

RETIEF GOOSEN (-6)

LAURA VESCOVI: Good afternoon. I would like to congratulate our champion, Retief Goosen, at the Bridgestone SENIOR PLAYERS Championship. It's your first win on tour. It's been a big year, you were inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame this year. How are you feeling overall?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, the year's really going well. Didn't start a whole lot great in the beginning of the year with a broken finger and all that kind of stuff. Yeah, then the Hall of Fame, and then I started playing nicely after that.

Lost in a playoff at the U.S. Open. I messed up a little coming in unfortunately, but this week was very much up and down, too. Played great the first two rounds and then didn't play all that bad yesterday and just let the course get the better of me. And today it was playing tough again. It was tough to get close, tough to make birdies, but managed to finish with four birdies in the last six holes or seven holes, so it was nice to pull it off.

LAURA VESCOVI: And this tournament previously was a rotating tournament. We're back at Firestone. Was there a lot of good buzz this week about returning to this course?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah. I mean, it's an unbelievable course. It's a golf course that hitting the fairways is number one priority, and even if you're on the fairway, sometimes you struggle to get close. It's a great golf course. This week it played tough with the way the wind blew. It blew pretty much across the whole course, the whole week, so you either had it off the left or off the right, so it wasn't always that easy to hit the fairways.

LAURA VESCOVI: And last question from me before I open it up, this tournament win now earns you an exemption into THE PLAYERS Championship at TPC Sawgrass. Is that something you're going to be excited and looking forward to?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, I like that course. I finished second there before once, so it will be nice to go play back there and play with the young kids again. It's a golf course I very much like and hopefully I can play well there.

It's been 10 years since I've last won a tournament. The nerves were there, and to have those nerves a little bit again in the last few weeks, you know, you've just got to put yourself in a position all the time to get used to it again and that's what I've done and it finally paid off this week.

Q. Retief, what was your mindset with the bunker shot on 16 and how did that execution possibly free you for 17 and 18?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, I made a mess with the second shot there. I hit a pretty thick line of rough and I thought the ball was going to come out a little dead and it came out hot and went right through the fairway. Really, I had no choice but to try and hit the middle of the green and if it does go long, you've got to take a chance. Couldn't take a chance with a 60 and try and fly it just over the water. So I was really trying to aim it at that back bunker and if it stays on the green, great, and if it doesn't, it's not too hard a bunker shot but you've still got to play the shot.

It came out a little further than I wanted to, so I left myself a little tricky downhill putt. That was a key par to stay tied for the lead, and knowing now that I saw that after I teed off on 17 that day and Petrovic were finished at 4 under, I knew I had to make one birdie and a par. Managed to walk away with two birdies on these last two holes here is a bonus.

Q. Retief, your decision to hit iron on 17, could you talk a little bit about that, please?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah. I've just hit that fairway once this week. I hit twice in the bunker and once in the fairway. My decision, because the wind today was a little different direction than yesterday, it was into the wind and today was downwind. I thought if I can hit a good 4-iron, I can have a 9-iron or 8-iron in. I hit it a little heavy so it didn't quite go as far, so I had a 7-iron in, which wasn't actually such a bad club besides it was a long way from the hole. But I didn't have to worry about too much spin, that ball coming off the that slope just short of the flag. It landed perfectly on the slope and just stayed on top.

That was a tricky putt with pretty much two cups of break on it. Once that putt went in, okay, now par on the last. It's not a given on that hole, but I probably hit the best drive I've hit all week.

Q. Once you don't have to make birdie on 18, that's certainly not a birdie hole.

RETIEF GOOSEN: No, no. Eighteen, the tee shot is just, you've pretty much got an eight-yard area to land in and keep it on the fairway there. Like I said, I probably hit my best drive I hit all week.

Q. Did you debate on 17 tee what to hit or were you going to hit an iron no matter what?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, no, I was going to hit an iron. I thought, as I say, if I hit a good 4-iron, I'm going to probably have a 9-iron or 8-iron in, which is not a bad club. I just didn't quite hit it as flush off the tee as I would have liked to. My main goal was to keep it on the fairway and out of those bunkers because every time I hit it in a bunker this week I was under the face of the bunker.

Q. You said it had been 10 years since you won, but did you get any of the old feeling like back in the good old days? Did that kick in on 17 or something?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Well, I surprisingly felt okay with myself. I wasn't really -- you're tense, but I wasn't like really shaking or anything. I felt actually quite calm. I knew what I had to do really coming down the last or the last few holes. Maybe that in a way sort of I knew I had to play aggressive, so I told myself as long as you hit the fairways on 17 and 18, give yourself birdie chances, you could maybe get one, and managed to get two.

Q. What was the moment like on 18 when you made the birdie? Usually you don't let out quite that emotion, but you let out two hands in the air. What was that moment like?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, no. Although I had a good drive and a nice pitching wedge and a great shot, it still was one of those -- one of the quickest putts on the golf course. I was just trying to make it just fall in the hole, which it did. It was just a great feeling to do it. And obviously a few weeks ago I pretty much had a similar putt or maybe a little shorter to win and missed it, so it was nice to pull it off this time.

Q. What did you hit into two?

RETIEF GOOSEN: I hit 4-iron.

Q. To about three and a half?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Close enough to make it, yeah.

Q. Laura asked you earlier about this course, but are you glad, you know, that it's going to be -- Bridgestone is sponsoring it for three more years? Are you glad to know it's back?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, you know, I played this golf course many times over the years and I've had my good rounds and bad rounds, but never really had a chance to win anything here. You know, it's tough to put four good rounds around this golf course. There's always going to be a day that you're just too far left, too far right, and that's what happened with me yesterday. Today was, after my double bogey on 11, I thought here we go. But really, the birdie putt on the next and birdieing those two holes really put me back in it.

Q. I was just curious, similar to what she just asked, I think it's been seven years since you last played here. I was curious, did you think the conditions were tougher today or were the conditions pretty similar to the last time you played it for a WGC?

RETIEF GOOSEN: I think the difference is the rough isn't quite as heavy as when we played the event here in the past. In the past if you hit it in the rough, it was pretty much a muscle to get it to the green. Now in a way you can get to the green, but what makes it tough, you can get to the green but you can't control the flight and the spin. As the course dried off after the rain on the first day, coming out of the rough with a pitching wedge, it was

hard to hit the green. The course played really nice just the way I like it. I like a course that plays tough and you don't have to make birdie on every hole.

LAURA VESCOVI: Thank you. Thanks, Retief.