

# Cognizant Classic

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

## Ryan Gerard

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Ryan Gerard here to the media center at the Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches. A bit of a home game for you. What are you looking forward to this week at the Cognizant Classic?

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, I'm looking forward to sleeping in my own bed. It's always a nice feeling waking up in your house, being comfortable, kind of rolling up to the course.

The course is in great shape. It's playing a lot more difficult this year than it did last year. Hopefully some good weather and a couple birdies out there.

**Q. You've had a great start to the season, the highest ranked player in the field in the World Rankings as well as the FedExCup standings. Can you talk about what's working for you so far through the first five events, I believe?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, did a lot of work in the off-season on my putting. Found a couple of things that I think are sustainable in the long-term here hopefully. Just been working hard, been playing a lot of golf. Didn't really feel like I had a lot of rust coming into the early part of the season. I've been playing a lot kind of through what a lot of guys took as off-seasons.

Just kind of keeping that momentum rolling.

**Q. 2023 here was a big one for you, helped you get special temporary membership on TOUR. When you reflect back on that week, what are some of the first memories that come to mind?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, it's kind of a whirlwind. Welcome-to-the-big-stage kind of thing. It was my first PGA TOUR event. Mondayed in, played 18 holes on Tuesday, kind of showed up Thursday with low expectations. Played really, really good and didn't really know what was going on just because I was kind of in my own little world out there.

But I think the big thing was rolling up to the 17th hole on

Saturday in the last group with a million people it felt like just yelling and screaming and having a good time and hitting a good shot there and finishing out the week pretty strong.

A lot of great memories around this place from junior golf and professional golf, and yeah, excited to be here.

**Q. Your journey last fall to get into the Masters, it was very well documented. Just talk about that part and those stages you have to go through and now you're kind of reaching the pinnacle. What is that like to have to grind like that to get to each step?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, I think there's no easy route in this profession. You kind of have to go earn every single step. I kind of feel like that's something that I was raised on from my parents and kind of put into my DNA through my coaches, college coaches and teammates kind of growing up. It's not going to be easy. It's not going to be a walk in the park. You're going to go earn it, and there's a lot of really good players who want it really badly. If you want to compete with those guys, you're going to have to want it just as bad, if not more, and be willing to put in the effort.

I think kind of going from junior golf, working hard, trying to get my way into college, getting to college, being the smallest fish in a big pond, figuring out how to score on more difficult courses, learning to be a more complete individual on and off the golf course, and then turning pro, starting all over again, lowest rung, working your way up, finding success at each level, gaining experience, and then making it to the pinnacle of golf here on the PGA TOUR, it just teaches you resilience. It teaches you a lot of preparation and time management skills.

But you have to want it because if you don't want it, there's a million other guys sitting at home this week not playing that want it just as bad if not more, and they would trade anything to be in the spot that I am right now.

If I'm not willing to put in the work, someone else will. There's a limited amount of jobs up here for a reason, and someone will come take mine.

**Q. Along those lines, what was it like when the**



... when all is said, we're done.®

**envelope came, and just when you look back at what you did over those couple of weeks, 20,000 miles or whatever it was, did you question your sanity at any point along the way? How do you process it all now?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, Augusta National must have the best deal with UPS ever. That thing got there almost before I got back from Africa. They know how to get a package to you quickly.

I would say it was kind of an insane journey, right? It was almost halfway across the world, if not exactly halfway, and I went there thinking I needed like a top 15, and it turns out I needed a two-way T4.

I kind of just rolled with it. I had a buddy, my roommate, John Patrick Burke, he caddies for Tyler Duncan on the Korn Ferry TOUR, he came with me, so it was kind of a -- we were in it together kind of situation, and we just tried to make the most of it.

We stopped in Rome for seven hours on the way there because that was the only, like, feasible way to get there, and we just didn't sit in the airport, we rolled around downtown Rome and saw the Coliseum and ate pizza and stuff.

We did it a little bit unconventionally, but once we got on property, got there Monday, it turned into a business trip. We were there for a reason. Didn't fly all the way over there just to make a fool of myself and play bad.

There was an objective in mind. There was a lot of work being put in from both a keeping your body healthy and trying to stay loose standpoint, on a 29-hour travel day.

But beforehand, being prepared, going to sleep at weird times, trying to make sure you're on the right time zone when you get there, a lot of golf balls, putting on fringes to try and mimic certain conditions. There was a lot of preparation involved, so when I got there I felt comfortable and ready.

**Q. You said a few minutes ago you thought the course was playing more difficult this year. Give us some examples how you think it's more difficult.**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, there's a new tee box on 2. There's a new tee box on 18. The 17th, behind the 17th green is a little bit more severe with some thicker rough. The rough is up. I know they topped it probably at three inches this morning, but it's lush.

There's been a lot of cold weather here recently, so all the Bermuda is a little dormant, and the greens are really

running probably faster and significantly firmer than they've been in the last few years. That ryegrass that's overseeded has really taken hold.

It's firm throughout, especially in the rough, but it's juicy. It's not a cakewalk. You're not going to be able to just hit it in there and hack it out. Most of the time you're going to have to hit good shots, and if you're hitting a shot from that thick stuff into the green, you have to be very precise because there's an opportunity for it to just start bounding over the back of the green.

**Q. You were once quoted as saying, I've been told my swing looks like Daniel Berger and Jon Rahm had an aneurysm on the downswing. So far this season you're eighth on TOUR in strokes gained approach. Can you talk about your swing DNA and how you've found so much confidence and success?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, I don't really watch my swing on video a lot. I know it's not the most visually appealing thing in the world. I don't even like looking at it sometimes. But I think it's just one of those things that you get comfortable being yourself and you get comfortable with it working.

Growing up there were people that were like, you've got to change, you've got to change. I just always did it the way that I felt most comfortable, and I felt like I could hit the ball out of the center of the face.

I spoke on it a little bit earlier, but when you're working your way up the ranks, you're basically doing whatever you can to find an edge, find a shot here or a shot there. The way my swing works is it's very consistent for me. It might not be for other people, but for me, I feel like I can repeat the same motion a lot and hit the ball center of the face most of the time. That's brought me a lot of success growing up.

There's no need to reinvent the wheel when you get to the PGA TOUR. It's about fine tuning. It's about continuing to get better, believing in what got you here, because if you start reinventing the wheel and doing wholesale changes, that can lead down a rabbit hole of lack of confidence and bad results, and then you're just kind of spiraling, and it's hard to put it back together.

**Q. How do you not fall into that trap that so many fall into with TrackMan data and trying to min-max your talent?**

RYAN GERARD: I think TrackMan is a great tool. You can use it to fit golf clubs. You can use it to make sure your numbers are going where they should be. Sometimes it'll even tell you if a club is broken, like if you've cracked the face on a driver.

I'm a very feel-oriented player. I feel like I try and hit shots. I don't try and play math. TrackMan, obviously I have one, but I use it in a way that's basically conducive to me hitting a number or hitting a golf shot, and then I would go look at it for the distance or the height or something if I'm looking at something in particular.

**Q. You talked about working on your putting a lot over the off-season. This week, of course, as a native North Carolinian, current South Florida resident, you're back on Bermudagrass greens. I know you played well on the West Coast, but speak about the inherent comfort you feel this week as opposed to on a poa annua surface at Riviera or a Torrey Pines?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, poa annua is a weird grass. It's very much an attitude grass. You have to have the attitude that it's going to go in the hole, otherwise you're doomed from the start.

I feel like being on Bermuda, I live 10 minutes down the road, so I feel very comfortable on it. Growing up kind of in the southeast, you play on it a lot, so it's a very comfortable feeling.

But there is a certain part of you that's like, hey, you can't just fake it around here. You have to step up and hit the ball on line. On poa annua you can kind of get away with a couple things in certain places. Some days you feel like you hit good putts all day and they're just bouncing around.

The biggest change is switching grasses and switching feels and trusting that when you get here and you do your routines and you reset and you do your drills that you're not freaking out because it feels so much different or it's different speed or ball is taking the grain and breaking off the planet. It's about recalibrating and trusting weeks and months of work and process and just trying to build on that instead of changing a bunch of stuff.

**Q. Back in 2023 when you came so close to getting that status, can you reflect on just that season as a whole and how that season shaped the player you are today?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, I mean, candidly, I wasn't ready to be a PGA TOUR player in 2023. I just kind of played good and found myself there. I wasn't consistent enough. I wasn't ready for that amount of travel, that amount of pressure, that amount of responsibility.

I felt like it taught me a lot. Sometimes you only get really one shot at it, and I'm glad I went back to the Korn Ferry TOUR and got a second shot at it.

I qualified for a tournament and played great and then played good the next week, and then I was basically a PGA TOUR member. At 23 years old, that's kind of something I was not expecting for another year or so.

I wasn't ready. But it taught me how to be ready. So I'm grateful that I had the opportunity to kind of basically try it out for 20 events and then go back down a level to the Korn Ferry TOUR, play golf, get more consistent, gain more experience, and then when I came back up last year, I had a lot of momentum, but I also had a lot of kind of good experiences and bad experiences to draw on.

I knew what I was getting myself into. I felt like I could put my best foot forward and kind of go from there.

**Q. When you're home, where do you play and practice mostly, and are there any peers you play and practice with more than others?**

RYAN GERARD: Yeah, I'm a member at Hobe Sound Golf Club in Hobe Sound. I'm a member at Panther National down the street here. I play a lot with some Korn Ferry TOUR guys. I live with a guy named Austin Hitt. He's a Korn Ferry TOUR member this year. I play a lot with a guy named Davis Lamb. He's a Korn Ferry TOUR guy. Andrew Kozan, I play a lot with him. He's on Korn Ferry. I play a lot with some of those guys just because they're a similar age group, and I've grown up with them.

I'll play with whoever wants to play, but those are kind of my guys usually.

**Q. Where does yourself-awareness come from? You talk about your swing, and I know there's a little bit of self-deprecation in there when you talk about it, but to say you weren't ready for this at 23, just three years ago, not a lot of 23-year-olds are aware enough to know that they're not ready for something. Where do you think that comes from with you?**

RYAN GERARD: I don't know if I was aware enough at the time to know that I wasn't ready for it. I think that was looking back on it.

**Q. Even at 26 a lot of people don't know that they weren't ready at 23.**

RYAN GERARD: I think my parents did a really good job of instilling confidence in me but also teaching me that you have to work hard, and it's not going to be handed to you.

I played a lot of golf in college at UNC with a lot of really good players, and I kind of came in there my freshman

year being almost irrationally confident and got my bucked kicked by Ben Griffin for about nine months straight.

I think that stuff kind of teaches you that there's a lot of really good players out here, and you're not going to be able to just waltz in and take over. There are some guys that have that talent and that ability and kind of pop off the page, but I was never one of those guys. I was always kind of that guy that got there, kind of kept getting better, kept getting better, crept up, crept up, and by the time that I was done with high school or I was leaving college, I was one of those guys, but it took me some time to get there.

I think it comes from having to work hard and having to put in a lot of hours and speaking to a lot of people, trying to figure out how I can get better, talking to college coaches -- Coach Williams has been great, Carolina basketball coach. Guys like that who have a lot of experience and who I have a lot of respect for have given a lot of good advice and a lot of encouragement but also remember to stay true to yourself.

Being true to yourself isn't necessarily just on the golf course. It's off the golf course, too. Trying to make sure that you understand where you come from and you want to kind of keep on the path that you're on.

I think there's a lot of people that have kind of helped along the way.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports