

The Sentry

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii, USA
Plantation Course at Kapalua

Eric Cole

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Eric Cole, to the interview room here at The Sentry. Eric is making his first start here on Maui. It's just been announced you are the PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year and you received this beautiful Arnold Palmer Award here. I know that means an awful lot to you. If we can get some comments.

ERIC COLE: Yeah, very happy to be here in Kapalua to start the year off and it's a huge honor to win Rookie of the Year. It's an award in golf where you only get one chance to win it, which is a little bit unique. To win that and be voted by my peers is pretty incredible, and it's just a huge honor.

THE MODERATOR: The only rookie to advance to the BMW Championship, a couple runner-up finishes. If you can just recap the season for us.

ERIC COLE: Yeah, it was a long year. I got a lot of comments that I played a lot, but I was just so happy to be out on TOUR finally and any chance I had to compete on TOUR just felt like a huge privilege. I didn't get off to the best start missing some early cuts, but then kind of got it together a little bit and started to play really consistently and pretty well there the last half of the year and kind of capped it off with a pretty good fall, so it was awesome.

THE MODERATOR: I was going to mention that. Talk a little bit about your form coming into this week. You had four top-5 finishes in the FedExCup fall and just talk a little bit about your preparations for this week and the form you have.

ERIC COLE: The fall was awesome. To finish the year off like that felt great. The off-season's been good. Got married, so had a lot of fun and did a little bit of practice and a little bit of playing at home, so feel good for this week and really looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Not to date Eric, but you are the second oldest winner of the Rookie of the Year award, so congratulations.

ERIC COLE: Yeah, thank you. No, it's cool. Like I said, it's been a long road to get here and it's something I'm very proud of and honored to win.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Questions?

Q. You're sort of the avatar of this ambition. There's so many guys like you that were in your position chasing for years on the minor tours. Have guys reached out to you over the past year to try to glean some information of what kind of led to your ascent this past year?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, probably a little bit. I'm friends with a lot of guys that are still playing mini-tour golf and I talk to 'em a lot throughout the year. They have been kind of watching the success I've had this year and I think it's just a testament to how many good players there are and how deep the talent pool is in golf. The separating factors between having success and not are so thin, so definitely hopefully kind of shed some light on that.

Q. Was there anything that really took you by surprise once you kind of got here? Was the PGA TOUR what you thought it would be? What was that kind of assimilation process like?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, no, I had been out here a little bit. I caddied out here for Sam Saunders for six months or so, so I have been out on TOUR a little. It's where you want to be. It's the biggest stage in golf, and the best place to be playing, so I kind of knew what it was going to be, but to actually be out here as a player and experience it was really incredible.

THE MODERATOR: Having mentioned Sam Saunders, talk a little bit about what winning the Arnold Palmer Award means to you, and any recollections of spending time with Mr. Palmer you have.

ERIC COLE: Yeah, I was very lucky, Sam and I became friends probably when we were going into high school-ish and I was lucky to spend a lot of time around Mr. Palmer, just around Bay Hill and a little bit up in Latrobe as well. He was such an incredible guy to be around, and so many



great stories that he had. To win an award named after him is just a huge honor and it's something that is really special to me and it's kind of a cool connection, for sure.

Q. Now that you have some security going forward, have you chained your mindset going into this year? Obviously, you've been grinding for so long, are you still keeping that same mindset going forward?

ERIC COLE: Pretty similar mindset. I, one of the things being older rookie and taking so long to get out here is, a lot of younger guys try and change a lot when they get to the TOUR, and it's been a big goal of mine to change as little as possible, because the game that takes you to the TOUR, in my opinion, you can have a lot of success with that same game. So, as far as looking forward to next year, or this year, I should say, it's not going to be changing a whole lot of stuff, just keep doing what I've been doing and hopefully just keep it rolling.

Q. Are you one that makes your long goals or do you try to stay more focused on the round or the shot at hand?

ERIC COLE: I do a little of both. I make some goals like throughout the year or at the beginning of the year to try and accomplish throughout the year. Then, I also do some, like, maybe like smaller, more process-oriented goals to try and achieve the bigger ones. So, I do a little bit of both, I would say.

THE MODERATOR: Well, Eric, congratulations once again, couldn't be prouder of you, and best of luck in your sophomore season.

ERIC COLE: Perfect. Thank you very much.

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