

Cognizant Classic

Sunday, March 1, 2026

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Nico Echavarria

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the 2026 champion of the Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches, Nico Echavarria. This is your third win on TOUR and I heard you made some promises for that third win. Let me know how you're feeling and what those promises are.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Feeling very excited; so happy. We've put a lot of work. The lows have been low and the highs have been high, and this is a high for me. I can't thank enough my team, my wife, my parents, my sponsors, everyone. They've been huge for me every step of the way. It's thanks to them.

The promises, yeah, we're getting a dog because a dog is expensive, so we need a third win for a dog; that's how it works.

Q. Do you get a say on the dog, what type of dog?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, we want a Bernedoodle. Min Woo just got one, and one just like that.

Q. How likely did you think this was? You were three down with three to play. Secondly, can you take us through the tee shot on 17 and if you thought it had enough, really, when you hit it?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: To be honest, no, I didn't think it was going to be possible with a three-shot lead that he had. But at the same time, the Bear Trap played harder today than any of the other three days. It was playing into the wind. When that ball on 17 came up and it was pushed and the wind was taking it, I lost a lot of weight.

The good thing is it was hit solid, so the push carried enough, but it didn't even pitch on the green. It pitched a few inches off the green.

But I'm happy it stayed there. Whenever you're walking, we crossed all the bridge and we were walking to the green, my caddie told me, hey, that ball is -- you're putting for birdie now. It's the easiest putt you can have on the green; let's make this thing. I was only thinking of making

the putt.

I gave myself -- I put a good read on it, and I just focused on where I wanted to start it, and that was it.

Q. How much were you aware of where Shane was on 16, that he was in the water? When did you know that he went in the water, and did that have any effect in terms of how you played?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Well, I already had two-putted for par. We were waiting. There was a bit of a wait on 17 tee shot. The TV guys told me that he hit it in the water.

I looked back and his caddie was running, so I figured it was probably going to be a double bogey. That would put me one back.

But it wasn't going to change anything that I was going to do on 17. I wasn't going for that pin. I pushed it, the wind took it, and I'm glad it stayed up but I was kind of aware.

And on 18 tee, I hit the tee shot, and my caddie was the one who told me that he hit it in the water on 17.

It's unfortunate the way he finished. It's a hard tournament to close. It's not easy to have a lead coming down the stretch on this course.

Q. Did you play 18 any different knowing that it was in the water on 17 again?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Somewhat. I didn't hit a great tee shot, but I was in the fairway. The hole was playing into the wind.

We did change the lay-up. My caddie wanted me to have 100 yards or 110 yards, so it was probably going to be a 7-iron lay-up, but I wanted to push it a little further up.

The third shot would be into the wind again, so I didn't want to have something with a lot of spin, so we pushed it. We hit a 5-iron, pulled it a little, which was safe in the rough, and after that it was just hitting it in the middle of the green and try to two.



Q. You mentioned you were staying at Camilo's house this week. Were there any words of encouragement that he gave you today or any specific conversations you guys had?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: No, he was happy with the way I was playing. We went to dinner on Thursday night and he congratulated me. But this morning, it was very peaceful being there. I played with Matteo, his son. We hung out in the house. It was an easy morning. It felt like the perfect way to have a Sunday morning with a chance to win a tournament.

I'm glad we ended up staying there. We had a great time. I'm very thankful with Maria, Camilo and Josie. They've been incredible for us this week. Happy to get it done.

Q. At the end of the round, you were just seeing your wife, and I know you guys had an interesting week, and she mentioned a talk you guys had on Monday, as well. Could you remember and recall what that talk was and the pep talk she gave you on Monday?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, we were in an event in the afternoon at Panther National with the charity of the Evans Scholar Foundation. I was there with my financial advisor, John Koufax, and my wife was there, and I told him, hey, I think I can win this week. I played the Bear's Club in the morning with Jack's event. I hit it really good. I played well.

I had this feeling that things were starting to click. I played well in Riviera. Unfortunately I didn't make a single putt and missed the cut by one, but I knew that come into Bermuda greens, it was going to be my forte of putting on a different surface.

I think the rain helped me with the greens. I struggled a little bit on Friday with how crunchy they were, and I think the surfaces on Saturday and Sunday were absolutely perfect.

It was good weather, good -- I can't believe we didn't get rained out today, either, or yesterday. Very happy with moving down here, winning this event, and representing my country.

Q. How often do you make those types of predictions?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Not very often. I can't remember the last time I told her I was going to win a tournament. It's one of those things that we know we like this golf course. This golf course doesn't require a lot of distance off the tee, a lot of placement, a lot of patience, hitting to the middle of the green, having 20-, 30-, 40-footers here is good. Some

pins are tucked.

I kind of had this feeling that ball-striking was there. The putting was going to get better from last week.

I also, one more thing, I changed the ball from Srixon, I changed to a different model because the greens were firm, so I think that helped a lot with the control of coming into the green.

Q. What model did you change to?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: I went from the XV to the diamond, which is a little softer and spinnier.

Q. Presidents Cup, this is a huge step toward representing International Team at Medinah. How much is that on your mind, and what would it mean to play on that team?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: To be honest, it's been in my mind for a long, long time. After I made the Olympics and after I made the Masters last year, I changed my screen saver on my phone to the Presidents Cup, the international logo. It's been there for a long time. I haven't changed it. It's been on my mind since a long time ago.

I went on that trip with the guys to see Medinah last year, and it was incredible. We had a great time. It's very present.

Q. You have a lot of things happening during the week. You're getting a dog. You're getting a house. I know you won your third tournament. What does this week mean for your life? If you could pick one shot during this week, which one would you choose?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, a lot of changes. My wife has been working very hard. We had our wedding three months ago. We got married, and she planned the wedding. She planned the honeymoon. She's been planning the house, building, dealing with different people, the pool, the this and that. So I'm very thankful that she's been doing that, and I'm able to play golf.

This week is always going to be special. We closed on the house on Friday, and we won that week. We got married on the 29th of November, and today -- well, it's March, but technically kind of --

And the one shot, the one on 17 today, I'm never going to forget that, seeing the ball drift towards the water. I had a visual that the ball was going towards the hole, it stayed there for a little bit and then it pushed right, and there's not a lot of room there. When that ball pushed right, I lost a lot

of weight, lost a lot of pounds. I'm glad I hit it solid. It was a push that was hit solid, so it carried the right distance, I guess.

Q. Just wondering, you kind of alluded to this earlier, but specifically what is the emotional roller coaster of just in the blink of an eye essentially going from three strokes down to almost leading while you're on 18, and does that affect your finish on 18 playing a par-5?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, it's a roller coaster. I wouldn't say it happens in a lot of events like it does on this course. Closing a tournament at the Bear Trap, I can't see a harder stretch of golf to finish a tournament, especially closing on a par-5 that's risk-reward. I'm glad the tee was up. It was into the wind. It was kind of reachable. I didn't hit a great tee shot. It spun up and I was far away, but if I had to make birdie I would have hit 3-wood and tried to make birdie.

So it did change with what was going on. We played it somewhat safe. I laid up in the rough, but I laid up, and I was only trying to make par.

Q. Austin Smotherman congratulated you after. What's it like with that type of support and him as someone who kind of came up with you through the ranks in PGA TOUR Latin America?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, I played golf with Austin in college, played golf with Austin in Latin America and Korn Ferry, now on the PGA TOUR. He's a good buddy of mine. I appreciate that he congratulated me. He had a great week, too.

And also playing alongside Taylor, which was my college teammate for four years made it easier out there. The energy was good. When I won in Japan I played the third day with him. So these little things or coincidences mean a lot.

Q. And your journey, you mentioned the ups and downs. That put few years ago on KFT in Portland to keep your card, what comes to mind when you think about that putt and how crucial that was in your career arc?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: I feel like that was a moment similar to today. I thought it was looking out, losing my card on Korn Ferry, and I ended up buying a ticket an hour later to go into the Korn Ferry playoffs. It was kind of similar to today.

Q. You mentioned obviously been to Augusta before. What's it mean to go back?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Oh, it's amazing. That place is one of my favorite places in the world. We had such a good time last year the Par-3 Contest with my wife caddieing for me. We stayed in an amazing house. We had a good time with my team and hopefully we can run it again.

THE MODERATOR: With that, thank you, congratulations on a great week.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Thank you, thank you guys.

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