

Cognizant Classic

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA
PGA National Champion Course

Chris Kirk

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome our defending champion, Chris Kirk, here to the interview room at the Cognizant Classic at the Palm Beaches. Chris, maybe some opening comments on coming back to the property one year later.

CHRIS KIRK: Sure, yeah. Amazing just coming back on property and a lot of good memories from last year for sure but also a place that I've loved coming for years and years.

THE MODERATOR: Coming into the week fourth in the FedExCup, obviously the big win at Sentry. Take us back a few months to the week of Maui and this year so far.

CHRIS KIRK: Yeah, an unbelievable week in Maui at the Sentry for sure. To start off the year like that is just wild. I've felt good about my game for a while now, but that's certainly not exact I what you expect to do your first week out after being a home for a little while. But I think that my win here last year definitely helped me a lot on Sunday to be more comfortable where I was at and just to be able to stay aggressive and take it one step at a time, and definitely kind of gave me the belief that after not winning for a long time, it felt like this was where I was supposed to be.

Q. Have you played a practice round yet or been out there?

CHRIS KIRK: No, I just flew in this morning. I'll be down here in Florida for three weeks, so was trying to get as much time at home with the family as I could. I'm looking forward to -- I'm probably going to play the front nine this afternoon.

Q. What are some of the flashbulb memories that come back, some of the main things you remember from last year's win, whether it's obviously hoisting the trophy has got to be one of them, but as far as being on the course and the challenge of this course?

CHRIS KIRK: Yeah, the playoff is obviously a pretty easy one to remember. That wedge shot is one that I'll

remember for the rest of my life, no doubt. But really the whole final round I was playing decent, making some birdies, hitting some good shots, but definitely made more mistakes than I would have liked on Sunday.

But this is just a golf course that lends itself to that. It's definitely one where any shot that's a teeny bit off has a possibility of getting punished really heavily.

I was able to really stay in it mentally and kind of knew that I always had a shot, even after making bogey on the 72nd hole. I got a little bit fortunate to be able to be in a playoff and get it done.

This course is always one that is an ultimate test of every aspect of your game. I just remember that feeling of source of perseverance on Sunday.

Q. They changed the 10th hole from a par-4 to a par-5. Wanted to know how that changes playing the hole. Is there any approach difference?

CHRIS KIRK: I don't think it'll be much of a change, really. I'm assuming they're going to use that back tee box that we have not used previously. I don't know what the carry is on that bunker on the right now. That would be the only strategic difference.

In years past as a par-4, pretty much everybody has been able to just hit it over that right bunker, which makes it a much shorter holes. Not necessarily how the hole was designed to be played I don't think.

If we're having to play left, it's still going to be -- scoring average probably won't be a whole lot different, but I guess mentally it may be nice to have a hole that's in your mind a little bit easier, even though it's the same exact hole pretty much before you get into that stretch on the back nine.

Q. Talk a little bit about your early season success. You played offhanded pretty much the entire off-season. I wanted to get your thoughts on how that's helping you mentally or what it's done for your game?



CHRIS KIRK: I think it's been a little bit overplayed about how much that has potentially helped me.

Yeah, I played nine holes I think four times and 18 once left-handed. I didn't practice any or anything like that. It was just something that I was doing purely just for fun.

I wanted to give my body a little bit of a break from swinging right-handed. We put in so many thousands upon thousands of reps, it just will kind of wear you down a little bit. I was spending a lot of time in the gym and going to play lefty occasionally. It's just purely for fun.

If I go play a round of golf at home right-handed, what do I have to do to impress myself? I hold myself to a pretty high standard, as all of us do. But you're playing left-handed and you make two pars in a row and you're jacked. It's just a totally different feeling where your expectations are so much lower. You make a 15-footer or pipe a drive down the middle of the fairway, and it's just like -- it's almost like re-learning the game again a little bit. It's exciting.

Q. Does that reignite the passion a little bit, something you don't get to do when you're playing right-handed because of how skilled you are?

CHRIS KIRK: Maybe so. Like I said, I don't think it relates to my right-handed game nearly as much as people want it to. It's just for fun.

Q. Where did you put the trophy that you won here?

CHRIS KIRK: Next to the other ones.

Q. In a time where once you turn pro, you're really playing for money, legacy, World Rankings, what is the value of a trophy when you're at this stage?

CHRIS KIRK: It's definitely a recognition of all the hard work for sure. This is a game where your overwhelming successes like that are few and far between. I don't care how good you are. Even if you're a top 5 player in the world and you win twice in a season, that's an incredible year.

My mindset now at this stage of my career is I just want to play as well as I can for as long as I can. I want to be a relevant player in this game, and I want to see how good I can be. That's sort of always what we're chasing. I'm not necessarily chasing, oh, I want to be the No. 1 player in the world and win 10 majors. I just want to see what is the best version of myself and try to enjoy the work that I've put in to try to achieve that goal as much as possible, whatever that may end up looking like.

Q. When you look at that trophy, that's what you see as the journey that you endured to hoist it?

CHRIS KIRK: Absolutely. Absolutely. If you play this game just to win tournaments or just for those really great weeks, you're going to be disappointed a lot of the time.

I play it for the challenge that it is. I love how difficult this game is. I love the work that it takes to try to be one of the best players in the world. Every aspect of it, I really enjoy that.

Q. How tuned into the business side of things are you with the PGA TOUR Enterprises and all that nitty-gritty?

CHRIS KIRK: Not very. I read the emails, but that's about it. I've had the approach for the last few years that it's not really something that I have a huge amount of influence on. I could have a small influence on it, sure, but I also feel like I'm a professional golfer, I'm not somebody who has a ton of experience in the business world. I'm not someone who has any experience in the business world.

I just sort of look at it as I'm going to put my trust in the people that are running our tour and hope that they do the best thing by us, and no matter what the outcome is of any of these decisions or agreements or what the TOUR changes to or what it looked like last year, this year, next year, the better I play, the better off I'll be. That will never change. That's my focus.

Q. Has that trust been tested recently? Has it been restored? What is the level of trust that you have for the leadership now?

CHRIS KIRK: I think that they're -- I've always felt like they're doing the best they can.

Q. Is that good enough? There's effort and then there's results; are you pleased where things are going?

CHRIS KIRK: They're doing a hell of a lot better than I would. I'll say that. Yeah, I have trust in them, and I think that everybody that's running the TOUR has our best intentions in mind, and I think they're doing everything they can to further the game, to further our tour. There's been some really, really difficult things thrown at them over the last few years, and I think they're doing a great job with a really, really hard situation that, like I said, they're doing a whole lot better than you or I would, I think.

Q. Can you articulate how the equity will work for a

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player like yourself?

CHRIS KIRK: I've read over some of the basic models, but I don't have a comprehensive enough understanding of it to really try to explain it right now.

Q. Who can you go to to ask those questions if you really wanted to get granular with it?

CHRIS KIRK: Anybody on the player relations team, or I can call Jay's cell phone if I want to. He answers when I call him.

Like I said, I'm very focused on what my job is, not what their job is.

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