

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: ALEX CEJKA
March 23, 2016



Q. So Alex, your first time as a defending champion. You were here in the press conference yesterday and everyone was so welcoming. What's the reception been like and the encouragement from this tournament?

ALEX CEJKA: It's really nice, especially first time as a defending champion. You come back and yesterday was really nice, everybody's so nice and welcomed not only me but all the other players back. It's just an incredible familiar feeling here. The course is nice, the resort is nice. I think we all feel pretty comfortable and it's a nice week for everybody.

Q. So you won in your fifth try here, and do you think this is a course where experience is a necessity in order to be successful?

ALEX CEJKA: You know, you've got to play good. It's like every week there's so many good players. Everybody out here can win, it all depends who puts four great rounds together, who gets a little bit lucky, who makes the clutch putts. Last year it was me. I feel good this week, but again, it's tough. It depends on the weather, it depends on who's going to be in form. I would like to obviously defend my title well, but you know it's tough. You've just got to play great every week and it doesn't matter what golf course it is. But the course is in great shape. I just finished the pro-am. The greens, a little bit slower than normal, but the course is in phenomenal shape.

Q. So you've had a pretty good start to the year, you've had about five top 25s since the fall. Do you think winning has maybe freed you up a little bit to feel like you can really just let loose and play your game?

ALEX CEJKA: Yeah, definitely. You know you have the two-year exemption so you don't have to really play every week. You play when you need to play, play good and try to make the top 125, keep your card. It just puts a little bit more pressure on you. You know, I had a great start obviously playing great, finished second kind of at home in Vegas where I had a little bit of an advantage but still you've got to play good. I play a little bit pressure-free, but still you want to go out there and play. It's not like okay, I won now and my career's over. You want to still perform well, play well, obviously win twice, three times. So everybody out here wants to win, wants to play as good as he can.

Q. So how much is the Olympics on your mind I guess right now with that coming up?

ALEX CEJKA: Really not so much. It would be great. Right now I'm like in on our calculations like in the German Order of Merit. Martin is first and there's two guys behind me and it's a close race. We get two spots. There is myself, Siem is behind me a little bit and the next guy is Kieffer. He's also playing great. So the question is who's going to be the

second player. It would be great, it would be I think a great tournament. It would be an honor to play and represent your country in the Olympics but it's not like oh, I must do it. We heard a lot of problems, a lot of diseases down there, the course just being done, so who knows. But everybody wants to be down there, and as I said, if I qualify it would be an honor for me to go down there and represent my country.

Q. You kind of touched on it a little bit but I was curious, what is the overall impact of getting your first win in your 40s versus getting your first win in your 20s?

ALEX CEJKA: I'll tell you what, when I started on the European Tour and I won when I was I think 24 my first time, again it took a lot of pressure off you. You know you can do it, you think you belong on the Tour and it makes it a little bit easier. Now I've done it in Europe obviously.

Since I came onto the PGA TOUR in the 30s so it took me a little bit longer to win. You know, the game changed. I played different in my 20s. I don't want to say it was easier to win, it's like the wrong word to say, but there were not as many great players 20 years ago as there is now, and it doesn't matter on what tour. If you go on any tour there's just great players. It's tremendously changed the last couple years and I'm super happy and super glad that I did it at least on the PGA TOUR. There's a lot of guys that play the tour for many years and never won. It was good. As you said, it took a little bit of pressure off me and I finally did it. You know, hopefully I have a couple more coming before I retire, before the career is over.

Q. And then in all your appearances here at the Puerto Rico Open they've been pouring in more money into the agronomy and everything trying to make improvements that the players would enjoy. Could you talk about the experience of the first time versus last year or this year?

ALEX CEJKA: Yes. I remember the first time I came here everything was a little bit slow, even the check-in. Everything was a little bit, let's say, unorganized. Nobody really knew what they were doing. Obviously now after a couple years running the tournament, the people here at the tournament know what needs to be done so we are good. We have food, we have drinks out there, good service in the locker room, in the players' lounge. So you notice by doing the tournament a couple more years and you learn from mistakes and you know what you have to do to improve, and you have a great course to lure the players here because, I mean, obviously now competing against the Match Play the same week so most of the best players are over there but it's still a great tournament. You have a two-year exemption, it's still a three and a half million dollar tournament. Why not? So it's a great course and I think everybody's trying to win this.