

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
April 18, 2018

KEVIN CHAPPELL



JOHN BUSH: We're joined by defending Valero Texas Open champion Kevin Chappell. Kevin, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. First of all, take us back to last year when you got that first PGA TOUR victory.

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Yeah, I just came off the 18th green first time playing the hole since the 72nd hole last year. Obviously some fond memories. It's been a fun year since then, but we're here this week in 2018 and I know I've got some work to do to try to do it again.

JOHN BUSH: Yeah, that win helped propel you to the TOUR Championship for the second consecutive year. You enter this week No. 52 in the FedExCup standings. Just talk about your season up to this point and your goals for the rest of the year.

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Yeah, that was huge last year getting me those 500 FedExCup points and getting me to the TOUR Championship. This year's been a little bit of a strange year for me, I usually don't find form until about here, usually a slow starter. But having three top-10s before this event I've kind of found some form. I'm looking to turn those top-10s into top-5s and the top-5s into wins. That's the challenge moving forward for this year.

Q. What are your thoughts on the possibility of defending your title here this week? What's it going to take?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Shoot the lowest 72-hole score.

Q. Okay. You and Greg Popovich know each other?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: It's going to take a lot of patience. The weather doesn't look great, the wind's going to be up. It will take a lot of discipline. I think I'll be able to pull from some of my experiences last year on Saturday. It was a tough day and I was able to grind it out and shoot a score that kept me in the golf tournament and gave me chance to win on Sunday. Kind of going in with that attitude that it's going to be a grind and take advantage of the scoring opportunities when you can, but really keep the ball in front of you and try and get as many birdie looks as you can throughout the week.

Q. What statistic are you planning on focusing on this week?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: You know, so for me around here, greens in regulation. I believe I was third last year in greens in regulation and it's such a difficult scrambling course because of the wind and how severe some of the runoffs are around the greens. It's important to get the ball on the green when you can and not necessarily force a shot in there to try to get a

birdie look because there's not many out there.

Q. Now that you've had a year to be a Tour champion, do you look at anything differently, do you approach anything differently than you did before now that kind of the pressure's off a little bit or do you feel more pressure?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: The pressure's not off. I'm a competitor and winning once makes me want to win hundreds of times. It's had its ups and downs since winning. I haven't been in contention as much as I would like to be. Really kind of looking at my game currently and trying to find that form I had in 2016 when I was in contention a lot. Wasn't able to get it done, but just trying to find what did I do well then and how can you apply that to my game now with some of the experiences I've had with winning a golf tournament or playing in the Presidents Cup and apply that back into my current game.

Q. Also I wanted to ask you about the 16th green. What do you think of that hole, specifically that green? You've played it even par basically your entire career here.

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Yeah, I've made some birdies, I've made some bogeys. I was talking to my pro-am group today about it. That back right pin or middle right pin's one of the scarier pins we play all year. Not because of penalty shots and that side of it, but the pin is nine feet from the people, so you can hit a good shot and hit someone. That's never a comfortable feeling. But it's unique. It basically plays as four different holes -- three different holes depending where the pin is, three different holes, front pin, back right and back left. So you're just playing to that area and hoping to get the distance right and give yourself the easiest look at birdie.

Q. Do you remember 2013 first round? Do you remember, were you on the other side of the bunker, the wrong side?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Sounds like something I'd do. I do remember chipping over the bunker to the back right pin, so from front left to back right. I think I did all right, too.

Q. Kevin, can you expand a little bit on the difficulty scrambling on this golf course? I walked it today and seeing the raised, the elevated greens and really how you have to change your style or your approach when you get here?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Yeah, so a lot of the greens are raised obviously, and it's not raised greens to shaved run-off areas where you know what you're going to get. The fairways are in such good shape around here that it would be a lot easier to be chipping out of that. You get kind of the squirrely bermuda and it's just so dependent on the lie you're getting. If you draw a bad lie, you've got to get up to the green that's often running away from you. So it's huge to get the wind on your side, always working into the wind, especially when chipping out of the rough here.

Q. Do you find yourself utilizing more shots than you would on just the normal

course without the raised greens?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Yeah, when I get squirrely lies I'll use the term defer down, so I'll hit a lot of 56 degrees so the ball doesn't ride up the face as much if you were using a 60 or something with more loft than that. You've really got to pick the specific spot to land it in and trust that the ball's going to do what you want from there.

Q. I'm curious if you have watched the highlights of the final round from last year? Do you have that anywhere on your computer?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: I don't have it. I've seen that putt on 18 a lot of times and it always feels good to watch it go in, but I'm not one to watch myself. I can learn from the feelings I had in coming down the stretch and that type of stuff, but I don't need to hear what other people are saying about me or watch myself do it because I was able to feel it and those are the things I try to hold on to.

Q. Did you ever take any time at all to kind of take a step back and enjoy what you accomplished?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Yeah, I try to do that at the end of every year just because when you accomplish one goal, there's another one there waiting to be accomplished. It's kind of how I try to motivate myself. As soon as I won, the first thing I said to Jay Monahan when I walked off the green was, "See you in New York," meaning the Presidents Cup. That was a goal the whole year and winning here propelled me to that, but it wasn't easy and I really had to focus, turn my focus towards making that team.

Q. Did you allow yourself to celebrate after your victory, like what did you buy, did you do anything special?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: No. That evening I spent some time with my caddie and my wife in the sports bar here. We had a little celebration. I haven't bought anything. Just that week we had just signed some paperwork to build a home, so it was nice timing for that, so we're still in the process of doing that. But as far as tangible things that I went out and bought because I won a golf tournament, there wasn't anything.

Q. The other question was, defending champion, you see your face on the billboards and at the airport and on the room keys of the hotel. Can you just talk about that experience?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: I think it's a lot more fun for my kids than it is for me. We came down the baggage claim in the airport the other night and both my daughter and son are saying, "Daddy, that's you," and I'm like, "Yeah, that's me."

You get some sly comments from players about their room key. "Oh, I'm tired of looking at you," and I'm saying, "Believe me, I'm tired of being in everyone's room."

No, it's fun and a great honor. One of the perks of winning here at the Valero Texas Open is the hotel supports the event and they support the defending champion, so it's a fun week for us.

Q. What did you do with the boots?

KEVIN CHAPPELL: They're on display in the house. We kind of have a trophy cabinet and they're sitting there. I had them made bigger because I didn't see myself wearing them so they can be displayed.

JOHN BUSH: Kevin, best of luck this week as you go for number two.

KEVIN CHAPPELL: Thank you.