

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 6, 2018



PATTON KIZZIRE
JOE MAZZEO
JOHN NORRIS

MARK WILLIAMS: We've got Joe Mazzeo, the tournament director of the Mayakoba Golf Classic; in the middle we have the defending champion, Patton Kizzire, who won the event last year; and at the far left we have John Norris, who's the senior vice president of tournament business affairs with the PGA TOUR.

So we'll get underway and we'll start with you, Joe. Just have some comments about coming back here to the Mayakoba Golf Classic for the 12th edition for the tournament. You've got a great field this week.

JOE MAZZEO: Thank you, Mark. Yes, I was asked to do this in English, but I think I'll do it in a little bit of both. We're really happy obviously to be celebrating our 12th year of the Mayakoba Golf Classic. The tournament every year gets better and better. We've had a wonderful year with Patton Kizzire as our defending champion and we're really proud to have him back with us. He's represented Mayakoba so well all year long.

MARK WILLIAMS: Thanks, Joe. We'll move along to John on the end. John, if you can give us some comments. This is, as I said, the 12th edition. From the PGA TOUR's perspective, this tournament is very meaningful in the scheme of things for the FedExCup season in 2018-19. If you could just make some comments, please.

JOHN NORRIS: Sure. The 12th edition, holy cow, where does time go? This was really the pioneer event for golf in Mexico and the entire region. If you think back 12 years ago, we didn't have any events outside of Canada, United States. Now we've got events all over the world, including a thriving Latinoamerica Tour, World Golf Championship. So this event really jump-started golf in this region, and I would be remiss if I didn't make sure I thanked a couple of gentlemen. Mr. Juan Miguel Vilar Mir, also Andres Pan de Soraluze, and lastly, Borja Escalada for their commitment in making this event what it is.

It was amazing to see the four Mexican players up here. I had an opportunity to watch the press conference and I know everyone in this room and the PGA TOUR are proud to have four members from Mexico on the PGA TOUR for the 2018-19 season. It's an amazing accomplishment and this event had a tremendous amount to do with that.

This year's field, as Joe said, is without a doubt the strongest. We've got PGA TOUR superstars in Jordan Spieth, Rickie Fowler, Tony Finau, Matt Kuchar, and of course our defending champion, Patton Kizzire. After this event last year, Patton went on a couple months later to win the Sony Open in Hawaii. I was there for that event and I want to thank

you for finishing before dark because I think it was a six-, seven-hole playoff?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Six holes.

JOHN NORRIS: I was stressed out, I can only imagine how you were feeling out there. But this event I would venture to say probably kickstarted your season and allowed you to make the finals of the PGA TOUR and the TOUR Championship, so congratulations.

In talking with our players, this is without a doubt one of their most favorite stops on the PGA TOUR. They bring their families, they bring their friends, and in no small part because of a wonderful experience here at the Mayakoba Resort. You have four fantastic hotels, a world-class golf course, amazing food and beverage, which I partake in on a regular basis, and fantastic hospitality.

So I'll just wrap up quickly by saying I'm proud to, on behalf of the PGA TOUR, represent the Tour. I want to thank all of you, Joe, you and your team, for a fantastic event.

MARK WILLIAMS: Wonderful, thank you for that.

Patton, now we get to you. Defending champion, as John mentioned. You went on and won the Sony Open just 63 days afterwards, but this was your first PGA TOUR victory. So coming back here to defend, what's the feeling like? Is it a little different for you this week? Obviously a new experience.

PATTON KIZZIRE: Yeah, it is a little bit of a different experience, but it brings back such fond memories. I get here and I just -- I played the back nine today and I remembered this shot and that shot. Just brought a smile to my face really just stepping on this property.

We love it here. My wife and I come here and enjoy -- we take advantage of all the amenities that the resort, Mayakoba, offers, and it's just a great week.

It's great to be back. It's such an important tournament for me because I got off to a great start with the win here and that carried me all the way to the TOUR Championship. The FedExCup Playoffs is very important to all the players, and to get a win here really boosted my season and carried me all the way to the TOUR Championship. So I want to thank the Mayakoba Classic and everyone here that's just, it couldn't have happened any better.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right. We'll have the opportunity for some questions.

Q. Joe, would you say this is the strongest field you've ever seen here, seven Mexicans? How has the effort or what has the effort been to make this tournament (inaudible)?

JOE MAZZEO: Well, I think the effort that goes into any of these PGA TOUR events that happen anywhere throughout the world week in and week out is enormous. I think until you

truly live one kind of behind the scenes to realize how much goes into making sure that every last detail is covered, you never really fully grasp it.

We here at Mayakoba are fortunate that we have a venue as spectacular as Mayakoba, which makes our lives so much easier when it comes to putting on and hosting such an event of such caliber with so many important people and so many dear friends that come and join us.

Having four hotels, having a golf course of this quality, having an airport that has such great connectivity where it's easy for people to get here from all over, whether it's the United States or Latin America or even further afield, all of that just contributes to being able to make the event what it is.

But first and foremost amongst all of that is the hospitality of the people here. The Mexican people and the staff and the family at Mayakoba are experts and are among the best in the entire world at making people feel welcome and making them able to live and enjoy incredible experiences. That's what we see and what we hear from the players and everyone affiliated from the PGA TOUR. Like John was saying, like Patton was saying, bringing the wife, bringing the family, coming on vacation, making this more than just simply a week to go and play golf.

All the effort that we put into it is to be able to make these guys say those things, and not just say it, but to actually truly mean it. It's been great and we're proud of where we are and look forward to taking even bigger steps forward in the future.

Q. Last year you won against the favorite, Rickie Fowler, on the last hole. Now this year you have as competition Rickie, Jordan Spieth, Kisner, Tony Finau --

PATTON KIZZIRE: Keep going, keep going.

Q. -- Abraham Ancer, of course. How much does it mean to you that you have more competition tougher, and of course now as the defending champion?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Well, it was great to win last year, especially against such a great player, Rickie Fowler. People have heard through the grapevine, through the other players how great this place is. Jordan Spieth and Tony Finau and Rickie Fowler. I'm playing with Pat Perez and Jordan Spieth this week, which will be a lot of fun.

But we have such a great lineup and my hat's off to Joe, he's done a great job, but it's pretty easy to recruit to the Mayakoba. A little jab at Joe.

But no, it's just going to be a great week and it's awesome to see the tournament grow, and as the tournament grows, Mexican golf grows. We talk about the four players that are exempt on the tour, Jose de Jesus Rodriguez, Abraham Ancer, Roberto Diaz and Carlos Ortiz. They didn't just get here by chance, those guys are really good golfers. So it's good

to see those guys, and the competition keeps growing and the tournament keeps growing. It will be an even bigger tournament to win in the future.

Q. What's your opinion about this golf course particularly and what really about this golf course that really fit in your game?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Well, it's a wonderful golf course. It depends on the wind. I think if the wind is really blowing, it makes the course more difficult. The greens are so good. Last year I really took advantage of that, the smooth surface. I practically made every putt I really should have made, which that's kind of the key to my success is to make a lot of putts. But I kept the ball in play. With the wind blowing left to right, in and down, you get a lot of different winds, but I was able to keep the ball in front of me, keep it out of the mangroves, which is a tough spot. But I kept the ball in play and made putts. I really grinded at the end and had to make a lot of clutch saves and that was what carried me to the victory.

Q. What has changed? Last year you came here as a PGA player, now you came as a PGA champion. I presume it's your first press conference as defending champion, so what has changed in your game, in your life?

PATTON KIZZIRE: It's all good, all good changes. It's been such a great -- this tournament was such a great boost to my career, and to come back as defending champion is something that I'm learning how to do, which is you always have to do for the first time. It's a great learning experience. Winning the tournament last year was a great experience, coming back as defending champion is a great experience. So it's all part of the learning process and it feels good, it feels really good. Defending my championship will feel even better.

Q. Again, last year I asked you after you won that you didn't know how to celebrate, that you were looking for your caddie. You know how to do it. When you won in Hawaii, did you know how to do it now?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Exactly. I practiced -- I learned a little bit from my mistake here. Yeah, last year when I won, I didn't really know how to celebrate. I looked around for my caddie, I couldn't find him. I looked kind of awkward, I was worn out, tired, relieved. But I had that short putt to win the Sony and I said, "This time I'm going to give a little fist pump or something," so yes, I did learn. Thank you.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right, gentlemen. We appreciate your time. Thank you and good luck this week