

The American Express™

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La Quinta, California, USA

La Quinta Country Club

John Augenstein

Press Conference

MARK WILLIAMS: Thanks for joining us here at the American Express. You're a sponsor invitation this week. It's your first start as a professional, which is pretty exciting for you, no doubt. Just talk about what your expectations are this week and how different that might be compared to what you've done in amateur golf?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, I think that the main thing is just continue doing what I'm doing. My golf's been good enough to get me here and I think that if you're good enough to be here, then you're good enough to be successful here. And so I just want to keep controlling what I can control. I got a really good caddie on the bag that has a lot of experience that will kind of help me to do that and staying in the kind of present mindset. I feel like if I do those things, my game's in good shape and plenty good enough to be very successful out here.

MARK WILLIAMS: You mention your caddie. Who have you got this week and is this his first week with you?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yes, this is his first week with me. Brandon Parsons will be caddying for me. He's been on the TOUR for the last 12 years and I'm going to be going full time with him for hopefully a really long time.

MARK WILLIAMS: Brandon was formerly with J.B. Holmes, and there's a connection there, obviously, you're a Kentucky native. How did that sort of come about and how much have you, how much experience have you had with other Kentucky players on TOUR, such as J.B.

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, so I've known Brandon for a little while, and during COVID he came down to Nashville a little bit and would, he's close with my swing coach, Matt Killian, and we would just kind of practice and hang out some and I just kind of hit it off with Brandon. I knew him before that, but was able to kind of be around him a little bit then and we just stayed in contact and it just worked out well, everything kind of fell into place for me. I think that, unknowingly, with me turning pro after, at this kind of point in time, I think really helped to actually have him and it's gone well.



MARK WILLIAMS: Talk about that decision to turn pro. You were at Vanderbilt. Did you stay for an extra year due to COVID?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Extra semester, yeah.

MARK WILLIAMS: So after playing in the Masters and making the cut and finishing tied for 55th and that experience, was it just a natural things for you to do or was there that much more that went into it.

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: I think when I committed to come to school for that extra semester after COVID, it gave me the opportunity. It was, I was very transparent with the coach there and the team there. I love those guys and the coach, and so had such a strong relationship with him, and so they all knew that me coming back could be a year-long thing or a semester-long thing. We weren't for sure. It wasn't leaning one way or the other at any point in time. It just kind of felt like the right time to move on. I was ready to move on following my original senior year and ready to get going, so it was kind of tough to have to go back, but it wasn't tough because it was Vanderbilt. I loved Vanderbilt. I loved Coach Limbaugh. It was just when you move your mind over to something else and then you got to kind of snap back, it's, it can be tough. But I enjoyed the semester. It was right decision. I think it further prepared me for what I'm doing right now and I think it all worked out well.

MARK WILLIAMS: That's a pretty good learning experience at a young age. Just, before we take some questions, just ask you about your experience at the Masters. Can you just describe that and what that was like?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, I mean, I don't know how to describe it other than pretty perfect. It's, Augusta is the best place in the world. I know it was kind of different not having fans. I would have loved to have fans there and get the full experience. But it was great. I felt like I played well for part of the tournament, and it was kind of part of the learning experience for me, was I did some things on the weekend that you can't do in major championships and certainly not on the weekend at major championships, and so it was a good learning experience. I loved every second



of it. I can't wait to get back there again.

MARK WILLIAMS: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Congratulations on turning pro. I'm wondering about the road ahead for you and sort of what it looks like, how many sponsors exemptions you have, sort of going forward, or whether it's just sort of taking it day by day. Also, does it give you some hope that other guys have succeeded going this route before you?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, so at this point in time, I don't know where all my sponsor exemptions will come. I'm hoping -- somewhat expecting, but hoping to get the maximum of seven throughout the year and maybe throw in some top 10s here and there and get some more.

But I'm not sure where they're going to come quite yet. Just kind of, like you said, taking it day by day. I know in the near future I might have a few opportunities and hopefully can take advantage of those and, but at this point in time, I don't have any confirmation on anything well down the road.

And, yeah, second part of your question, I think seeing some young guys out here play well and some, a lot of them being guys that I've played a lot of golf with, been around a lot, yeah, I think that's somewhat -- you can take it however you want. I like to think that I'm going to focus on myself and what I can control and play as well as I can. If I do that, then I think I'm going to be in the spot I want to be in.

But I guess it's good to look around and see some guys my age, some guys that I played with also being successful doing what I'm kind of starting.

Q. Who in particular would you be referring to there who you've played a lot of golf with that have kind of taken this route?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Will Gordon.

Q. Have you beaten him a lot in matches?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: We played three years at Vanderbilt together, so, yeah, I mean, we always traded blows a little bit. But, yeah, he's a good friend and obviously he was able to kind of get his card coming back after COVID, or over the COVID break and get his card for this year. So he's out here this week, talked to him yesterday. We're going to try to grab dinner this week. So it's nice to see a familiar face. And but, yeah, he's a good guy. He's fun.

Q. And did he give you any words of advice?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: No, I mean, we're competitors, you know? We got to try to keep the secrets to ourselves, right?

Q. What would you say the scouting report of John Augenstein's golf game is, strengths, maybe areas to improve, that kind of thing?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, I think that, for me, things that I feel -- there's not anything that I don't feel good about, but I would say the strengths would probably be mid, short iron play, wedge play, and chipping. I think that I drive it very good and long and everything, and I feel like I putt, pressure putting, I tend to do pretty well at. But from a consistency standpoint, I think I need to putt a little better from 10 to 20 feet. Just trying to make -- and I'm working on that. I'm doing new stuff and working on some things with some guys to do better at that, of course. But I just essentially need to make one or two more a tournament, because I have that distance a lot with how well I hit it and the more opportunities I have and the more you miss those, it can kind of send you down a rabbit hole a little bit. So trying to just make a few of those, a few more of those each tournament and continue to give myself opportunities.

Q. Are you able to say who those putting instructors are?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, I'm just still working with Matt Killian, and he's my everything coach. And Hunter Stewart, who went to Vanderbilt and is doing kind of a statistical guideline on the PGA TOUR, working with some guys, I've started working with him. He's out here this week. And just kind of hearing his side and Matt's side, they both kind of work together. And then, of course, my caddie is also well versed in a lot of things. And so the people around me I trust, I'm still working with kind of the same people, and also trying to take what they say and make it my own. So I don't want to putt or do or practice or play like anybody else. I got to think what I think is good stuff and make it what it could be for me.

Q. Who has been some of the most influential people in your golf career and how would you say that they have influenced you or helped you?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, of course, when you're young your dad is, or for me, my dad was, he got me into the game and is still a good player to this day. So he taught me everything until I was about 12 and still continues to teach me and take care of me a lot, so I lean on him a lot. He's very, he's been very influential.

And then I think Matt Killian. I've worked with him for the



last 10 years and so, we're so close. We're, we work together, but we're also just best friends, and so I have such a good relationship with him. And then I would say Justin Thomas has been a big influence. He's such a good dude and has helped me along the way a lot to, just kind of learning new things, and whether it be on the golf course or just kind of how to handle things, and watching him and seeing his growth through where he was when he was 22 years old to now is really cool and he's been a big influence on me as well.

Q. You played a practice round with Tiger and JT at Winged Foot?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yes.

Q. What was the best story from that or what was the best experience from that practice round?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: I don't know. There wasn't, or there was a kind of a funny story. I was, like, we were teeing off on No. 11. It's kind of a short par 4 and it's a pretty tight fairway and I hit two to lay up and I hit a driver to see if I could hit a driver out of this bunker, and both Justin and Tiger laid up only and we were walking down the fairway, and I asked Tiger, you know, Do you, would you ever hit driver here? Do you think -- kind of threw him a couple numbers out, tried to act like I knew what I was talking about, I guess, and he just looked at me and was like, Why? And that's all he said. And I was like, I don't know, just thought driver might be a play here.

And he's like, No, just try to -- and then he explained himself. But for a second, it was funny because he just said Why and paused, and I was like, I don't know what's about to come next. But he said why and then he told me, you know, he's like, I'm just trying to hit that 245 yard number. I think that's the best way to play the hole. And he was, he was very nice.

But that kind of, for about a five-second silence pause, I was like, Oh, boy, this isn't, this isn't what I was planning on, but...

Q. Do you think you'll be more nervous on the first tee Thursday for the first shot of your pro career or the first tee of that practice round?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: That practice round, for sure. That practice round, for sure. I mean, I've played with Justin a ton of times. He doesn't make me nervous at all. But, yeah, I mean, Tiger being my childhood idol, watching him play, I mean, he's one of the biggest reasons the guys my age played, loved golf, thought it was cool, and continued working at it, was because of him. So, yeah, I looked up to

him my whole life, of course and so, yeah, that was, he's the only guy I've ever met that I was like, you know, that's pretty cool, like, that's, wow. That's kind of a little more of a wow factor, I think, than a lot of guys. But he was very nice, very approachable and so it was a really cool experience.

Q. Who is caddying for you this week?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Brandon Parsons. He's been out here 12 years and J.B. Holmes' bag.

Q. Switching over from what you were just talking about, you played with Rory at Augusta National and how much were you encouraged that, hey, my game isn't that far off from his and then how much were you like, oh, wait a second, he's doing this a little differently and I got to tighten it up here?

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, I think that I was encouraged all week. I didn't see anything, there's only a couple things that I saw in anybody that I was like, man, that's not something that I'm doing really well at this point. But that also, that's them, that's, and this is me. So everybody's game looks different, Rory hits different shots than Tiger and Tiger hits different shots than Brooks and so on, so forth. Everybody's going to do their thing differently. I think the most important thing is trusting it and believing that it's good enough to win out here. So I think that the thing that I saw from Rory is, I played with him on Saturday and Saturday at Augusta I felt like he just kind of picked apart -- I think that comes from experience -- he just kind of picked apart the course so well. He was aggressive where he could be aggressive, and he had a chance to kind of lose his round on 13, he made bogey, a 3-putt bogey on 13, which is the easiest par-5 on the course and he handled it well. Of courses frustrated and maybe he said a few things to himself and walked off and that's fine and then went to the next hole and it had never happened and he ended up making a couple more birdies coming in. So I think just seeing him kind of understanding that you have to kind of move on from that 13th hole when he's got it going, I think he was 5 under through 12, so I mean he was really rolling and trying to shoot up the leaderboard to get in contention. To see him make bogey on the easiest hole, he could have easily -- it could have thrown his round off a little bit. I'm not saying -- nobody out here ever gives up but it could throw the momentum of your round off and to see him kind of just get it back within the stakes and keep moving was I think the one of the biggest things that I learned from him, probably.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right, thanks, John. Before we let you go, just kind of get to know you moment, did you play other sports at college, just I don't want to put you on the

spot, is there anything that, one thing maybe that we don't know about you that you can share about you with us that, things that you do away from golf or something of interest none-golf related.

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Yeah, I mean when I'm away from golf I pretty much just love to spend time with people, friends, family, girlfriend, I love sports, all sports. I watch, I can watch sports all day, doesn't matter. So I would just say there's not any like hidden talent I have or anything like that, but I love watching sports and just when I'm not playing golf, I certainly like to take it easy, I don't do too much.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right, well, we appreciate your time with us and good luck this week in your professional debut and all the best for the future.

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: Thank you.

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