

The American Express

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La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Tony Finau

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome American Express ambassador Tony Finau to the interview room. Tony, making your eighth start here of the tournament, we'll just start off with some comments on what it's like to be back for your second start of the season.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, thanks. It's nice to be back in ... Indio? Is that where we are?

THE MODERATOR: La Quinta.

TONY FINAU: La Quinta. Sorry. Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, we're all close (laughing). It's nice to be back. PGA West is a place that I've had a lot of great memories over the years, some success, and golf courses that I really enjoy, so it's really nice to be back and making my second start in 2025.

THE MODERATOR: You've been able to get out and practice on the course. What are you seeing out there, and a week where you have to go low and make birdies, is that something you like for your game?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I like making birdies, I think it suits me well. The first couple tournaments on the PGA TOUR, first few tournaments are that way, and then you get into some golf courses that aren't that way, but for early in the season I do like the shoot-out, and having to make birdies.

Again, I've had some pretty good success over the years, and a couple chances to win in the past, and looking to just build on that and give myself a chance to win this week on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Second start of the season after starting at the Sentry. You're typically someone who likes to set goals, what are some of the goals you have for the 2025 season?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, my main goal for 2025 is to physically just be healthier than I was the last couple years. I think I've kind of hid it under the rug a little bit, but as some people have followed a little bit I did have some knee



issues over the off-season that I had to tend to. My biggest goal is just making sure that I'm healthy and strong physically, and I think that that will bear some good fruit on the golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Just a little bit, going off that, what are some of the stuff that you've been doing to help in the recovery with your knee to be prepared?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, well, the rehab's been a lot tougher process than really anything that I've done with my body. I haven't been apt to injury throughout my career, so this is kind of the first time that I've had to go through any type of surgery or anything like that. So the rehab process has been grueling and tough, but one that I've been more than willing to do, and will continue to, to make sure that I'm as healthy as I can be and physically strong as I can be as I move forward in my career.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. With that we're going to open it up for questions.

Q. So, are you a 100 percent or are you 90 percent healthy?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I'm not going to put a number on it. I'm not a hundred percent, but I don't know if anybody plays at a hundred percent really ever in the world of sports. There's always some nagging injury, it seems like, for everybody. Coming off this injury, I feel really good, I had a nice start, I feel like, at the Sentry, with how my body felt and how my game felt, and I'm looking forward to just building on that this week.

Q. When you come here, Justin was in here a minute ago and was talking about this is offensive golf, you have to be on the offensive. Do you look at it, like, Okay, there's golf courses I have to take advantage of, or holes I have to take advantage of, or is it let's just make birdie every hole?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, there's definitely I think holes in the back of your mind that you feel like you have to take advantage of, but because you know at the end of the week that you just have to put together a lot of birdies, I feel like a big thing for me is just be patient in these types of tournaments. It's easy to make two or three pars in a



row and feel like you're starting to fall behind because, quite frankly, you are (laughing), but a run can come at any time on any golf course here. You can go through six, seven holes where you're even, maybe 1-under, and you can go through the next seven holes and make five birdies and an eagle. So it can happen anywhere, on any of the three golf course, so I try to tell myself be patient through stretches maybe that you're not playing and scoring as well as you should be. But they come in flurries out here, you're going to see that throughout the week. You're going to have guys make six birdies in a row, go through a three-hole stretch of 4-under, you know, that's what happens on these types of courses and you have to just be patient enough to wait for when it happens for you.

Q. You've played here quite a bit, which means you've played the Stadium Course quite a bit.

TONY FINAU: Yeah.

Q. Have you noticed the changes over there?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, yeah, I definitely noticed the changes. Again, I've played the golf course a lot, even well before I got on TOUR I had a chance to play a couple tournaments out here, we had Q-School here where I got through in 2013, so great memories here. But I remember how the golf course was and now it presents a little bit of a different challenge. The greens are a little bit bigger, seems like they have added some slope to them, and since they're new they're going to be extremely firm, that's the biggest thing that I've noticed this year compared to the years in the past. Balls are bouncing, like on 17, I played 17 downwind yesterday, and it was hard to hold the green. If you weren't landing it in the first 10 yards of that green downwind, you aren't holding the green, it was going in the water. So it's going to present some challenges this year that I think we haven't dealt with years in the past. We've definitely had some years where it has been firm, but this is going to be the firmest that we have seen the Stadium golf course maybe ever, because of the new greens.

Q. 17, not to put a good story on it, but I hit a shot on media day into the dead of the middle of that green and we never found it.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, yeah, I'm sure it bounced right into the water. Yeah, that's going to be the biggest challenge with the new greens is just that the ball's going to bounce. On the par-3s, that's an extreme challenge on Stadium when you have to cover water and also stop it before you hit it into the water behind the green. So that's the case on 6, it's the case on 13, and also the case on 17. So those holes, I think you'll have guys hit great shots, but you'll also see a lot of guys hit it in the water because of the bounce.

Q. When you see scoring the way it is at the start of the year, 35-under at Sentry, Dunlap was 29-under here last year which was a record for the 72-hole format, is that better players, better clubs, better mindsets going in than it was say five years ago, six years ago, when the scoring might not have been quite as low?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I feel like I've been on the TOUR long enough, I just started my 11th season, and I've seen the shift in the game of golf just in that guys are more aggressive off the tee. Data, we've taken advantage of data, I feel like, over the years, to where basically it just tells us the closer you are to the green, the better your chances of making a birdie. Guys are using that to their advantage. A lot of guys, the best club in the bag for most guys on the PGA TOUR is their driver, and we're trying to see where can we use that as often as possible. I think it's starting to, you're starting to see that with the amount of birdies that are being made, but, yeah, I think it alludes to a lot of things that you mentioned.

There's young guys that are hungry. Nobody's really, I don't see anybody that's really scared to win. I don't think that was always the case, that hasn't always been the case on the PGA TOUR. You got a lot of incredible athletes, incredible players that play the game and want to win, and we know that it takes an incredible four days to put together to win a golf tournament out here.

Q. There's a 17-year-old kid playing at La Quinta tomorrow as a pro, Blades Brown. Dunlap was in here yesterday and he said his advice to a kid like that would be just take everything as a learning experience.

TONY FINAU: Yeah.

Q. Is that kind of what you would say to the kid, or would you say, Go to college?

TONY FINAU: (Laughing). Well, if I did say, Go to college, I would be a hypocrite, because I didn't go to college (laughing). So, being someone that turned pro at 17 years old, which I did, I don't have, I didn't have the talent or I guess I didn't have the skills that this kid has, from what I've seen. But, yeah, I would say the same thing, you know, it's an incredible advantage, I feel like, to be young and playing on the PGA TOUR at 17 years old, having an opportunity to play. It was an advantage I feel like for me, I was able to see the best players in the world up close, and I went through years where, some of the mini-tour years, where I struggled, but I knew where my game could get, and I knew where I needed to get because I had already had the experience of playing with some of the best players in the world. So that experience is going to be

invaluable to him, no matter how he does this week, and I wish him the best, and I'm sure we're going to see a lot of great golf from him in the future.

THE MODERATOR: All right, perfect. Thank you, Tony.

TONY FINAU: Thanks.

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