certain green or certain hole or certain tee shot. I think as players you have to kind of put that behind you and move along.

I mean, the Masters is played there every year. For a lot of those guys I think at some point everyone is going to have a skeleton or two out there somewhere.

Yeah, I think in general the more you get to know a course, hopefully the better that you'll understand maybe how to play it. Like I said, this place has more thought than most golf courses anywhere that I've ever played. You're going to have to really think your way around as far as which greens you want to attack. There are some places where if you want to roll the dice, boy, you're going to roll the dice. It can be really good, and it can be the other side of that too.

We're probably not going to try to roll the dice too often, and good luck to those that do, but hopefully having a

decent plan with that side of things. I think maybe that's what I learned a little bit playing that Boca event is that at times I was maybe a little bit too much on the aggressive side of things out there, and it hurt me maybe a little bit here or there and maybe being a little more patient with it.

Q. Justin, how many times have you played The Concession before last week, and how many par-5s do you think you're going to be able to go at this week?

JUSTIN HICKS: Last Sunday was my first round out here, so that was the first time I had a chance to see it. I came out, played with a local caddie, and tried to get some information from him as far as his thoughts.

He actually had a few stories in there where he had been out with I think it was Gary Woodland's caddie. I think they call him Butchie. He's playing this week I think.

Q. Brennan Little.

JUSTIN HICKS: There were a couple of things they mentioned that maybe when Gary played back here during the PGA TOUR event. When it comes to the par-5s, you know, I've been going at these par-5s now for every round I've played in. The more I go at them, the more I keep thinking I don't know if these are par-5s you really want to go at. If you do, you got to have the right club.

Yesterday on 17 it was downwind, and I hit a pretty good drive out there, and I had 7-iron into the green. Fairly easy decision there. I think 17 is probably one of the most benign par-5s out here, though. So I think that's where you're going to see probably a fair amount of, you know, birdies and/or eagles on the par-5s.

The other par-5s, though, what is it, number three, that one to me might be the least of -- besides 17. Even that one, though, has got some pretty good stuff going on. I just don't know if the par-5s in my mind. My caddie is trying to tell me there are going to be birdies on it, but I keep thinking the par-5s are not necessarily like what we think of as typical par-5s where it's you're making birdies and if you don't, you're losing shots. I'm not seeing that, quite honestly. That's just how I'm looking at it.

They remind me a little more of 15 at Augusta. Are we seeing birdies there? Yeah, seeing some other too. I don't know if it's really, you know, going at that green in two, depending which club you have. That's kind of what we're seeing out here.

Then you're going to pay the price if you're not in a really good spot, and you're coming in with clubs that, you know, you look at shots gained and stuff like that, 200 yards is

50/50 for PGA tour players. If I'm going in there from 240, that's not a really high percentage. I would guess out here with the length that we hit it that those percentages are not as good as the PGA TOUR. What's that percentage? Then where is my miss going to be and everything else? There are some places that, like that seventh hole, yeah, you don't want to find out.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned it briefly, but very quickly after this you'll soon be heading across the country to Bandon Dunes for the PPC. Have you been there before? What are your thoughts on the challenge there and those golf courses?

JUSTIN HICKS: I'm really excited to go see that property. I think of that place as another kind of Pebble Beach, but you've got, what, five, six courses there. I'm looking forward to this.

To me this would be at the top of my bucket list of places to go. I mean, right up there with Augusta or Pine Valley or Cyprus. Bandon is something in that league of places to go to.

Unfortunately, yesterday I finally looked at that weather forecast. I think, you know, most days it's going to be right around 50. Most days it's like chance of rain. I think there was one day where there was a little bit of a sun and a big cloud.

You know, it will kind of take me back probably a little bit more to growing up in Michigan playing in the fall and the spring with some of that weather. We're going to definitely have some layers on. Maybe wearing rain gear almost every day out there.

I think, you know, I always enjoy courses where you're literally on body of water like that, like an ocean or something. I don't know how you can't.

It will be a lot of fun. The courses sound like they're really cool and great, kind of linksy. A lot of bump and run kind of shots, which is similar to what we're doing this week too. It will just be maybe a little windier and definitely cooler.

Yeah, it will be a fun challenge and a whole other group of things to figure out. That's what I love about this every week. You kind of go out there, and it's like putting together a puzzle. You got to get together with your caddie and figure out what kind of shots you're going to need and maybe how to play certain holes and lines off the tee, and do we want to be short of this or long of that? Then you show up the next day, and it's blowing 30 miles an hour the other way. It's, like, okay.

Yeah, that's what makes it fun. I think that's what I love about this game.

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