

# Sony Open in Hawaii

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

## Russell Henley

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We will get started. We would like to welcome Russell Henley into the interview room, making his 11th career start at the Sony Open in Hawaii.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Wow.

THE MODERATOR: I know. 2013 champion. Russell, just talk a little about being back here and just one year removed from the playoff against Hideki.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, always love being here. A lot of great memories. It's just beautiful. Looks like we got another great week of weather, and I'm just always happy to come back here.

Thinking on last year, definitely stings, but I do take a lot of positives. I had a putt to win last year and I thought I hit a pretty good putt. I had a two-shot lead and shot 65 and lost in a playoff, so not very often that happens.

But, yeah, I'm excited to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Take us back to 2013 and what you remember about winning here.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I stayed down in Waikiki at the Holiday Inn Express. Got California Pizza Kitchen most nights. I just remember feeling really good about my game because I just won two of my last three tournaments on the Web Tour in the fall, and just felt excited to be here.

Felt comfortable immediately because it seemed like a course that I was familiar with, bermudagrass and wind and warm weather, kind of what I played a lot on in Charleston. Just had really comfortable pairing playing and Scott Langley, one of my buddies, and we both were playing well and just kind of rode the wave.

THE MODERATOR: You opened that week 63, 63. That's also what you opened this year at Mayakoba in winning, so just talk about getting this season started in such a good way and the state of your game.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, Mayakoba was awesome. Looking back, I feel like I just kept taking what I was struggling with from Jackson and the CJ Cup and was making adjustments in my game, and started to feel really good with my putter and felt really comfortable on this course.

Had played pretty well there a couple times but hadn't really got the result. One year I got kind of disqualified and had the confidence I could play well there; just hadn't put it together quite yet.

Just felt really comfortable.

**Q. We were talking last week and you mentioned that you ran into Hideki at Phoenix.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah.

**Q. Did you literally take his 3-wood out of his bag and pretend to break it over a knee?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yes, yes. He was standing there with his team. He's got a little team that follows him around. I don't have as many people on my team. I just walked up and said, hey, there, buddy, and grabbed his 3-wood and almost broke it over my knee. I mean, he played awesome. He shot 63, 63 on the weekend and it's just going to happen in golf where you lose.

But no hard feelings obviously. I was just messing around.

**Q. Do you think you guys will laugh about that for years to come and maybe have a little bit of a friendship over that?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I hope so. I really like Hideki. I've always enjoyed playing with Hideki, and I think his golf game is just beautiful to watch. You know, I always enjoy when I get to be paired with him, so it's just a fun memory to look back on.

More so for him, but still stings.

**Q. What do you have to adjust to the most coming**



## **from Kapalua to playing here at Waialae?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I mean, I think the two things that I notice about that place compared to here are off the tee it's much more difficult to hit fairways here; it's very easy to hit fairways there. So I'm at disadvantage in that regard.

In terms of speed control and knowing how fast and slow putts are, I did a terrible job last week, and I feel like this week just without the big valleys and the views and the -- your optics I guess are just off a little bit for me there in speed control and knowing what's up and downhill.

It's so much slower uphill there than it's going to be here. Greens will be a little quicker. So it's just a completely different course. This one is much more narrow, smaller targets. I like that kind of course better for sure.

**Q. I can't believe we haven't already asked you about Georgia, how enjoyable last night might have been. Maybe was it boring for you because you guys dominated?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I guess at the end of the first half when we kept scoring in the last couple minutes I just was like I can't believe -- like we already basically won. I think we were up 38-7 at the half and their one play that they scored was kind of like a weird broken coverage pass.

Just I guess for me it's just mainly surprising. I would love for us to win the national championship by 60 every year, but I'm just still kind of surprised. I mean, that was crazy.

**Q. Did you stay up and watch the whole thing?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**Q. The opposite would be maybe the tension that you might have felt playing Ohio State and how this unfolded.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah.

**Q. That went down to the wire, down to the wire in the year in and the whole thing. Couple seconds before the year ended.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I know. I mean, I thought they played a better looking game that game than we did. I thought that Stetson made a couple passes that weren't like him, just some sloppy plays, and they had a lot of receivers catching a lot of really -- running a lot of great routes.

We were having a really hard time guarding them in our

secondary, so I just -- yeah, I mean, just blown away we did it again. It's crazy.

**Q. Were you nervous over that game?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Oh, absolutely. I kind of had to accept that we were going to lose. We were losing by 12. I was like, these guys are looking good. We're kind of sloppy, struggling, not looking good for us.

I was kind of like, okay, we're going to lose, and we kept chipping away, and then I got real nervous the last five minutes of the game. Like it was nerve-wracking. Kind of feel like we stole one there for sure.

**Q. Going back to last year and of course winning here in 2013, you obviously like the golf course, and you mentioned maybe some things about it. Are there things in the design of the golf course or the way it sets up that you like here? Everyone likes the weather. You seem to like the golf course, how it fits your game.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I do. I think it puts a premium on ball control. I think it puts a premium on hitting the fairway, hitting good approach shots, making good decisions, good course management. I think it puts a premium on that. I think that's more my game when I'm playing well.

There are some weeks I don't have it and my course management is bad and I'm not able to control the ball and hit it straight, but typically when I'm on, playing well, ball control and having a cleaner card is kind of my game.

And so that's what I feel like this place is. If you can hit fairways and know which side of the fairway to miss it, if you miss it, things like that, I think that's kind of how I try to play golf.

So I feel like that and this course is. Much more so than last week.

**Q. Are you by my chance playing Phoenix?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I am playing Phoenix, yep.

**Q. What do you think about a tournament like that this year being held the same week as the Super Bowl, and would you ever -- I guess you could theoretically try to get to the game. Would you ever try to go on the Super Bowl?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I might. I mean, depends on the circumstances. This year my family will be with me that



week. I don't have any interest in really going. I would rather watch on TV.

Yeah, I mean, especially if the Falcons were playing or something like that.

**Q. You would go maybe?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I might go.

**Q. When was the last NFL game you are went to?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Oh, man, it's been a while. I haven't been to a Georgia game in a few years since I said kids. I think around college maybe I went to a Falcons game. I can't remember.

**Q. Were you able to get a place to stay for the week easily enough?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: In Phoenix?

**Q. Yeah.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Not easily. We found one on airbnb.

**Q. It's not easy this year.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: No, not easy. Snuck one in though.

THE MODERATOR: Russell, thank you for your time.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Thanks, guys.

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