

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: ESTEBAN TOLEDO
Wednesday, August 21, 2013



PHIL STAMBAUGH: Esteban, thanks for joining us this morning. A beautiful day in Seattle, just thought I would have you in given the fact you're having a really good year and with a win earlier this year at the Insuperity Championship. I've sort of given a little background about your story, but talk about the Champions Tour .you're almost a full cycle, almost one year from when you started out here. Just a few thoughts about playing out here.

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: It's an honor to play this Tour. I think we are a bunch of group of players that are fantastic. Every week we try to entertain the people, the fans, the sponsors, the community, and make sure a lot of charities around the country where we stop. It's just fantastic to be able to be in that group with 80 players every single week and for me it's an honor to represent that group and the Champions Tour.

Q. A little different than the TOUR because they're more serious and more focused on themselves and money. Here you kind of have to wear a couple hats. You'd like to win as much money, you'd like to win but you know you're -- promotion is a big thing here, too?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, we play to win and, like I said, we entertain the people. Obviously the money is great but the majority of the time we spend time with the fans and the sponsors, and every week is a challenge for each player. As you see so many players on the PGA TOUR, they're already here, and the players, we're trying to satisfy everybody. We play for the trophy. A lot of people don't play for the money really, we play for the trophy. And also we believe we're going to have the best image and how are we going to attract people to come and see us from different cities around the country. I met a couple people last week in New York, they drove three hours, two guys, to see me and that made me feel great, absolutely. It's amazing because I'm just a rookie guy with a lot of -- I'm very hungry for success, to be able to play against the best players in the world and that's pretty much why we play every single week. As you see, a lot of players are Major winners and pretty much every player you see this week won on the PGA TOUR or on the Champions Tour. So we carry that image for the Champions Tour and for the Charles Schwab Cup that everybody plays for the Top 30 at the end of the year and that's the reason I'm here, to be successful in what I do. But at the same time I entertain the people, the people who come over and see us. That for us, it's huge because what sport in this world at the age of 50 you're still playing for that kind of money and the pride pretty much really. There's no sport that's ever done that, only golf, which is great, and I'm part of that.

Q. You were a boxer?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: I am a boxer.

Q. That's a screwy combination.

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, I always believed I was a better boxer than a golfer. Golf for me is kind of my second sport. Boxing, I'm very good at it and I would kick anybody's butt if I had to, but golf is just awesome and I'm glad, I'm glad I switched to golf because there's only a few things that are similar. I use the same glove, all right, on the left hand because I'm a lefty, but at the same time I think it's a determination that I carry from boxing to golf that is huge for me. When I get onto the first tee, it's like getting into the ring. It is amazing how my focus goes back to when you're coming into the ring. Now I'm using it in golf, it's just fantastic.

Q. The sports are not complementary in many ways but I imagine your mindset is very similar, you're out there to defeat your opponent and do the best you can with your skills?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, when I was in boxing I prepared myself a hundred percent to compete against the other guy. Now in golf I work so hard every single, from Monday to Sunday, to play the course. I don't play against anybody else because this has never been what I think. I have one golf course and that's the one I play every single week. If they beat me, great, because they're very good at it, but that's the only difference, you know, in both of them. There are 80 wonderful players on this Tour that I've got to compete every single week but there's only one I worry about it, it's the golf course. This is what I always think and I prepare myself for every single week the best I can to beat that golf course and 81 players, the majority. Sometimes I come up on the top, sometimes I don't, but I learn because in boxing there's only one guy, in golf it's 81 players instead of 144 or 156 on the PGA TOUR. But both tours are the same, to be honest with you. I competed on the PGA TOUR for so long, it's the same on the Champions Tour. As you see last week in New York, three days, 16-under par. On the TOUR they probably win with 20. So you put another day on the Champions Tour, it will be 20-under par. It's no different much on the PGA and the Champions Tour. Both tours are fantastic and I'm part of that.

Q. The couple that helped you out that provided the finances when you were making the transition from boxing to golf, where are they from?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, John Minness is the guy who really helped me in my life. Because of him and his wife, I'm here. That's the only people who helped me when I really needed it. I had the talent but I didn't have the money. John Minness helped my life, changed my life, out of California. He died almost 10 years ago in October this year, so he was the guy that believed in me, he's the guy that believed I was capable to play the PGA TOUR because I had the ability to do it, the mind to do it. He spent thousands of thousands of dollars on me during my career and he caddied

for me 10 years on the Qualifying School and the World Cups that I represented my country, and the guy working millions and millions of dollars and how many of those people around this world can help a guy that has nothing, to spend his time away from office, away from the business to help a little guy out of Mexicali. How many people in this world? And for me it was like my father to me and it still hurt me that he died, to be honest with you, but at the same time and it's been great because he made me who I am and I will never forget that.

Q. You didn't exactly grow up rich. Can you just explain?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Him or me?

Q. No, you.

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Rich? Are you kidding me? I was poor as could be. I grew up in the dirt and cucarachas around and bunch of creatures out there, but that's okay. I'm not afraid to talk about it. I think it's wonderful that I came out of nowhere to be one of the best players in the world because that's the way I feel. To get to here, I don't know how I did it to be honest with you, I really don't. But I really believe that my ability and determination that I had and I was very hungry for success and that probably I never gave up on my dreams because that man taught me how to dream high. Because of him, I'm here.

I still go back to my town and I see where I grew up and I still hang out with those guys that I used to drink a little bit and just a little bit, you know, and just to be with them because I don't want them to think that I'm still something different. I'm still the same guy that I go back with them and spend time with them. And they know I am still the same guy, so that's kind of cool. Mexicali is in the middle of nowhere. It's right on the border of Calexico, California. It's a wonderful little city and my whole family lives there, everybody watching me pretty much every single week, Mexicali and the whole country really.

Last week they asked me what kind of responsibility I have in golf and I told them, I said, well, I have a lot of responsibility because I'm the only guy on the big links but at the same time I prepare myself so someone can follow me, mentor or children to follow me and that's a good responsibility but at the same time I'm just enjoying myself and maybe that's the reason I'm playing.

(Inaudible). Another person who played really well on the LPGA was Lorena Ochoa. I think it was wonderful at the same time. But Lorena is real Mexican, Trevino is American-Mexican, so it's a little different but they're still Latino. To be honest with you, Trevino inspired me to play because he's great image, his great love for the game of golf that quite a few people have the image and the fun to play with the fans that I haven't seen.

Q. Ochoa had so much going and all of a sudden she abandons the --

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: The what?

Q. -- the LPGA.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Early retirement.

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: I think it was -- I was very disappointed with the decision she made. I think she could have traveled with anything. I really don't know her that well, so I can see how she is because it gets tiring to travel, to be honest with you. If you do it for 15, 20 years, it gets tiring. But at the same time I think she left as kind of a young still and she could have won a few times. I think young girls in Mexico, they were really pushing and she opened the door for everybody, a lot of people, men and women, and probably myself as well and Victor Regalado back in the '70s and '80s. But I think the Mexican people were kind of a little bit upset that she quit because she was such a great image, such a good person, that now I'm kind of, I'm following that.

So that's a reason I have a little bit of responsibility for my country, for the fans out there, for the Latino community, Argentina, Columbia, all these guys because I'm the only one up here right now. But at the same time I don't worry about it because I'm just going to play myself. If I worry about me and my family and my fans and the sponsors that I play for and like everybody else here on this Tour, that's all we ask, is to play golf and entertain the people.

Q. How did you get started in golf?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, you've got to read my book. You know what, I found a 7-iron on this golf course and I played four holes after everybody left, after all the members left and that's how I started. I didn't know much about this game, I didn't know nothing about what it takes or practice. I was a boxer at the time so I didn't have a lot of time.

Q. How old were you picking up that 7-iron?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: I don't know, maybe 10 years old, 9 or something. But I didn't know what it was, I just saw people playing, hackers playing. I didn't know that I was going to be on the PGA TOUR or the Champions Tour, I never really thought. But you know what, to be honest, it's been a great, great years for me over the years. I was able to have a wife and two kids and support them and take care about the people who cares about me and they love me.

Every stop that I stop this year, it's amazing how the people respond to me, emails, texting, Twitter. It is amazing how many people are supporting me over the last probably 14, 15 weeks, it's amazing. Remember when I won in Houston

on Cinco de Mayo, I got 60,000 clicks on my website that I never had before. I'm sure Langer and Fred Couples and all these guys had the same things, but for me to come out of nowhere with a great image trying to do the best image for the Champions Tour because this is who we represent, the Champions Tour, and it's a pretty amazing how the people are really think about me when I'm on the golf course, it's just pretty amazing.

Q. Can you name anybody else on this Tour who has anything close to your growing up roots?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Oh, boy, I don't know much about -- most of these guys are probably all Americans anyway. They have everything, which is great, you know, that's great. I don't know. I never thought about it.

Q. You're probably the only poor kid?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, you know what, I'm still poor in my heart because this is my -- material things, they don't mean anything, money don't mean anything. The person who's going to change is yourself and I haven't changed at all. I'm still a guy joking around on the golf course. I tried my best image for really my children because I want them to follow me. Mostly it's my family, kids, because that's the image. The fans also.

But wherever I go, to be honest with you, they treat me awesome. I mean, they asked me the other day, what tournament is the best? I said all of them are the best. They treat me and they treat us fantastic. Phil and David, you guys are the ones that are writing things, you know, and those are my feelings. I'm pretty sure Fred Couples is the same thing, Langer is the same thing, David Frost coming from a different country to come over and play with the best and every week they treat us awesome. Pretty golf courses. Yeah, this course is one of the top 5 easy on the Champions Tour but all of them are pretty good. Most important is they treat us awesome, that's the reason the players are here.

Q. When's your birthday?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: September 10th, and I think I'm probably going to Los Cabos and have a couple beers to be honest with you. My kid is trying to hook me up with a couple of tee times in Los Cabos on my birthday. I haven't told my wife that but that's what he wants me to do, so I'm going to ask my wife if that's okay if I go down there because I love Los Cabos and I really enjoy it out there.

Q. You made the most of your first year. You played how many tournaments?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: I don't know. Phil knows all that.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: He hasn't missed many.

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: I mean, why should I miss a tournament in this wonderful Champions Tour when everybody treat me like a king? I'm not a king, I'm just a person. They treat us so well, why I missing one? I mean, I give interview in Calgary next week, they're looking forward to talk to me on the radio. I mean, I never had this attention before even when I was on the PGA TOUR, and for me it's just pretty awesome because they know I'm a good guy. And I'm a really good guy, I like to take care of people, but at the same time I think it's just if every player would have a wonderful image and nice to the fans, this Tour would be unbelievable. It is unbelievable, but it's quite an experience to represent this Tour that you probably just don't know.

Q. It helps when you win?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, it helps when you win. It's like I said before, it's an honor to win on this Tour. These guys are awesome and great players. But at the same time I haven't changed anything. The only change when I won is the tournaments that I get in because I'm not supposed to be here, to be honest with you. Those two guys who turned 50, Jeff Brehaut and John Riegger, in TOUR school I finished 7th in the TOUR school and I was right against the wall, but I played pretty hard. As Phil knows, I work very hard from Monday to Sunday from 8:00 until 5:30, that's when I stop. 5:00 is my limit. For 18 years that I've been a professional, 5:00, 5:15, I'm done. That's a routine that I follow over my golf career that I always stop at 5:00, 5:30.

Q. So if you're on 17 and it's five after 5:00 and you're in contention?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, I have to stay because there's money on Sundays. But Monday through Thursday that's what I do pretty much very consistent. My caddie will tell. Ask my caddie what time Esteban stop every Monday through Thursday and he tells you because he knows me. It's been great, this TOUR is just fantastic.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Thanks, Esteban.

Q. How's the book doing?

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: My book? Well, I wrote it in '98 and I sold 50,000, 60,000 and I donated all the money to charity.

Q. You've got to update it now.

ESTEBAN TOLEDO: Well, I'm going to write the second book probably next year and I'm going to donate all the money to my foundation, the Esteban Family foundation, that's what I'm going to do.