

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT

SHARON SHIN: I would like to welcome in Christiaan Bezuidenhout to the press conference here at the Rocket Mortgage Classic.

Christiaan, you're currently ranked number 46 in the World Golf rankings and you're making your Rocket Mortgage Classic debut. Can we just get some comments?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. So far we've been welcomed back by everyone here at the Rocket Mortgage Classic. Looking forward to the week.

SHARON SHIN: And you're making your seventh PGA TOUR start. Can you talk a little bit about your transition here from the European Tour and how that's been for you?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yeah, I mean, ever since I came to the States, it's been great. Obviously a lot I had a great run just before the lockdown started. Played well at THE PLAYERS, which was canceled at the end, but yeah, good to be back and good to be competing again and see how it goes this week.

SHARON SHIN: And talk a little bit more about that. What has been the biggest difference for you entering the PGA TOUR and being able to play with the some of the best players here in the United States?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Personally, it's just getting used to the environment here, getting used to all the players, used to courses here, different grass than you play in Europe and South Africa. So just get used to the things here. Make myself comfortable here and just settle yourself into playing.

SHARON SHIN: Great, we'll take this time to take some questions from the media.

Q. Thank you for doing this, I appreciate it. Obviously juggling the PGA TOUR and European Tour schedule is never easy in the best of times. I'm wondering if you've even looked at what your European Tour schedule is and whether you're going to be able to play any of those events realistically?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Obviously I have looked at the European Tour schedule, but I'm not going to play in this swings coming up now in July. I'm just going to focus myself here in the States, try to play as many as I can, and then obviously at the end of the year I'll get back over to the European Tour.

Q. Can I ask a quick follow? Is it a tough situation, because you want to support the European Tour, they're in a tough financial state as it is. You're loyalties are divided?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yeah, I mean, obviously you're loyal to the European Tour and stuff, but you also want to place yourself on the PGA TOUR at the end of the year. I've got exemption until the end of 2022 on the European Tour, so I can focus more on the PGA TOUR now and try to get my card here and then place myself here.

Q. Just having played a couple of events on the PGA TOUR, what is it like, what has the experience been like? How different has it been? What have been the challenges and maybe the advantages of not having fans and all the different strangeness?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yeah, obviously we've got challenges every week with different courses, different players every week, different grass, but you've got three days off preparation to get yourself ready for the week ahead. Yeah, I'll say it's just, it's a different environment you have to get used to. I've been playing on the European Tour for three years now and you get used to the environment now and used to the players and used to courses and stuff now, so you almost get comfortable playing there.

I'm looking forward to getting myself comfortable here and to try to compete week in, week out.

Q. Christiaan, where were you based during the suspension of play in the U.S. and how much of an influence have some of the other South African golfers had on your career, Ernie Els, Louis in particular?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yeah, I flew back home after THE PLAYERS got canceled, so I was back in South Africa for two and a half months, spending time there. Next came back over to the States to quarantine before Colonial, which was my first tournament back.

But yeah, so I've actually got pretty good relationships with most of the South African guys. Obviously Ernie Els has been my hero growing up and I've always been part of his foundations back in South Africa for six years, so he's actually been a really big influence in my career over the last 10 or so years. He's obviously a great guy to be friends with. I can phone him anytime of the day and I always learn something from him. He's been out here for 25 years, won four majors, so he's a great guy to be around.

Q. What's the best benefit that you receive from his foundation and what words of encouragement did he give you that you could come play here in the U.S.?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: The foundation is a great steppingstone. They gave you all the opportunity to compete all around the world. I've been there for six years now and I learned a lot, which was great. Yeah, the PGA TOUR is the Tour to play on, it's the best players in the world here, so if I can keep my card here and then base myself here in the

future.

Q. And do you remember the first time you met him?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yes. I met Ernie Els when he was actually playing the Nedbank Golf Challenge in South Africa, Sun City. I met him in 2003 when I was nine years old, when he played. That was the first time, yeah.

Q. You're one of the few players who is playing now that wasn't living in the United States during the suspension of play. I'm wondering if you have maybe a little more trepidation about the testing every week because if you test positive, you're going to be stuck in a strange city with no way to get home. Can you just talk us through your thinking and what that's like for you?

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Yeah, most of the time I'm just trying to be cautious, wear my mask, sanitize my hands every five minutes. I'm just very careful about the attitude to pick up the virus. Most of the time I just stay in my room, eat in every night. I think I take it more serious than any other player here. But yeah, I mean, so far, so good. I've done all the testing and stuff, so hopefully it will be good in the end as well.

SHARON SHIN: Do we have any more questions for Christiaan? All right. Christiaan, thank you so much for your time and good luck this week.

CHRISTIAAN BEZUIDENHOUT: Thanks a lot.