

ROCKET MORTGAGE CLASSIC

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW

June 27, 2023



TONY FINAU

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Tony Finau into the interview room, our defending champion here at the Rocket Mortgage Classic.

Tony, first of all, if we can get you to take us back to 2022 and what you remember the most about that Sunday.

TONY FINAU: Oh, yeah, I mean obviously it was a great day. I think I remember my wife being there on the green. It's always a special, special moment on 18th green after you win a golf tournament to kind of have that excitement, but you also have that relief that you've accomplished the task that you had for the week, which is win the tournament. Just nothing but good vibes.

It's so nice to be back in Detroit where I have such a great memory to look back on. It's a golf course obviously that I love and just an area that I really enjoy. So it's really nice being back.

This is actually crazy, this is the first time I'm defending on the same golf course that I won on. It's different, it's different than anything I've -- I'm kind of experiencing new, I don't know if you call it nerves or excitement, but it's new. This is the first time that I'm coming back to a golf course and defending a tournament on the same course. It is really nice to be back.

JOHN BUSH: Max, Rory and Scottie have already defended this year. What would it mean to you to be the fourth this season?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it would be mean a lot. Any win is great, but when you go back-to-back at a golf tournament, especially on a tournament that means so much to me. You know, this is my first back-to-back in my career last year, you know, winning back-to-back weeks. To be able to go back-to-back at this event in back-to-back years I think would mean a lot to myself and my career.

JOHN BUSH: And the state of your game coming in playing for the third straight week?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, playing for the third straight week. I started at the U.S. Open, played Travelers last week and now here I am at the Rocket Mortgage. The game feels good. I haven't scored over the last couple weeks the way I wanted, but it's been that kind of year.

I have -- early in my career I would say I was a very consistent player, but I didn't have a lot



of wins. Over the last couple years I haven't been nearly as consistent, but when I have found myself in contention, I've won. It's been the tale of almost two careers over my career, so that just tells me this week I need to put myself in contention and hopefully I have a chance -- hopefully I can win.

JOHN BUSH: Before we open it up to questions, a lot of fans came in today and are pretty happy to have received this, if we can get your comments on your bobble.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, first of all, man, it's just amazing to have a bobblehead, I've never had one. I used to collect bobbleheads when I was young, so to now have one is, honestly, it's just cool.

I'm honored, I'm humbled. This is really cool. Hopefully anyone who has one enjoys it. And I thought they did a pretty dang good job. Yeah, this looks amazing. I might have to grow that beard, grow that goatee again so I can match my bobblehead this week. Hopefully people that got it enjoy it.

Q. I'm just curious, obviously as the defending champion this place is going to be a special spot for you, but what was it about this tournament that initially drew you to wanting to play in this? And since you've been playing here, how have you seen this tournament -- it's a short period, but have you seen it improve in things that they've done to kind of make it better for players and being a place they want to play?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, no question. The first thing that drew me to this place when I first played it was the golf course. I think it's an awesome layout.

And then to me, as I've learned about the history of Detroit Golf Club, I thought that this was an important place for me to play. What I mean by that is I think that this is the most diverse country club in the country and that means a lot to me, that I can play at a golf course that is so welcoming and has that great history. As I learned about that, I thought that this would be an amazing place to play, and being the champion speaks to that. I think it's a tournament that I'll play because of that for many years.

I think that's important in our world and in our game, that the diversity of our game continues to grow. And here at the Detroit Golf Club, again I think it's the most diverse country club in the country and I'm happy to play at a golf course that has that history. As I continue to learn about it, there's nothing but great things, so I will be back for many years to come.

Q. Around the Tour with other guys talking and figuring out schedules and all that, is there something -- is this a tournament people are starting to talk more about, like hey, maybe this is a place I'd like to play? Do you feel some of that momentum from other guys being interested in coming and playing here?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I definitely feel momentum. You've got JT added himself to the event this week, Max Homa's back, Tom Kim, these guys that have had history here. Collin



Morikawa. I think the list of guys that are playing this golf tournament are going to continue to improve.

But I think they, just like me, they just have to play it once. A lot of the guys that have played it continue to come back because it is such a great venue. I would say that's at the top of the list when we look at our schedule is, is this a golf course that we like. As guys play it, more guys will I think continue to play it.

Q. Your ball-striking has been tremendous week in and week out. When you experience some of these struggles with the putter that kind of has sometimes plagued you throughout your career, is it a grass type, is it technique related? How do you not let it affect you mentally when you're going to have to make a lot of putts this week?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, we were just talking about it coming up with Jason, the tournament director. I think this may be a week where you have to go 30 under because of the conditions being so soft, so when you shoot 30 under, you've got to make putts.

As far as my mentality, shooters shoot, that's all there is to it. I never get shy when it comes to putting. I believe I'm a good putter, I've shown myself that through not only my career on the PGA TOUR but throughout my life. I make putts when they matter, and I have to continue to have that belief no matter what kind of struggles you go through.

I haven't putted the way that I know I can. Outside of Mexico this year, I haven't really putted great, but I continue to look at the technique, whether it be, as you mentioned, grass, what's different. For me, I grew up playing on bentgrass so this is a golf course that I will be comfortable putting on. Hopefully I see them go in early this week, but that's the best way I can put it. Shooters shoot and I'll continue to shoot.

Q. At LACC you called it on Friday, you said 10 will win, I think I can get to 10. How common, out of curiosity, how common is it on Friday that you pretty much have the number in mind that's actually going to stand come Sunday?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think I've been around the game enough to kind of have an idea. Again, I think I'm pretty much calling 30 under this week just because of the conditions. I think last year I was able to get to 26. When Nate Lashley won, he was able to get to 25. Both years were pretty soft, but they started to get firm on the weekend because we didn't experience any rain. It's a golf course clearly you can score on so with the conditions, barring any wind, I do think you're going to have to shoot 28 to 30 under.

I don't know that it's a skill or anything. I think a lot of guys have that same, whatever you want to call it, intuition to kind of know what they're going to have to shoot to win. It is what it is. I'll have a lot better idea probably after the first round what it's going to take this week. It could be 24 under. You just never know on any given week, but most of the time you'll have one or two guys that have an amazing week and an amazing week on this golf course, as



I've shown last year and again Nate Lashley in years past, a great golfing week this week may possibly be 30 under.

Q. And for a kind of player of your stature, can you explain how kind of communication is taking place right now with everything going on with the Tour and the deal from a couple weeks ago? How much are you getting from Player Advisory, how much are you getting, you know, because everyone's saying I don't know what's going on. From where you're standing, are you actually getting the information that you want?

TONY FINAU: Yeah. Well, we're able to access the information that we want on a personal basis. If we wanted to reach out to Tyler Dennis or the guys that are involved in the day-to-days, we have that access with their phone number or through an email. We're able to have that access.

As a Tour member as a whole, we had a meeting last week. That's not a secret that we had a meeting at the Travelers. Any questions that we had were answered there, but not a lot of new information has been given to us as a whole. So we'll just continue to move down this path with the Tour and see where it takes us.

Q. Tony, a couple things for you. Go back a year ago at this point, 12 months ago, you had two PGA TOUR wins. You referenced the back-to-back victories in Minnesota and here. What changed for you from your perspective that allowed you to run through the finish line a little more often?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, that's a good question. I think what changed for me was a couple things. The first thing was that I was committed to a certain putting technique, so my technique was putting conventionally and to stick with one putter. That was a big thing for me, that was a big goal of mine. It produced a lot of fruit throughout last year.

And then it was the mindset that instead of, you know, how hard it is to win on the PGA TOUR, somebody's going to be holding a trophy on Sunday, there is going to be one person that will be holding a trophy every week. So the mindset of I want to be that person and not be the one complaining about how hard it is to win.

When you have that click in your mind that it's not impossible, somebody is going to win, I think as I've tried to focus on winning and not about how hard it is that I started to produce some wins. The combination of those two wins I think have helped me over the last year create the results that I've had.

Q. How challenging was it to buy into that maybe different change in philosophy in thinking and then seeing the validation soon thereafter?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, first you have to have the skills, you have to be good enough. You have to be good enough to think that you can do it. I think you can have the belief, but you



have to put in the work and believe that you can do it.

I think my game is at a point where I believe if I play well I can win any golf tournament. You have to have that belief, but you have to have the skills to back it up. When you do it, then it becomes like a confidence thing, I think I can do this more.

So it is a tough thing to buy into, but when you win, then you start to have that. You carry yourself with that extra confidence and you continue to try to push yourself to do that more.

And that's the crazy thing about winning. When you experience it, you think you would be complacent, like oh, well I did it. It's been quite the opposite. After I've done it I want more of it, and I think the top players in the world talk about that. You know, you're never really satisfied with the amount of wins you have. I have six now, but I want to get seven. After I get seven, I'm going to want eight. This week I'm looking for number seven.

Q. You obviously have the bobblehead up there, but there's something else that the tournament has worked on and I believe you've tasted the sandwich, but the Finau Fitu sandwich is a special opportunity for the fans to kind of celebrate you and your culture. What's it mean to have a sandwich being built and sold in your honor?

TONY FINAU: Yeah. Again, I'm humbled and honored. The Finau Fitu is a very tasty sandwich. Anybody that's here this week, I would advise you to order it. It comes with coconut water, which is my favorite water or my favorite drink really on the planet.

It's quite a touch that Rocket Mortgage would do something like that. I've never been a name on a menu, I've never been asked to have a menu item, so for them to do something that special is really cool, definitely something I'll always remember.

I've got this bobblehead, I've got the menu item, it's quite something. I'm really excited to be back to defend this week. And it's been some amazing touch already by Rocket Mortgage, so I'm looking forward to playing in front of the Detroit fans this week again.

JOHN BUSH: It's your world this week, Tony, we're just living in it.

TONY FINAU: You guys are sure making it feel that way.

