

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 23, 2023

JUSTIN LEONARD



Q. Justin, thank you for joining us here at The Ally Challenge. You're a past winner on this golf course having won the Buick Open in 1996. How does it feel to be back here at Warwick Hills?

JUSTIN LEONARD: It's a lot of fun to be back. Pulling in yesterday afternoon, I snuck out late and played nine holes. The golf course is in perfect shape, it hasn't changed. It's just right there in front of you, and it's just as I remembered but probably in better shape than any year that we used to play the old Buick Open here way back in the day.

It is fun, fun to be back in, you know, kind of familiar territory even though it's been a long time since I've been here. It's nice to not have to look up a golf course, you know, on my computer iPad and kind of see what I have to look forward to. This one I was like, oh, I don't need to do that, I know every hole out here. It's nice to be back.

Q. When you look back at 1996 or your other times here, what memories stand out to you, Justin?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Really the way the whole area comes out and supports this event. The PGA TOUR plays in a lot of big markets, and this is one of the events where I would consider it a smaller market. Obviously you're pulling people from Detroit as well, but to get out and away from a big city and get a real community feel, it's a fun atmosphere. From watching this tournament here the last couple years, that has not changed at all. So it will be fun to get better weather than we have today and get a bunch of folks out here.

Q. What do you remember from your victory that weekend?

JUSTIN LEONARD: That was a really long time ago. I remember playing with Bob Tway in the final group, and I played well enough kind of on the front nine where the back side was fairly comfortable, like I didn't have to go out and make a bunch of birdies.

I remember my parents showing up and being here on the 18th green. It was my first victory. Just kind of the love and the support of the crowds that gather here. And then coming back a few years after that, I had another chance to win, I don't remember the year, Brian Bateman won. I thought I might get in a playoff. Just always looked forward to coming back here.

The specifics, there aren't a lot as far as shots that I hit. I know I made par on 18. You know, really just kind of the whole feeling of it and getting my first win here was pretty special.

Q. I see a lot of guys who have won this before are back. Do you like seeing the familiar faces, does it kind of bring back those times from the '90s?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yeah. I mean, I was registering yesterday and one of the volunteers asked me if I had seen my picture in the hallway yet, and I said, well, no. So walked down the hallway, I had to walk down quite a ways to get to my picture, but you know, those pants have a lot of pleats in them and everything else. But it is, in walking down that hallway and seeing Vijay won here a few times, Tiger as well.

It's funny, I ran into Tiger on Monday and told him I was headed up here. He goes, oh, that's such a great golf course and great memories. For me as well, and I think for all the players.