

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 12, 2019



MATT KUCHAR

MODERATOR: Matt, thank you for joining us today. We're going to get you the headphones to get you the simultaneous translation, but obviously we were saying how excited and honored everyone at Mayakoba is for what will surely be a great week.

And some of the final remarks there, that with your permission, it would be wonderful if we're able to have a Mexican champion come Sunday to celebrate Mexican golf, but barring that, we would be honored to have you as the back-to-back champion. That's never happened in the history of Mayakoba Golf Classic.

As we continue, if you would like, we would love to have an opening statement, a few opening remarks from you. Back on property again a month later after visiting us for media day and here we are a year later from that great win.

MATT KUCHAR: Yeah, it's hard to believe it's been a year. So excited to be back, to be back as defending champion. To come back on property to see posters, the billboards leading up, to see all the excitement for the tournament, to see my face as the defending champion, it's a real thrill.

I know last year was an amazing week for me to be able to play the golf I played, to come up 18 with an opportunity to win and sink the winning putt on 18, I can't describe what an amazing feeling that was. It had been more than four years since I had last won a tournament and just such a special, special feeling for me.

This place, I've been coming down with my wife, Sybi, and my kids now for I don't know if it's been 15 years since we made our first visit here, and to have such great memories here and solidify the win last year was so special.

I know what happened post tournament with David is something I'm not proud of, made some headlines that certainly I'm definitely not proud of, but I've done my best to make amends, to make things right with David, to do things right by the community. This tournament is such a great tournament, one I want to make -- you know, make everybody know that I'm proud to be the champion of, let everybody know how proud I am of this event. I've always wanted this whole facility to be held in great light and I've tried to use this opportunity to learn from mistakes, to grow, to try to learn and be better. I'm proud of being able to make the amends like I have with David and the community, and certainly very excited to get this week started and off to hopefully a good start here.

Q. You've been to Mayakoba several times over the years, you mentioned 15 years ago. Tell us a little bit about the experiences off the golf course that you've enjoyed,

what your sort of thoughts are about Mayakoba as a place to be and to spend time?

MATT KUCHAR: It's amazing. Once you get inside the gates, you have so many opportunities within the resort itself to enjoy the beauty, the peacefulness, whether it's taking the boat through the canals, sitting on the beach, getting in the beautiful water. We've tried to do anything and everything inside of the gates and then anything and everything outside as well. One of the cool things here in this region is going exploring, going down to Tulum and seeing the Mayan ruins and the old cities and then seeing the cenotes and just so many outdoor adventures that I so enjoy doing with the family and the family enjoys whenever we get a chance to come down. It's a place I recommend to friends, and every time somebody comes down here, they continue to rave about it as well.

Q. Another question that I think we'll ask and then we'll open it for questions to our friends gathered here today, if you could talk a little bit about Mexican golf and where it is today. Obviously several Mexican players on the PGA TOUR, Abraham Ancer just finished fourth place in the World Golf Championships event over in China, Carlos Ortiz is now a veteran member of the Tour, been out for a number of years, other players coming strong behind him. From your perspective, what is your take on the state of golf of Mexicans on the PGA TOUR?

MATT KUCHAR: Yeah, Mexicans should be very proud of what they have with the state of their professionals on the PGA TOUR and those within the pipeline as well. On the PGA TOUR, you keep hearing about more and more great players, junior players coming out of Mexico. I know I see it on the PGA TOUR. You guys have kick started it in the professional ranks with a tournament here. You guys have been going 10 years now?

MODERATOR: Thirteen.

MATT KUCHAR: Thirteen years. Holy cow, 13 years. And now to see the World Golf Championships in Mexico City. I played the America's Cup down in Mexico City. We're just kind of seeing a lot of growth in the game here in Mexico and seeing a lot of great players. A lot to be proud of from the standpoint of being proud of the Mexican golfers.

MODERATOR: Last question for you before we open it up. Let's talk a little technical, the golf course. I know you just arrived, you haven't had a chance to see it yet, but you were here a month and a half ago and obviously quite familiar with it having won. What's the secret, what's the key, what's the professional's, what's the champion's perspective on El Camaleon?

MATT KUCHAR: It is a proper championship test of golf. You've got to play some good golf to win this tournament, in particular driving it well. If you're missing fairways, it means you're in the mangroves, you're in the hazard, you're taking penalty drops, you're really in trouble.

If you're driving it well, you have a chance to perform well from there, but the wind typically

will pick up in the afternoons and when the wind picks up, you had better be hitting the ball solid, you had better be in control. Even if you do find the fairways, the approach shots are awfully challenging as well. So this is really a championship level golf course and demands the best out of players.

Q. During the tournament last year, you set the 18-, 36-, 54- and 72-hole records or tied them. Do you think that's the best you've ever played in your career or is there somewhere else that --

MATT KUCHAR: It's got to be (inaudible). Certainly for the first three rounds I was in quite a bit of control. The fourth round I didn't score quite as well, but yeah, I always enjoy playing the game when you're really playing well. I was very much enjoying it. I knew exactly what I was doing, I had full control of the golf ball, and around this place you have to be. There's so many hazards to navigate through. Last year, I know I've had some great rounds of golf, but to be able to have three straight great rounds of golf and back it up with a very solid round is probably one of the best tournaments I've ever put together.

Q. And secondly just to follow up, the Mayakoba Golf Classic and the FedExCup began in the same year, so they're both approaching their 13th seasons. You are one of nine players on the Tour in those 13 years that reached the FedExCup Playoffs every single season. What does that say about your game and how proud are you of an achievement like that?

MATT KUCHAR: Hugely proud. I sometimes pinch myself. I'm 41 years old now, I think I turned pro in 2000, 2001. It's been a long go, it's been a great go.

I had some friends over the house the other day and I've got just a bit of an area where I keep the Presidents Cup and Ryder Cup golf bags. I think somebody said, "I can't believe you've got nine now." It's something I'm hugely proud of.

I remember a stage in my career as a professional golfer where I thought that may not be something I could attain. I thought that was beyond -- I remember (inaudible) I fell back to the Nationwide Tour where I had -- I was just hoping to keep my card on the PGA TOUR was a big goal of mine, and now to be a Ryder Cupper, a Presidents Cupper, kind of a mainstay on those teams has been a real thrill for me. But to have that longevity is something I'm very, very proud of.

Q. So as you were saying, you hadn't won in plenty of long time before winning here. Do you consider this gave you some confidence back?

MATT KUCHAR: Oh, definitely. It was very much a springboard. 2018 was a bit of a frustrating season for me, definitely one that did not see my best performances, but to be able to bounce back and continue kind of working towards some goals I had. To come down here, when you win a PGA TOUR event, it gives you a feeling for that week that you're the very best player in the world. For that week, you stand on the green on Sunday and accept

the trophy and you feel like you've beaten the best in the world who came out to challenge the golf course in the tournament. It's hard to describe what a great feeling that is.

I think it's such a great feeling because it doesn't happen often. I think if it happened on a weekly basis or even a monthly basis, it may not be quite as special. But golf is such a challenging game. There's some guys who set the bar so high that sometimes if a guy wins once, twice in a season that's great, but the bar's been set high by the Tiger Woods and the Phil Mickelsons and now we've got the new crop of Dustin Johnsons and Brooks Koepkas and Justin Thomases who seem to win multiple times a year.

It is hard going head to head with those guys every week and then trying to come out on top, and when you do, it's an amazing feeling. I certainly would say it springboarded me to arguably the best year I've had.

Q. After what happened last year with David, personally what happened in your life after reading all the headlines, how life changed? How personally as a player, how are you changed after what happened?

MATT KUCHAR: Yeah, that was a tough thing on me and my family, but it was really tough when I heard from my grandmother and she's reading headlines about her grandson. I think I've always tried to make her proud. I've got kids of my own, you try to set a good example.

I'm disappointed in myself. It's a moment I'm not proud of, but it's one of those things you do your best as a father to teach kids lessons, and there's no better thing than to show them -- taking the lead and showing them the right steps to take. When you have moments you're not proud of, you make amends for them, you do your best to make it right and try to keep moving forward and staying positive.

I think I equate it a lot to team sports, you know. You learn a lot in losses, you learn a lot in hard times. Certainly it's given me an opportunity for growth, for self-betterment. I try in situations to definitely not make that mistake again but to be better in so many areas, to try to be more charitable, try to be more giving, try to take more opportunities to do the right things and do really good things.

I think as a whole I'm proud of the life I've led, I think I've done a lot of good, but you look back at certain instances, I've got some I'm not proud of. I'm proud of the way I've tried to make them right.

Q. Matt, if you would, he mentioned Golf Para Todos. If I may interject, Matt was kind enough to visit with us and participate in one of our special sessions of Golf Para Todos. If you could, maybe share your remarks about the same question about the golf expert fan and the golf new fan and the young people perhaps?

MATT KUCHAR: It was such a thrill to see the kids get golf. I have two boys who are 10 and 12 and you do your best as a parent to open as many doors as possible for your kids.

To be able to have that opportunity here for kids, to open the door to golf, what a great game it is. We've seen in the tournaments we go to, the different First Tee programs that have been so influential in kids' lives. I think here at Mayakoba they have a homegrown version that is doing just that, it's opening these opportunities, giving the kids a chance to play golf and experiences that come with that, whether it's leadership, honesty, you name it.

The things that come out of golf are such great qualities. I was excited. Anytime you see a kid excited about anything, it makes you excited. Bringing a smile to a kid's face is always a fun opportunity. To see these kids get a chance to play golf, and you guys all know how it feels if you hit a good shot, watch the kids all of a sudden hit one better than they hit before, they get really excited. I was really excited to see what you guys were doing here to give kids that chance and that opportunity.

MODERATOR: Some pretty good swings, too. Well, thank you for participating in that, Matt, and thank you for your generosity in supporting that program and the other general programs we have for the tournament. We really appreciate that.

Q. Are you playing another tournament before the Presidents Cup and how much of a preparation is this tournament with so many Internationals playing here?

MATT KUCHAR: Yes, so my schedule, I'm here this week. Next week is the RSM Classic on Sea Island, I'll play there. Then I'll play Tiger's Hero World Invitational in the Bahamas the week before the Presidents Cup. So I'll have this followed by two more events before the Presidents Cup.

I've had a nice break. It's been probably one of the longest breaks I've had in any recent or long-term memory away from golf, away from tournament golf. I've still been playing a lot with the kids and still having a good time with the game, but I ramped back up practicing a couple weeks ago, really gung ho to put on a good showing for this week.

I haven't had too many opportunities to defend a title. I think up to this point I've had seven chances to defend a title and I've yet to be successful in defending it. Had a couple good runs, but it would be a thrill for me to go ahead and defend the title and be champion once again.

But certainly, I'm very excited to be back competing this week and also building for Presidents Cup as well. That's kind of the long term. In the short term, I am 100 percent focused on playing well this week.

Q. You just mentioned that 2018 was obviously a tough year, like we know. Towards the end of the year, you kind of like got it together and it carried on through 2019, which is your best year yet. What changed?

MATT KUCHAR: I think I could point my finger, I've had a lot of people ask just that. The best answer I've given is I've basically stuck to the plan. I've been working with my golf

coach, Chris O'Connell, since 2006. We had kind of a great year one after another. 2018 was a disappointing one for sure for me. I was really excited to play for Jim Furyk at Ryder Cup in France. I didn't make that team. I didn't even make I think the BMW Championship playoff event.

I was wondering, do I go back to the drawing board, do I need to retool. I was just off a little bit in almost every category. I think if you looked at my stats, every category I dropped just a bit. I really stuck to the plan, and Chris has continued to kind of tweak and my golf swing continues to evolve, but no big changes other than sticking to what we set out to do.

I don't know if this course -- I've had some good history. Joe has recruited me in the past years with some fun stats, the idea for a while I had the lowest scoring average around El Camaleon, and so I think I missed playing here a couple years and Joe reminded me that I had the lowest scoring average here. So it must be just some good feelings towards this place that maybe helped kickstart me and get me back believing that I was a good player again.