

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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TONY FINAU



JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Tony Finau into the interview room. He is making his seventh career start at the Wells Fargo Championship with a T-16 in 2015, his best finish.

Tony, welcome back. First of all, we'll get you to talk about being back at the Wells Fargo Championship.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, thanks, nice to be back here. It's a golf tournament that I enjoy playing. As you mentioned, it's my seventh start. So I haven't had great success here, but it is a golf course that I like and it's a great area. Fans come out in bunches, which I enjoy. Having my experience I think with the Presidents Cup this past year, it's hopefully going to serve me well this week.

JOHN BUSH: And coming in in great form, congratulations last week picking up your sixth PGA TOUR victory winning in Mexico. If you can take us back to Sunday and getting that done.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it was great. I played four really solid rounds of golf and Saturday I saw Rahmbo making the charge and I was able to hold him off and have a two-shot advantage on him going into Sunday. You know, I needed the cushion. I ended up winning by three, but I knew it was going to be a tall task going against Jon in the form that he's been in. To be able to come out on top was a lot of fun and it's always great winning golf tournaments, it felt great.

Q. I guess it's four wins in your last 18 starts. Can you pinpoint any difference between this last stretch and maybe why you didn't win as much prior to it? I know you had the win in 2021, too, so you can throw that in there sort of in this latter stretch, but is there anything that you're much better at now or that you're doing that's making a difference?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think I'm incrementally hitting the golf ball better. Just through time I've learned a lot about my swing and things, so I think that has helped.

I would say the No. 1 thing has just been my putting. I decided in 2022 at the beginning of last year my No. 1 goal on my goal sheet was don't change your putter grip this year and see what happens. That literally was my first and only goal; not only goals, my first goal, which was just the priority.

Anytime I was in a putting rut, I seemed to switch grips or switch putting heads. It was a



quick fix, it wasn't an overall and it was exactly that. I'd have a great week or two and then I'd be back in the same mess if not even a deeper hole with my putting further down the stretch.

So I decided that I was going to commit to putting conventionally for a full season no matter how I was putting, just figure it out. I think I'm enjoying the success of what that looks like for me on just being able to dissect the same putting stroke with the same putter, the same putting grip style. I think I would say that that's where most of my success has come. Even this year I haven't putted great before leading into Mexico. I was starting in my mind to think maybe it's time to switch grips again and then I won I think with the conventional grip.

So I think I would point to that as the main reason. My putting has been I think my Achilles heel in the past where my ball-striking has gotten better and I've hit it well enough to win more tournaments than I have, I haven't been able to execute with the putter. But that's changed over these last couple years and that would be the main reasons I'd say.

Q. Is there a lesson to be learned there? Do people experiment too much sometimes maybe?

TONY FINAU: No question, I think it's a great lesson to be learned. It's a lot better to be great at one thing than tinker around with 10,000 different techniques and trying to figure it out.

I think Bruce Lee has a saying about something like that. He's more scared of the guy who practices one punch 10,000 times than someone who practices 10,000 things one time. I'd say I agree with that.

Q. Do you work with Boyd on your putting or do you have a specific, a specialized putting coach?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I work with Boyd through the bag from my driver to my putter. I have a good friend named Derek Fox back in Utah who's a guy that I bounce ideas off of. He used to be a playing competitor of mine, but he owns I think it's called Impact Golf Center in Utah. I'll see him when I'm in Utah, he'll get me on the SAMS Lab, we'll kind of dissect the stroke a little bit just to take a more deep dive into what it looks like. Those are the two guys that I'll bounce ideas off of with my putting, Boyd being the main one, though.

Q. In the NBA Giannis had a moment that went viral last week, he talked about how losing is not necessarily a failure and a lot of people reacted and responded to that. You had said a similar thing after winning Rocket Mortgage and I was just wondering did you feel some solidarity with him when you saw and read about those comments?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, my manager actually sent that to me. I didn't see it until he sent it to me and I 100 agree with those sentiments.



In sports, we know sports is about winning, but you either win or you learn. It's hard to say that you fail specially at the level we're playing at. Just anybody in general, when you're trying to accomplish something, if you're always looking at yourself or something as a failure, it will be hard for you to succeed.

I couldn't agree with Giannis more. I'm a huge fan of his and I think he's so great for sports, so great for the NBA. He brings a sense of humility. I think someone in his position, it's important for our youth to see that type of humility from a superstar athlete like he is. I mean, he's a mega-star, he's arguably the greatest player in the NBA year after year. He's consistently shown that he is that guy. So to show that type of humility and that example is pretty cool.

Q. Congrats on last week.

TONY FINAU: Thanks.

Q. Just curious on how do you see the finishing stretch out here, because a lot of people, they talk about how tough it is. What do you think makes it so hard?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, the finishing stretch here is unbelievable. They call it the Green Mile. Sixteen is just a really long par 4 with basically half an island green on the left. Seventeen's a 200-yard par 3 with half an island green, water on the left, and then 18 you've got water all along the left side every shot you hit into the green.

I would say it's probably the toughest stretch we have in all of golf. The only thing that comes to mind is TPC Sawgrass up there with the Green Mile, but for that reason, No. 17 and 18 are some of the toughest holes we play in golf and they happen to be -- back to back. Closing this tournament out is extremely difficult because of that.

Q. Any other holes you find especially challenging?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think each hole out here you face your own challenge. I love the risk-reward that No. 7 brings. You hit a good drive, take on the fairway, you're going to have like a mid iron in. If you pull it into that bunker or you push it into the water, then it's a whole different hole. I think that's one of the better risk-reward holes we have out here.

But I just think overall it's a great golf course. You can attack it and play well, but you can also get bit on any hole.

Q. Tony, fate has put you with Jon Rahm a few times now on Sundays, sometimes in the same group, sometimes you're just going for the title or whatever it is. Is there something you recognize in him or something even you can learn from about how competitive he is and what a player he is? Do you recognize something in yourself that we're two guys that win tournaments and there's something I can see here that's familiar?



TONY FINAU: Yeah, you know, Jon and I, I would say my game has evolved and Jon has helped my game evolve. We've been basically sparring partners, I would say, for a couple years now. We're both part of the Silver Leaf Club back in Scottsdale. I moved there a few years back and I joined the club. He's there with Max Homa and quite a few other guys, but I practice with Jon a couple days a week, so just being around him has made me a better player. Iron sharpens iron.

I hope he'd say the same. Just us competing against each other on a weekly basis while we're home I think has been great for both of us, but I can only speak for me. He's definitely made me a better player.

We're very different players, we have different styles, we have different swings, but biggest thing is we have very different attitudes. But it just speaks to how great I think this game is. There's not one way to play it, there's not one way to think about it or do it. I definitely have learned from his fierceness and his competitiveness and how he brings that out to bring the best out of himself.

Q. If I can just follow up and ask you, you know, how is it specifically that he has made you better? What is it like to stand up to that ferocity when you're more of a laid back guy?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, just if you play with someone of his stature and his caliber often, just rubbing shoulders with him, you're going to be better. Talking with him about the game, he speaks about the game as a very simple game. He's very simple minded when it comes to playing the game of golf, which is very refreshing because it's an extremely difficult game and sometimes I think we look at it as an impossible game, which at the end of the day somebody has to win. I think my mindset has changed from how hard it is to win before and now it's like, well, on Sunday somebody's going to win, there is going to be somebody that's holding that trophy. I think he's helped me kind of see clearly that mindset because that's the type of mindset that he has.

Q. Tony, what do you think of the -- how the designated event thing's been going just this year and maybe how it's impacted you and how you think it will go next year when they make some changes?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think the elevated events have been great. I think if you look at the leaderboards, you look at the rivalries that it's already created and the pressure-packed moments, I think it's been pretty dang cool for our game.

I think our last one we had Spieth and Fitzpatrick in a playoff, we've had Rahmbo and Homa, we've had Rahmbo and Scheffler. I think it's been quite -- Rahmbo and Morikawa, right? You've had these heavyweights go at it in our game more often, which I think is good for our game.



I think we have to move toward how the game is going to be more presentable on TV, how it's going to be more accessible, more watchable. I believe that that's the best way to do it is have the best players play against each other more often and that's what we're seeing. Next year we're going to see more of that and it's just cool to be a part of it I think.

Q. I don't know if you saw there was a video Sunday night of you and your family on the par-3 course down there. Can you say how that came about and then how many holes you guys played? And you didn't play any, right? You just caddied?

TONY FINAU: No, I played.

Q. You did?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, yeah, I played. Yeah, you know, my son and I were out there every night, so it wasn't -- that happened to be Sunday night, but my son and I were out there every night, and sometimes two of my boys. My younger son Sage is starting to get into it. During the par-3 contest this year, I had him hit a putt. He doesn't like golf at all, he just likes being with dad. I had him hit a putt from 12 feet after I hit a shot there and he ended up making the putt. Everybody went crazy and it kind of changed his whole persona about golf, he wanted to hit the next putt and the next putt. Ever since then he's been asking me to play golf, so I took him out a couple times last week.

Yeah, that was just on Sunday and somebody happened to catch that, but it was just cool to cap off an amazing week with my boys and be on the golf course. I fell in love with the game of golf playing evening golf with my dad and my brother and it brings back memories that are just unforgettable.

Hopefully my boys are enjoying it like I was when I was a kid, just being with my dad and my brother. It's just special to be with them no matter what. If I would have finished second I would have been with them still. My boys were counting on me and that's something that I take pride in just as a father.

I look at myself, I'm kind of a part-time golfer, full-time father. That's kind of my thing. My kids are only young once and my boys are only young once, I want to make sure I'm there for them as much as possible. That's also why I have them travel with me.

It's pretty dang cool that we're able to share that special moment on the golf course having won the tournament, but then shooting straight over to the par 3 and then having that time with them was a lot of fun.

JOHN BUSH: Did you win Sunday night, too?

TONY FINAU: Man, I cleaned house last week. I beat up on my boy fortunately all week on the par 3 and then was able to take the trophy at the Mexico Open. It was a good all-around week in golf for me.



Q. Tony, just curious on your thoughts on the new PGA TOUR fall format which was released, your initial thoughts on that and how it's set up?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, some great tournaments in the fall. I think they just added one in Cabo. Instead of being at Mayakoba this year we're going to be in Cabo, which is a really cool place. Now having won the Mexico Open, Mexico just has a special place in my heart.

But I think there's some great events in the fall. I think it is going to be very interesting to see how the fall plays out with the amount of guys that normally play elevated events, how many are they going to play in the fall now that that's not accumulating world ranking points and no -- sorry, no FedExCup points. It will be interesting to see how many guys are interested in playing in the fall. I think that's going to be the most intriguing thing about the fall. But you also will have storylines where guys are now going to be able to qualify for the elevated events through the points in the fall. I think there's still a lot of intriguing storylines no matter who plays in the fall. And you have guys that win in the fall that are maybe fresh off the Korn Ferry Tour or just barely kept their card this year and next year they're going to be playing in all those elevated events. I think it's going to be great to watch whether a lot of the top guys play or not.

Q. Tony, building off of the elevated events structure, it's been pretty front loaded this year with the designated. How has that impacted your schedule and how you planned? We've seen Rory now miss two, Rahm's skipping this week. How has it impacted you personally with it?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it's impacted my schedule. I've already played a couple elevated events that I normally wouldn't throw in my schedule, so it has thrown my schedule a little bit for a loop. It will do the same next year, but I think these are the sacrifices that I'm willing to make as a player to play these events as elevated events. I mean, it's not that I don't like them, it's just normally tournaments that I haven't played in the past so I didn't have that much experience going into these tournaments this year.

But overall everybody has to sacrifice a little bit I think as far as their schedule is concerned and this year it's been a couple already. I think it will be one or two more as we move forward with elevated events.

The good news is next year I would have now played all of them and hopefully next time around at least up to this point I can play some of those events better.

Q. Tony, you mentioned the balance with your family off the course. I'm wondering, with May being Mental Health Awareness Month, just wondering what role mental health plays in your golf game, off the course, and if there's anything that you do to kind of train that muscle in your mind?

TONY FINAU: My dad taught me a very important lesson when I was young. Anytime we're



on the golf course it was all business, it was all golf. As soon as we left the golf course he told us right out of the gate, he said I don't want you to talk about golf, I don't want you to think about golf.

It was easy for me to be humbled because I would go back to my other six siblings at home and I was just another kid and I was treated like the little brother that I was and I was still taking the trash out, my mom still asked me to do the dishes.

I only by bring that up because I don't really mesh my professional life with my family life. I just, I was just taught that at a young age. That was really important for me so that I don't have a suck day on the golf course and I take that straight to my kids and take my anger out on my family because it has nothing to do with them. I was able to learn that at a young age and that's still something that I think is extremely important for me today. My kids remind me of the same thing, they keep me very humble, my wife keeps me humble. That's what family does for me. I'm able to be present with my family when I'm with them and I'm also able to be a competitor and try to be my best version on the golf course when I'm playing golf.

JOHN BUSH: All right. Good stuff, Tony, thanks as always for your time. Best of luck this week.

TONY FINAU: Thanks.

