

Cognizant Classic

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Ryan Palmer

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Ryan Palmer to the interview room at the Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches. This is a special day. Ryan is going to be making his 500th career PGA TOUR start this year, the first of three players expected to reach that milestone in the coming weeks. Congratulations on your achievement. How does it feel to get a sponsor exemption this week knowing that you're going to be making your 500th start?

RYAN PALMER: Oh, man, just to be 500 is wild to think about it. I can't thank Joie and their team here for giving me the consideration. I've had a lot of -- I've spent a lot of time here in this area. I think this is my 17th year out of 20, 21. I've spent a lot of time here, had some success. I couldn't have thought of a better place to spend my 500th event on TOUR than the Cognizant Classic this week.

Again, Joie, thank you to you and your team and everybody who helped this happen. I put on a good campaign for it to make it happen.

What a special week for sure. It's hard to believe in '04 I would be sitting here talking about this, playing 500 PGA TOUR golf tournaments. What a riot and what a blessing. Thankfully my wife is here this week to hang out a few days, a little break. Hoping for a good week.

Q. Looking back over your career, can you pinpoint what you're most proud of over the last years?

RYAN PALMER: If I look back, there's not one moment. Obviously I'll never forget the moment of all places Walt Disney World when I got my first win. They do say where dreams come true, so to happen there, my first win.

The one thing I'm most proud of is for 20 straight years, I've never really changed the way I've played the game. I've always done it my way. Never chased swings, equipment deals. Always kind of played the game the way I felt I wanted to play.

I always go back to I did it my way, and that's what I'm most proud of, and I've put the right team around me, and

that's been the most important, and it's been a blessing for sure.

21 years of playing professional golf, I'm proud of that for sure. Still waiting to wake up from that dream.

Q. This is your 17th start. You've had some success, been in a playoff here. Just share some thoughts about being back at PGA National and the Cognizant Classic.

RYAN PALMER: I've always circled this event on my calendar. I love the golf course. Today's game has gotten so big on hitting it long. It's hit driver everywhere and make a putt. This golf course is so unique because it's so demanding. It takes every aspect of your game. You've got to play golf here. That's what makes it so much fun for me is par is a good score.

All of the funny part is, every time I look on TV, when I'm watching after the morning round, they always bring up the total over par at the Bear Trap, and I think I'm leading it. That's the negative part about it.

I just enjoy playing this golf course, and I love what it brings, the challenges, and the moments I've had, it's been a demanding week, and I've been proud of being in the middle of losing in a playoff a few years back, but I've had some close calls, as well.

Just always enjoy coming here.

ZACH JOHNSON: Outside of your wife, Dr. Jennifer Palmer, who do you owe your success to, and why is it Zach Johnson? Number two, I read something that you're donating your earnings this week to the Zach Johnson Foundation, which is really kind. I just want to say congratulations. You did it the right way.

RYAN PALMER: That means a lot. We go back for sure. I'll never forget the fun party at the Nationwide Tour Championship, the Korn Ferry TOUR Championship now. We were rookies in '04 together, so I know I'll be here when you celebrate yours. We tried to do it together, to play our 500th together. Thanks, Zach. Sorry about the



donation part. We'll discuss that later.

I'll tell you what, it's been a blessing to be 21 years on TOUR and be close and share it and spend the time with guys like Zach. Obviously what he's done with his career, it's unbelievable. I'm just proud I'm a small part of it.

I owe a lot to a lot of people, to answer that question, I guess. I guess I owe a little bit to you. Actually we're going to be partners maybe in Zurich, so I'm waiting for him to -- I'm on a short list, he said. We're still discussing.

No, a lot of people that I owe a lot to. 20 years of it, from my first coach Neil Wilkins to Randy Smith who has been with us since '08. I was blessed and fortunate to have one of my dearest friends caddie for me for 20 plus years in James Edmundson. He'd been with me since day one of the Korn Ferry TOUR, Nationwide back then.

The time I've spent now having one of my closest friends handle everything for me, Mike Chisum, what he's done for me in my career and my foundation and everything, but it all goes down to one person who's suffered and sacrificed more than anybody in Jennifer. She married a golfer and didn't know what she was getting into. I wouldn't be here without her and what she's done at home with our kids, Mason and Maddy 25 plus weeks a year.

You can't play this game and have success without somebody like that at home.

Q. You mentioned your first win at Disney. I'm curious if there's any kind of anecdote from that week, maybe how you celebrated. Did you take the trophy on It's a Small World? What do you remember from that celebration? And what would you tell yourself then now?

RYAN PALMER: For some reason I remember a lot about that week. We had dinner that night at Magic Kingdom. I had a Turkey leg. I was six back. Vijay had won nine times that year. I'd kept my card a few weeks earlier in Mississippi, in Jackson. So it was kind of a fun week to realize we were at Disney World.

Woke up the next morning on a Sunday and ended up shooting 10-under par and sat around for almost two hours watching the guys finish.

Didn't really do anything crazy after that. It was just such a surreal moment, to sit there and you're a rookie on the PGA TOUR and now you're a TOUR winner after 33 weeks of grind and you win your 32nd event I think is what -- 32nd or 33rd event that week.

Yeah, just one of those moments like did it really happen.

What would I tell myself back then? There's a lot. Learn to get longer, the way the kids are hitting it today for sure. I don't know. That's a good question.

Back then, I didn't know how important playing certain weeks and resting. I spent two or three years straight playing 34, 32 weeks in a row -- not a row but in a year and just grinding and wearing yourself down. Probably had to handle the road life a little different. Then just learn to play the courses that you know you can compete on. That's what I've learned the last six weeks where I've played my best golf. I've played less golf and played the courses that suit me.

It's hard to learn as a rookie, but just stay with the physical fitness side of it. It wasn't as big back in '04. Jason Bohn and I talk about it all the time. He's on the Champions TOUR playing rounds of golf, going in the locker room, having a beer or two with the guys, and everybody out here is in the trailer working out. Back then we were in the locker room having a beer after rounds. He's like, get ready to come out here and have some fun. It's a different world now.

Yeah, there's a lot of things that -- I wouldn't change anything. There's some things I would change, obviously, how I handled stuff on the road in preparation for tournaments and with body and stuff like that, but there's a lot of things that you can do different and make yourself better, but I still think I did things my way playing the game of golf, and I'm proud of that.

Q. When you first qualified for the TOUR, what were some of the goals you set way back then?

RYAN PALMER: Well, let's see. In '04 we started off in Sony to keep your card. That was the No. 1 goal. Finish Top 125 on the Money List. Obviously every year your goal is to win, but when you're a rookie on TOUR, all you want to do is keep your card. That's the No. 1. I never would have thought in a million years I'd win a golf tournament and play my first Masters in '05. My career fast forwarded, took a pretty big leap early, and very fortunate it happened that way.

Each year when you tee off, even today, my first -- the No. 1 goal is to win, obviously, but the No. 1 goal is to make sure you solidify yourself, keep your card, finish Top 125. Made the Playoffs now, but that's all that mattered back then was let's just try to be back here next year.

Q. You mentioned you're really proud of playing golf your way. You've obviously been a really good ball

striker throughout your TOUR career. I'm just wondering if there's anything specific that you've figured out along the way about your own game or found yourself going back to that helps keep you in this really good ball-striking sort of position?

RYAN PALMER: I wish I could find what I was doing so well ball-striking as of late.

A lot of it is just when I'm at home, I practice with a purpose. When I go to the range with Randy or if I go hit balls by myself, I'll make sure I'm going there with the drive and desire to work. If I don't feel like I'm ready to practice and I'm just kind of tired or my mind of thinking of something else, I'll go home. I don't go practice or hit balls because I feel like I have to or I need to. That's one thing, I never think of this as a job, and that's kind of what drove me even more.

I'm very fortunate and blessed financially with what we were able to make, but to me that was always a bonus.

What drove me is the desire to hit shots and hit over and over again and every time I hit a good one I want to do it again, I want to do it again. Today I still love to go work at it. If I feel like I don't want to work at it, I'll go home. I don't want to go practice because I feel like I have to.

The day I treat this as I have to go practice because it's my job, that doesn't drive me. I think that's what's kept me mentally and physically strong with my swing and the work Randy Smith and I have put into it.

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