

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 15, 2017



PATTON KIZZIRE

AMANDA HERRINGTON: We would like to welcome Patton Kizzire to the interview room here at the RSM Classic. Patton, you were in this room just two years ago receiving the Web.com Tour Player of the Year award, now you return as a PGA TOUR winner, getting that first win after a career-low opening round and then held it through some rain delays in Mexico last week. Tell us what it's like to be here as a winner.

PATTON KIZZIRE: It's exciting. It was a tough week. I got off to a hot start and was able to hold it together through all the rain delays, and had a long day on Sunday and had some -- played some good golf and was able to hold off Rickie's charge there at the end. It was a lot of fun.

Q. Part of the Sea Island contingent down here now back at the RSM Classic, have you had any time to prepare for this week or has it been all celebrations?

PATTON KIZZIRE: There's been some celebrating, but luckily I know the courses really well and I've spent a lot of time learning them. It's good to be back home and sleep in my own bed and see friends and family, a lot of hugs a lot of high fives. So it's a great week and I'm looking forward to teeing it up tomorrow and seeing if I can make some birdies.

Q. Top-10s before you fired that career low heading into Mexico for the win, what's clicking with your game right now?

PATTON KIZZIRE: I've had a lot of good stuff since about the summer. I've hit the ball really well, just haven't been able to get the putter going, and putting is my strength so it's been a frustrating time. And then in Mississippi I made a few putts and started to get some confidence, and then carried that into Vegas and had a few really nice rounds there, especially a good Sunday, which I took that momentum Sunday into Thursday's round in Mexico. That was a pretty special round where it all came together, ball striking and putting, in one day. Those are the ones we play for.

Q. And finally, we're about to have a break here until January but a leader in the FedExCup Race. How important is it to get a hot start in the fall heading into the calendar year?

PATTON KIZZIRE: It's really important. I've been able to do that, this is my third year on Tour and the fall's been good to me. I like the fact that I start hot in the fall, but I don't really want to be known as a fall player. I want to be able to play my game throughout the whole season. Early fall, play well in the early fall and not the late fall. That's what I'm looking for.

To be No. 1 in the FedExCup list right now is a good head start and there's going to be a lot of guys that are going to be pushing for that No. 1 spot at the end of the year, so I have a long way to go and I'm looking forward to chasing that FedExCup and getting to the TOUR Championship and playing a little bit better than I have in the Playoffs.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Great. With that, we'll open with questions.

Q. That first win can be such a barrier to get through. You talked about your putting a little bit, but in the end what do you think pushed you across the line?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Experience helps. I've had some experience in contention. Especially last year at the Safeway I was kind of in a similar position where I had a little bit of a lead there on the back nine. I was able to draw from that and really feel a bit more comfortable and able to hit decent shots and the putter just felt so good in my hands. I really leaned on it all week.

Q. Patton, you had gone, after Safeway last year, a while without a top-25 finish. Was there anything -- until the summer, was there anything particular in your game that you were struggling with or were there any I guess confidence issues in that stretch?

PATTON KIZZIRE: You have to manage your expectations. I think that was something I struggle with. I always want to play well so badly that sometimes I put too much pressure on myself and expect to do so well and all those things. If something doesn't go right, it just doesn't add up to good golf.

So managing my expectations, understanding what's important and really just focusing on the present is something that I've learned from all that. It's not necessarily my driving's bad or putting's bad or chipping, it's not really that sort of stuff. It's more mental game and just allowing yourself to play like you can and being patient.

Q. And a couple years ago on the Web.com Tour you talked about guys like Davis, looking up to them, and Jonathan Byrd and seeing how they played and practiced, and fast forward a couple years and I'm at Q-School talking with guys like Riley Davenport and Brad Schneider, who kind of look up to you in that way. Is that cool and kind of crazy to have that in a couple years kind of flipped the other way, and what are some of the things you try to instill now in those guys coming up on the Web.com Tour?

PATTON KIZZIRE: It is really cool. Davis and Jonathan Byrd and Zach Johnson and guys here have been really good to me just mentor-wise. We've got kind of a Sea Island family that really pulls for each other, to have some young guys come up and guys that are kind of my age or a little bit younger that I really encourage and we're all pulling for each other. So it's fun to see each other play well. It's just a golf family down here and we enjoy everybody's success.

Q. Absolutely. And last thing from me, you were a Web.com Tour Player of the Year two years ago. The candidates this year are Chesson Hadley, Brice Garnett, Stephan Jaeger. Who is your prediction for Web.com Tour Player of the Year?

PATTON KIZZIRE: I think it's the finger snap, Chesson Hadley, for sure. He played some really good golf and has continued to do that into this fall. He's a fun guy, fun player to watch. And all those guys played great, but I believe Chesson's probably the guy.

Q. There are a lot of perks to winning, you basically have a three-year exemption. What do you see as the biggest one?

PATTON KIZZIRE: The Masters, that's something I've always dreamed of playing in and winning a green jacket. That's a tall task, but I'm looking forward to the opportunity to play at Augusta and just soak all that in.

My dad and I have been going to Augusta since I was a kid and it seemed so far away at that point. To finally live out that dream is going to be really cool. There's a lot of perks, but Augusta is certainly the one I look forward to the most.

Q. What's your earlier memory there and have you ever played the golf course?

PATTON KIZZIRE: I've never played the golf course. I believe the first time I went was in 1999 and Jose Maria Olazabal won. But I believe my fondest memory is I was on 16 tee, that's kind of where my dad and I would set up our chairs when we got there, and Fluff threw me a Jim Furyk ball and I thought that was the coolest thing. It had his little line on it. It was a Strata, those are so cool. And I still have the ball somewhere in my dad's house. I told Jim about that and he laughed. Now I just think about when I throw kids balls, they might feel the same way.

Q. You have close ties being here at Sea Island with Davis obviously. He's pretty tied in with the Ryder Cup. What are your thoughts as far as winning, has that become a big target or goal for this year?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Certainly. The Masters and the Ryder Cup have always held kind of up on a pedestal, so those are tournaments I want to play in and compete in and win. I think I've got a long way to go. I don't really know how the point system works with the Ryder Cup and that sort of thing, but I know I have a long way to go. I think if I win more tournaments, that will take care of that, but that's definitely on the bucket list.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: All right. Anything else for Patton? We'll let you get out there and good luck this week.

PATTON KIZZIRE: All right. I appreciate it.