

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**September 9, 2020**



**ROCCO MEDIATE**

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**CHRIS RICHARDS:** Rocco, welcome back to Sioux Falls and the Sanford International.

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** Glad to be back.

**CHRIS RICHARDS:** Just talk about what you feel when you come back to a tournament as the defending champion. So many good memories, right?

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** Yeah, it happens so often. It really doesn't. It's good to come back. Does it mean anything? Not necessarily. I played it really well last year and the year before actually, but to have that -- to have won somewhere, it's always special, you remember all the stuff. I loved the golf course the first time I saw it. It's old school, right in front of you, and the last couple years the rough was up, which I like. It shows you if you drive it in the fairway, you get rewarded. It's just good stuff. I love the old stuff and this is exceptional. The place it great.

**CHRIS RICHARDS:** And how are you playing right now coming into this week?

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** I played good a couple weeks ago. Everything's coming around, a lot of changes in the COVID offseason we'll call it. Everything's coming around. It takes time sometimes, but everything's where it needs to be.

**Q. You're a guy that loves to relate to the fans.**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** Yes.

**Q. How much are you looking forward to having some fans here?**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** It will be nice, it will be nice. I like the noise and everything. I like feeling surrounded, I've always enjoyed that part. So it will be nice to see people clapping, hopefully clapping. Just noise. This may be the -- is this the first sporting event like in any sport?

**Q. In golf.**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** That's pretty cool. Well, in golf, okay. It's pretty cool that it's us and it's here, so it's nice. It will be nice. The people, I'm sure they'll show up, they have every year and they've been waiting, so it will be good.

**Q. How tough is it out there? The competition level keeps going up Seems by the week on this tour, but you're used to it from the days on the PGA TOUR, but it's a**

**pretty impressive roster of players out there on the course.**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** To make it simple, we all work -- I would say I could probably speak to every one of us out here, we all work just as hard or harder than we did when we played the regular tour. I know I did, because if you don't, you get run over and stepped on. The competition out here's just as deep as I've ever played on on the regular tour because it's the regular tour, just older, you know what I mean?

I always say this: We shouldn't get worse as we get older. We may lose a little speed or this or that, but that doesn't really matter, it's just a matter of making a score. So the bottom of the club, it doesn't matter what you're hitting, you can still make scores out here. Like I said before, the guys that outdrove me 30 yards on the regular tour, guess what, they outdrive me 30 yards here, nothing's changed.

But the distance part, we never talked about it. We knew like Freddie hit it four miles, Davis, we knew that, but we didn't care because we're still trying to make a score. Now it's the whole thing what's everything's about, which it's going the opposite way. Out here there's more shots, more curve, different clubs than just full-out 150-yard wedges, that's a 7-iron, it's been for 35 years.

So you look at it that way, the competition out here just keeps getting better just like it does on the regular tour. They're coming out here ready to go, and even guys that have been gone for a while, like DeMarco was gone for a while. He started out a little slow, all of a sudden he's up there a bunch of times. It just takes a little time when you're out for a while. But when you come back right off the Tour, it's brutal. So I don't know, I think we all work just as hard. You have to.

**Q. Pretty amazing when you think about it, you're the only sport where at age 50 and on up like Langer's 63, that at our age you can still be playing darn competitive --**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** Oh, God.

**Q. -- where in other sports --**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** You're done, you're right. It's like I don't feel 57 whatsoever. I still treat myself -- I still feel like I'm 30, but it's a different game now to where we kind of know how to do it. But it's still the same thing, how good can you pitch and how good can you putt, because most of us can get it from point A to point B okay, but it's the other stuff that really still matters. It's the same thing.

I tell the kids, some of the kids I talk to that are up-and-coming guys that are going to start playing the Tour probably pretty soon, make one more putt a day. Think about that, just one, not six, one a day, add them up at the end of the year, astronomical numbers. One more putt. Maybe get one more up-and-down that you don't usually get up and down a day or a week and add all that up and that's where -- that's where you see the biggest difference.

It's just an amazing sport, but it's always been the same, it's always been the same, how good can you pitch, how good can you putt. The best strikers hit 13, 14 greens a day. The best guys. What about those other three or four or five they miss? That's the key. And it's still the key and it's always going to be the key no matter what anybody says about.

They talk about the driving stat on the regular tour. The fairways don't really matter. Well, if you hit it 340 in the rough and I hit it 280 in the middle of every fairway, who's going to win? In the long run, the guy in the fairway will. I don't care what these stats say, these books that have been written about the strokes gained driving. I mean, you've seen it the last couple weeks when there's been rough on the golf course on the regular tour.

Look what Dustin did the last two days, he drove his ball in the fairway. First two days he couldn't find it. Wins the golf tournament. Morikawa, hits it far, but not "those guys" far. What did he do at the PGA? He drove his ball in the fairway. What happened? He got the trophy.

Still in the big events, like last year here if you didn't drive in the fairway, you were pretty much toast most of the time. And I think that's how it should be Because everyone wants to make more birdies.

**Q. How much fun was it for you to win here last year?**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** Oh, it's great, it's always fun. It was a weird way, I've never won from -- I shouldn't say, I don't really know if I've won from behind. But you don't know what's going to happen.

But that day, it was a nasty day. It was windy, greens were firm, it was brutal. I didn't think -- I felt like if I birdie the last hole after I birdie 17 that I would have a shot maybe. Kenny kind of got, as you saw, two. Hit a beautiful tee shot, just kept going and it was toast. Then the next one, I didn't really see it but I know it was terrible.

So those things happen. Didn't expect that at all. I was expecting maybe if I'm lucky I could get in a playoff, but I figured he would win outright because hit some beautiful shots coming in, just missed on 17 and 18. Just bad luck, that's what happens, because he didn't make really a bad swing off 18. They had it on the other day, it was pretty, just kept going in a horrible place.

**Q. What did it mean for you to win?**

**ROCCO MEDIATE:** It was great because I hadn't won since the PGA, hadn't won since I stopped alcohol, hadn't won since I did all this. I mean, I'm 20 lighter this year than I was last year. I've gone a little too far, I guess, but I feel good.

But it meant a lot there because you don't know -- I felt good, but I kept telling everybody, things are happening, it will happen. I'm working to -- did some equipment changing

shaft-wise, all this other stuff that I did started to creep in, creep in and all of a sudden, boom. And it's coming again, it's coming again right now.

So we'll see how that plays out, but you never know. But it felt amazing to win here because it's hard to win anywhere against anybody and it's just one of those things where I don't know how else to explain it, to be the best that week and to shoot the lowest score that week, any week you do it is unbelievable. Everything has to happen right.

You look back, if I look back over the weeks that I won, you go, oh, my God, I can't believe I did that, and that was the first day. But it all obviously adds up and you never think about it until it's over. But to do the last two holes, it was one of those things. Hit a pretty shot into 18, nasty little pin there and somehow made it because these greens are tough to read, they're just tough. They move a lot, they're excellent. So it was cool, really cool.

Something after the PGA was good. It was like after the U.S. Open in L.A. when I won at Fry's, that kind of set me free a little bit because I didn't want The Open to be it. Well, it was cool, but I didn't want it to be the last thing I did. And I was fortunate at almost 48 to do that, but this is kind of the same deal. After winning the big one and then changing everything and coming out here to win on this kind of golf course, it doesn't really get much better for me.

So it will be fun to play again this year, looking forward to it. Hell of a field, everybody's here. Fantastic. Everybody does a great job here. I mean, all of our tournaments are good. Hollis does a great job. Unfortunately we didn't get to play Houston this year, but it's always good. The governor here is money, she's done a hell of a job. I love it, I love it.

**CHRIS RICHARDS:** All right. Thanks so much, good luck this week.