

## THE PANAMA CHAMPIONSHIP

### ROUND 1 INTERVIEW

February 2nd, 2023

RYAN GERARD ( -6)

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**Q. Ryan, leader out of the morning wave, 6 under. Can you kind of take us through your round and kind of what went right for you?**

**RYAN GERARD:** Yeah, I just really tried to stay patient out there. This course is pretty tough. It's a long course, pins are tucked with firm greens. So I just tried to stay patient from the get-go. Hit a few really good shots early to almost kick-in range and kept hitting it on the fat side of the green making my life easy. Got a few putts to go on the back, which was really nice. Held on at the end when it got really windy.

**Q. You had that four-hole stretch where you went birdie on each of the holes. Can you walk us through that real quick?**

**RYAN GERARD:** Yeah, I just had a really good number on 10 kind of into the wind there and hit a nice flighted one about 15 feet, got the putt to go.

Then 11, again just a tough hole but hit a good drive, had a nice wedge in and made the putt there.

Hit a bad drive on 12, hit a great, probably best shot of the day, it was just a punch from the trees kind of get it back in play and another one tight to maybe eight or nine feet.

And 13, same thing, just kept it on the fat side of the green and had about 25 feet. If they're going in, they're going in, just kept it rolling.

**Q. Did any of the birdies kind of stand out, or any of the shots on those holes stand out and then you thought, all right, today could be a good day?**

**RYAN GERARD:** Yeah, I think, I mean it's always good to start off hot. I stuck it to maybe a foot on 1 and that's always a great start. But I think it was more of the bunker shot that I hit on 14 right after I made those birdies, just kind of get it close to the hole and made the putt to keep the momentum going. It got really windy there and still is windy right now. Just tried to keep putting myself in the best spot possible and knowing that the course isn't easy and not trying to get too aggressive and overcomplicate things.

**Q. You said don't make the -- or the course isn't too easy, a lot of the players say it's one of the more challenging ones this whole season. What about this course challenges the players, makes it hard to go low?**

**RYAN GERARD:** It's a long golf course, it's 7500 yards or so. It is getting firm out there, but the fairways are still soft so you're hitting long clubs off the tee, whether that's drive, 3-wood on a lot of the holes. You're hitting short irons, mid irons, wedges into the greens, but the greens are really firm and the way they have the undulations and the slope, they can tuck the pins really nicely towards the edges and above bunkers and swales, you just really have to be precise into the greens.

And when the wind picks up, you just have to get that much more precise with them. If you try and chase some stuff, which you get tempted to do, you see a flag kind of sitting there with a good number, if you get too aggressive, all of a sudden you're putting yourself behind the eight-ball short-sided or kind of in a bad spot where now the greens are firm and you can't stop a chip or a bunker shot or something from the rough, which just leaves yourself 15, 20 feet for par and that's not what you want. So I think a lot of guys out here just got to stay patient and that's kind of what I tried to do today.

**Q. How nice is that when -- I was with you probably for 11 or 12 holes, I don't think a ball didn't go in the dead center of the cup. You were obviously -- did the hole look like a basket? I know it's a cliché, but it just seemed everything was dead center.**

**RYAN GERARD:** Yeah, no, I was really hitting good putts today. I grew up on kind of grainy bermuda like this in North Carolina and a lot of time spent hitting balls on putts with -- or balls on greens with grain and having to read that in addition to the break. So I feel really comfortable on greens like there and grass like this. That kind of just helps feed the confidence. But, I mean, once you see a couple go in the hole, you just keep rolling it and yeah, eventually if they all go in it's a great day.

**Q. You've been pro for a year now. Has it kind of gone -- I mean, having played Canadian, down here now, in the first less than a year has it kind of gone how you thought or are there some things that you didn't get told that you're learning on the fly?**

**RYAN GERARD:** I mean, there's always a learning curve. I'd say for the most part it's gone kind of how I wanted it to go. My goal coming out of college last year was find myself on the Korn Ferry Tour this year and to get a PGA TOUR card for next year. That's still the goal. I'm playing this week, I'm playing next week and just got to keep going and hopefully reshuffle in and keep playing.

But I'd say professional golf is different than college and there is a big jump, but I do enjoy it just because I don't have to worry about anything besides me and my golf. It's something I've wanted to do and dreamed of since I was a little kid, so I'm living the dream every single day that I get to come out here and tee it up. I'm just really thankful for that and trying to make the most of it.

**Q. I think Ben Griffin, did you miss him or did you --**

**RYAN GERARD:** I got a year with him.

**Q. Has he been able to kind of give you a little guidance? Obviously he's worrying about his career, but kind of Tar Heels stick together?**

**RYAN GERARD:** Absolutely. Ben has been just really, really good friend of mine and kind of a mentor out here kind of giving me some pointers on certain courses and certain events. And same thing last year in Canada. He went through Canada a few years back and same thing, looking out for certain issues on golf courses, just even stuff as simple as staying in the host hotel this week.

Yeah, but Ben's great and it's cool to see where he's come from. Probably played a few times last couple years, played with him over the winter break this year. I mean, he's a great player and I'm happy to see how he's doing and hopefully he can close the door on one of these things soon because he's been knocking at it.

**Q. OK. Sometimes it's the leader of the dreaded early-late, so now there's a lot of time, almost 24 hours. What does -- especially when you're in a foreign country, what is the thing that you do to kill time?**

**RYAN GERARD:** Oh, I'm just going to hang out, try to get my body as right as possible for tomorrow and just stay calm and don't overdo it. It's hot out here. People get dehydrated and I don't need to be spending too much time wearing myself out doing anything, so I'll probably just go back to the hotel, chill, have some food and just be ready for what tomorrow brings.

**Q. Is there a show we're watching? Are you a binger?**

**RYAN GERARD:** Not really, I'm not really a binger. I might try and find some like hockey game to watch tonight or basketball, just something to pass the time so I'm not waking up at 6:00 or 7:00 like I'm accustomed to now, having to sit there all morning. That will be kind of the plan and just kind of hang out. I'm sure a lot of guys at the host hotel this week kind of looking for something to do, so probably find a nice group and have ourselves an afternoon.