

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
April 17, 2018

SERGIO GARCIA



JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Sergio Garcia into the interview room. He is making his third start at the Valero Texas Open but first since 2010. So Sergio, welcome back, if we can get some comments on being here.

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, no, I'm excited about it. Played the back nine and the course looks great obviously from what I remember from 2010 and some of the work we did here early days. So it's a solid golf course, a tough golf course, we know that. It's going to be breezy all week so it's going to be a lot of patience is going to be required through the week.

Q. Other than the weather conditions, you mentioned working on this course, you were a player-consultant here. What is it about this golf course that really presents challenges?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, I think everything. Obviously around the greens is tricky stuff. Greens are not too big and you have to drive the ball well. You know that if you hit it, even if you hit it in the little rough it's okay, but once you start getting to the little longer rough there's a lot of rocks, there's a lot of difficult terrain, what you call it. So driving it well is important because it helps a little bit going into these greens. But with these windy conditions, there's a lot of solid, difficult holes out there.

JOHN BUSH: You're basically a Texan now, too.

SERGIO GARCIA: Yes, y'all.

JOHN BUSH: We'll open it you will up to questions.

Q. Sergio, how are you doing? Are you eager to get back out there and is there an element of redemption this week after the Masters? Are you eager to get back out there and kind of wipe that taste away?

SERGIO GARCIA: No. I am excited to go out and get playing again, but no, I wouldn't say that. It's one of those things that happens and it's happened to me before and it probably will happen again in the future. That's the nature of golf. There at Augusta it can happen. So it's what it is. I guess at the end of the day I'm excited to come here and keep playing well like I've been playing pretty much all year and see if we can get on a good run.

Q. Sounds like then you're saying that you're basically over that already?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah.

Q. How long did it take you to get over it?

SERGIO GARCIA: Probably as soon as we finished Friday afternoon, you know, it was pretty much forgotten and the week was over. That's what it is. I think at the end of the day you've got to realize that sometimes it happens, sometimes it goes the wrong way, and without doing much wrong it can happen. But you learn from it and you move forward and try to be better.

Q. Sergio, I'm wondering if you could take us back to the thought process when you guys first discussed 16, putting a bunker in the middle of the green.

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, I think Greg, he's always -- I mean, I love Riviera and he's always been a fan of that course, too. He obviously liked the sixth hole there, so he wanted to do something kind of similar but with his own touch and a different flair to it. I think this one, the nice thing about it is you have more pin positions than you do at Riviera. For example, the green is a little bit bigger, the bunker is also a little bit bigger. It just brings a different element to it, it's a different look, and it's just kind of like a par 3 with two greens if you look at it that way. Obviously you have the right side and the left side, and you kind of play it as a small green to the right side with a bunker on the left and a small green to the left with a bunker on the right, so it's as simple as that, I guess.

Q. Just leading off that on the golf course, Greg Norman not surprisingly one of the greatest drivers of the golf ball ever putting a premium here. What were your influences on this course?

SERGIO GARCIA: It was mainly on the perspective of the player, tried to see some of the things that we look for to challenge ourselves on the golf course; the kind of bunkering and maybe a little bit around the greens, things like that. Just trying to kind of make it as challenging as possible, but also playable and enjoyable.

Q. Following up on the Masters conversation, obviously a really good problem to have are the distractions as the defending champion. Were they a little bit more than maybe you anticipated going through it?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, there were, but at the end of the day when you come to start the tournament, I mean if my ball with a 6-iron bounces up and goes to, I don't know, five feet or something like that, even if I don't make eagle we're probably having a different conversation. I'm probably shooting even par or even 1 over that first round, you know. With a decent round on Friday, I have a chance of contending. Unfortunately, what happened happened and you can start trying to make excuses of I had a lot of things to do coming into the week or during the week, yes, but we're used to those things. I'm not going to put that as an excuse of why the week went the way it went.

Q. I don't want to dwell on the Masters --

SERGIO GARCIA: Don't. (Laughs.)

Q. Okay. I'm just interested in how your thought process and how you were able to seemingly handle that so well because the year before, I think didn't you eagle 15 --

SERGIO GARCIA: Yes.

Q. -- when you won the Masters?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yep.

Q. That probably just was so shocking. Was that a low point for you in your career or would you not say that?

SERGIO GARCIA: No, no, not really. If I would have been -- if I would have been 25 and having a chance, or maybe if that would have happened on Sunday last year after hitting my shot, if it hits the pin dead on and goes in the water, it probably would have been harder.

But it's happened to me there before, obviously not making 13 but it's happened to me where I've hit a good shot actually to that pin and looked like it was going to be very close and kind of almost gets to the top and goes back into the water. It's not something new, but no, you just deal with it the best way possible. Obviously I was trying to hit the right shots throughout the process and unfortunately the result didn't want to come out the way maybe it should have, but it's one of those things.

Q. Do you think your experience then enabled you to have a short memory and kind of put that behind you quickly?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, I think having a green jacket helps knowing that --

Q. It affects your memory, too, the jacket?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, yeah. Knowing that you can go there every year, it kind of helps. It's one of those things. Unfortunately I'm sure probably -- hopefully not to that extent, but I'm sure it's going to happen again if I play it 30 more times and we'll have some years where things go our way and some things where it doesn't. Just got to accept it.

Q. Welcome to San Antonio, how do you feel being here with a large Hispanic community here in San Antonio?

SERGIO GARCIA: No, it's good. Obviously I'm excited to be back here in San Antonio for a while. Just looking forward to the week and hoping that I'm able to play well and I can give all those Latinos and the Hispanics a good week to enjoy.

Q. Sergio, I thought it was really cool to watch your interaction with Joaquin on the driving range. You clearly have a nice relationship with him. Carlos said that you've embraced this role of being a role model, Joaquin called you a role model. How much do you enjoy being in that position?

SERGIO GARCIA: It is fun. It's fun because, I mean, it's probably 20 years ago but it doesn't feel like it was that long ago I was in that situation and I was looking up to my idols and my role models in golf and trying to learn anything I could from them or as much as I could from them.

So it is fun and it is an honor to be in the other side of a situation, I guess. You know, he's a great kid. Obviously he's got a lot of talent. I think he can do a lot of beautiful things out there on the golf course, so the only thing I can do is try to help him in whatever I can. At the end of the day he still has to do his own things and he has to learn what works for him, but every time he has a question for me that I can help him with, I'm happy to help him as much as possible.

Q. And a quick follow, what are your expectations after getting to know him and watching him talent-wise? You've seen a lot of great young players.

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, I'm not going to stand here and put too much pressure on him because like what I told him today, just go out there and enjoy it, just try to do your best and that's all you can do. I think that at the end of the day it's a start for him. He's starting from scratch. Everything he's done as an amateur, just like it happened to me, it's great but it doesn't count anymore. So he's got to go out there and hopefully not put too much pressure on himself, enjoy the week, learn every week. Hopefully he gets off to a good start and things kind of go straight up, but if not, he's got to be patient and kind of find his way out here.

Q. Could you share with us what you did after the Masters? You didn't play the Heritage, right?

SERGIO GARCIA: No, I didn't, no.

Q. What did you do to relax and kind of get away from things? Did that help you?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, changed a lot of nappies. No, yeah, just enjoyed time with my family, not only my wife and our little daughter but my parents and Angela's parents. We went to the ranch a couple of times, we practiced a little bit with my dad. I played a member-member at Austin Golf Club with Ben Crenshaw last Friday and Saturday. We managed to win it, too. That was nice. So just kind of kept myself busy. But like I said, just changing a lot of nappies and cleaning a lot of things and just feeding and things like that.

Q. Got your hands dirty then, is that what you're saying?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah. I tried to wash them, though.

Q. Okay. Your wife I think had tweeted some encouragement. Did you get some other notes of encouragement from people after the Masters?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, just friends just saying the same thing, obviously just supporting and saying that it's one of those things that happens and it happens. You've just got to deal with it and put it behind and keep moving forward. Obviously the Masters, it's massive, it's very important, but it's one week and you can't let one week ruin your whole year.

Q. Sergio, you've won three times in the state of Texas. Would you consider that mere coincidence or is there something about playing here in this state, managing the course, managing the winds perhaps?

SERGIO GARCIA: I don't know. I think I've always enjoyed playing in the wind. It's usually windy here in Texas, so I've always felt quite comfortable in this state. I've been fortunate to do fairly well throughout my career in Texas. Yeah, just enjoy it. I guess now I feel like even more of a Texas than I felt even before. It's a good state, I enjoy it.

JOHN BUSH: Sergio Garcia, thank you, sir.

SERGIO GARCIA: Thank you.