

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
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RAFA CAMPOS

MODERATOR: You cracked the winner's circle this year.

RAFA CAMPOS: Yes.

MODERATOR: How has your life changed since then?

RAFA CAMPOS: It really hasn't changed much, but I finally did it. I finally did it. It's nine years as a pro, between Latin America, Canada, and the Web.com, and not having -- I can't say I didn't have success, I had a lot of success in all the tours, but not being able to crack that winner's circle started kind of really getting to me. And I really felt that -- whether I was doing things right or wrong, I really had no idea. And that moment a couple weeks ago when I won, that was just a huge, huge weight lifted off my back. And I was so emotional, and I still am. If I look at the videos, I still cry, because I know how it felt. And it's such a good feeling.

But after that, went back to work. I really wanted to go back to work. I really wanted to get another chance of winning tournaments. So, I mean, right now I think I'm just a little bit more motivated to give myself more tournaments, give myself more opportunities, and hopefully see if I can do something different or do the same thing, see if it works.

I'm obviously, really, really happy. Life per se hasn't changed much. But I did get to enjoy it with my family and friends a couple days after, after the win.

MODERATOR: And after missing a year, the Puerto Rico Open, what does it mean to kind of be back in full strength now?

RAFA CAMPOS: That's huge. We need to make sure that people understand that Puerto Rico is perfectly fine after the hurricane. I still talk to a lot of friends back in the states, and they are like, is it okay if we go? I'm like, guys, this is absolute -- it seems that we had no hurricane, you know, at this point. Obviously, we struggled a little bit the first five, six, seven months after the hurricane. But right now it's great.

So, having this event back, it really gives us the opportunity to showcase the island, once again, and actually make people see how nice it is. It's beautiful. It's actually nicer now, because there's a couple less palm trees out than before, so you can go to these areas and all of a sudden have nicer views, and all those things.

But having the Puerto Rico Open back again, it's huge for tourism, it's huge for the economy. It's huge for everybody just here on the island to be able to promote the island as well as we

can, and it's great to be back and have the Puerto Rico Open once again.

MODERATOR: And you played well here in the past. How would you evaluate your game coming in?

RAFA CAMPOS: My game is really good right now, it really is. I struggled the past couple weeks in Panama and Florida, but that's okay. That's golf. I really do feel my game is where it should be leading up to this tournament.

I was able to take three days off after the missed cut last week, and I think that kind of rejuvenated me a little bit more, and I'm ready. I think I really have high hopes for me this week. Not to put any pressure on myself, but I feel my game is where it should be for this type of golf course.

And hopefully we can just get off to a good start tomorrow and kind of start putting ourselves in a good spot. I think the biggest day for me is tomorrow. I kind of want to have a good start, not have to worry about cuts or anything, because I can't win if I don't make the cut. So, first things first. We got to make sure we play good golf for the first two days and then kind of see where we're at, see if we have to press a little bit more, or see what we do.

But the game is really good right now. I think all the preparation I have done the last five weeks has been for the better of my game, so I'm really happy. I'm really happy I'm here. I'm really happy my game is how it is right now. And hopefully I can just start tomorrow good and pace myself back from there.

MODERATOR: Perfect. We'll go ahead and open it up for questions.

Q. It's supposed to be pretty windy Thursday, Friday. We just saw a rainstorm go through like two minutes and then gone.

RAFA CAMPOS: Yes.

Q. What's kind of the key for people to have success on this golf course this week?

RAFA CAMPOS: Patience, I think is probably the biggest key out here. It is a little bit more windier than normal. This morning I went out, played nine holes, and I got -- I got here like at 6:30 in the morning, 7:00, and it was a lot windier at that time than normal.

But it's good for us. I like that. I do like wind. But patience I think is the key. Balls will move a little bit more than normal. It's going to be tougher to make some sort of putts and all that, but stay patient, try to keep the ball low. The course is fairly open. It's not a lot of problems off the tee, but it's a matter of trying to keep that ball low, keep it in front of you, keep it in play.

But, yeah, I prefer it blows 40 miles per hour, just so scores won't be low. It makes it harder

for everyone. But yeah, I think patience will be the key this week for good golf, not only for me, but for anybody out there on the field.

Q. This is the only PGA tour here in Puerto Rico, so you're going to be playing in front of junior Puerto Rican golfers, and kids get to see a fellow Puerto Rican play on the PGA tour. Do you try to block that out, or do you --

RAFA CAMPOS: No. That is the one thing I actually do not try to block out.

I know my role as a professional golfer being Puerto Rican, it's not only just to play good for myself, but it is to promote golf on the island, to promote the youth to actually pick up a golf club, or actually just get more motivated and hopefully inspire other people to actually get back into this generation and actually play some golf and hopefully be with me on the Web.com or on the PGA tour. That's the biggest, the biggest goal I have right now, is to do that. Apart from making it on the PGA tour. But that is the one thing I honestly do not get rid of. I block everybody else out.

I really have no idea people are following me when I'm out there on the golf course. I do hear the cheers, I do hear that. That serves as motivation. But if I see kids around there, that definitely motivates me more, because really that's my main goal, is to make sure these kids kind of get inspired or kind of realize that, hey, this kid did it and he's right here playing in front of us inside the ropes. I want to be able to do that in the next three, five, 10 years. So, that's the one thing I really do not block. I actually want to get them inside of me, so I -- say if I hit a bad shot or something like that, I know I won't get upset, because I'm trying to make an example, positive example, to these kids.

So, yeah, that's a good question, because that's -- I do want people to understand that that's our main goal here. And I don't think it's only me, but like the other three Puerto Ricans that are playing. They have to understand that we are ambassadors to this game, to Puerto Rico, and we show an example for other people, so we should hopefully do the job.

Q. To that question, how easy -- kind of a fine line you have to walk, because you obviously want to win the golf tournament.

RAFA CAMPOS: Yes.

Q. And that requires an incredible amount of focus and determination. Do you have to make adjustments, or do you have to say, okay, this particular week I am going to make -- set aside time for the kids and for this and that, phone calls, text messages, and all the -- you know, the people asking me to be at this function and this function?

RAFA CAMPOS: Sure.

Q. How are you able to balance that?

RAFA CAMPOS: It is a tough week. This week for me, it really is a tough week. Like I said, I do understand my -- where I stand in golf and what it means to be a professional golfer from Puerto Rico. It is a fine line.

I mean, I had to change my schedule a little bit, especially for this week. My practice routines have had to be a little shorter, but I have had to focus a little bit more. But you have to set -- like I said, this is part of my job. And you really have to set this time apart. Your work schedule changes. You know how to hit the ball, or I know how to hit the ball. I know the golf course also. But definitely have to set the time apart and just try to spend the time with the kids, spend the time with the media, do everything you have to do just to be able to -- that part of the game, promote the game of golf, promote the event as much as we can, but at the same time not taking away so much time off of our work schedule.

That's why I had to wake up earlier than normal this morning for a Wednesday, to go play the pro-am. But at the same time, after the pro-am, I spent like an hour, hour and a half hitting balls, trying to fix a couple things I needed to do, to then do all the media. But fine line, but it's well worth it.

I believe we all understand what we have to do, and we are able to kind of manage around it and actually change the things around the schedule to make it as positive and good for us to go out and play some good golf.

Q. One other question. I think I remember you telling the story how you got into the game of golf. Did your dad have a hand in it, where he would (inaudible)?

RAFA CAMPOS: My dad, yes. They invited my dad and my uncle to go play golf five minutes away from here, in Riomar. And I was nine years old. My younger brother was seven years old. My three cousins were 10, 10, and 11. And neither my dad nor my uncle had ever picked up a golf club. And they said, okay, we got to go play, but then their moms -- my mom, my aunt, they go, oh, it's your turn, your day with the kids. We're going shopping, so you stay with the kids.

And so they -- one, my parents had no -- my dad had no idea what he was getting himself into, so they just let us off, all five of us. They just dropped us off at the range. They had no idea it took four hours to play golf, four or five hours. So, we were there on the range for like four hours, five hours, just five of us just pounding balls.

And ironically enough, like the week after, week and a half afterwards, we were all -- all five of us were at a golf summer camp, and it was so cool, two weeks.

And the truth is, having my younger brother, having my cousins all being around the same age, it was really cool. That kind of -- we all stayed playing golf, we all kept playing golf. And to this day, if we have a chance, we're all together, we will go out to play. But that's pretty much how we started. And slowly, my brother -- my brother was so good at golf. He still is. Unbelievable talent, but has preferred to do other things.

But like I said, that's how I started -- that's the day we picked up the golf club. And fortunately, everybody still plays, weekend golfers, or whatnot.

But yeah, that's a really cool story. But I couldn't have kept on going if I didn't have my brother and my three cousins there at that time, that's for sure.

Q. How well do you know the other Puerto Rican golfers who are in the field?

RAFA CAMPOS: Very, very, very well. Max Alverio I have known since nine years -- since I was nine years old, since I got -- you know, to start playing golf.

And after that summer camp, I was there like a year afterwards. We got into the junior program here in Puerto Rico. And Max was already there. He was my idol, one of my idols. I had like three idols back then: Rafa Doro, Erick Morales, Max Alverio. I'm like these -- it's the same thing that I want younger kids to look at, not only me, but these guys. I look at them, I want to be like them. I really want to play like them, be like them. And so Max I know extremely well. And Hedo I have known extremely well. Great golfer. Lives in Florida, obviously, in Orlando. But we played -- we have been playing for the last eight years together, more than likely. And Edward, I know him for the last five years, I believe when he turned pro, and he is one unbelievable player. I mean, unbelievable talent. Hits the ball great. Currently I think he's on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica and Canada. He just -- he will -- he will make it, that's for sure. But I got -- I got to play with him in the America's Cup, which was I want to say five years ago, four years ago.

Q. The team, you guys were together?

RAFA CAMPOS: Yeah, we were together. And we finished second. The only guys that beat us were Matt Kuchar, and I forgot who Matt's partner was at that moment. So, it served not only for me as a motivation, but also for him I'm pretty sure as well. I got to see how good he is. But yeah, I know all three of them extremely well. And I can't -- I'm rooting for them as well this week, and I really hope we have all four of us at least playing the weekend this week.

Q. Was Maria Torres in summer camp, too, or no?

RAFA CAMPOS: I mean at that age, at 9 years old? No, no. I didn't even know how to pick up a golf club. I mean, I still see videos, I'm like how did I start actually hitting the ball off at 10, because at 9 I couldn't even lift it up.

But Maria, no. Maria is, I want to say, like seven years younger than I am. I believe she's like 22, 23 years old. First player from Puerto Rico to be on the LPGA tour. She was in contention in a major already. And I'm very extremely impressed with her. Because she -- she has outworked everybody I know. And that's -- I remember seeing her in Dorado let's say when we were practicing and she'd have this big binder portfolio. I'm like, oh, what

is that? She's like, oh, this is my schedule. I'm like, you're only 15, 16, you haven't even gotten to college yet. This was before she went to college, to Florida. And when I looked at it, it was like, okay, I'm going to eat a watermelon in the morning, then you have to go practice for an hour, then like you have lunch from 11:30 to 12:30. It was a full schedule of -- I mean, that's how you have to do it.

At some point -- you have people that work for them. I'm not -- I can't really -- I do have my set schedule of routines, but that's 15, 16 years old, you know. And I was completely impressed with her. And she deserves it more than anyone. She deserves to be on the LPGA tour. And she will do great. This is only her second year starting off right now, so she kept her card, and that's unbelievable. She went through Q-School, got to the LPGA tour, kept her card the first year, that's huge. And I know she's going to do great this year, so I'm really happy for her and pulling for her for sure.

MODERATOR: Last question. How much fun was it hanging out with the kids and with Iván yesterday?

RAFA CAMPOS: That was awesome. It really was, especially Ivan I have known for eight years, nine years. We play a lot of golf together whenever we can, whenever we're together. But he's so good with kids. That's what I was -- I was more like -- I felt like a kid. I was more like -- I had the mics on and everything, but I'm like, I just want to listen to this guy talk. It was great. You can tell he knows so much about his sport and so much about golf, and but he's -- you can tell he's worked so much with kids. And he has foundations that help the kids out as well. Natural talent, to be a pure role model and teacher for younger generations. But that was -- it was a blast to spend like an hour, hour and a half with the kids, kind of hitting a couple shots and playing a couple games. So, yeah, like I said, I mean, we had probably like 80 -- probably like 80 kids yesterday and I know a lot of them don't play golf, but that's why we were there. We kind of want to tell them like, hey, you know, golf is -- it's not that we want you guys to play golf or baseball. You got priorities. But these sports actually teach you a lot of things, like humility, respect, generosity. And that's our main -- and education. Something we stressed out yesterday in the clinic was, guys, you have to go to school. I mean, it's -- just because you get to become a better person, you get to learn, you get to grow as a person. And that's something we have to make sure we stress out to everyone.

Like, my priority when I went to college was not to play golf, it was to graduate, get an education. You never know what can happen with golf. And it was really fun to spend time with the kids yesterday and pledge to actually teach the kids a little bit more. Hopefully they got something out of it. But if there's anything that we want them to get in these clinics is just like, hey, sports are a good way to get better as a person and stay in school, keep working hard and be respectful to your elders, your peers, and you will do great.

MODERATOR: Rafa, thanks for your time.

RAFA CAMPOS: Thanks, guys.