

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
**September 12, 2023**

**AARON BADDELEY**



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**DOUG MILNE:** We will go ahead and get started, like to welcome Aaron Baddeley to the interview room here at the Fortinet Championship.

Aaron, two pretty cool distinctions to mention this week. First, you're making your 500th career start on the PGA TOUR, second is you're making your 16th start here at the Fortinet Championship, tied for the most of anyone who's ever played here.

With that, why don't we start with locally here at Silverado and Fortinet, top-5 finish I think a few years ago here, 16th start, just a few comments on being back here. Obviously a cool place in the Napa area, of course. Not to put too many words in your mouth, just some thoughts on being here this week.

**AARON BADDELEY:** Yeah, this is -- to be, as you say, the 500th event I've played at this event makes it pretty cool because this is definitely mine and my family's, one of our favorite events on the Tour. Not just saying that because we're here, it really is. We love the golf course, we love the area.

It reminds me a lot of home where I grew up. I grew up in the Yarra Valley winery area, very similar, the hills with the brown grass with the trees. They're just a little bit bigger, the hills around here. But like I remember when I first came here I was like wait, am I back in Australia right now, so it makes it pretty cool.

Yeah, this is one of my favorite events. I think that the two years that I wasn't exempt into the tournament I Monday qualified in, so yeah. I had to make sure that I was here. Last year I Mondayed and a few years before that did the same thing.

**DOUG MILNE:** Well, that's good. And then the bigger number, 500, four wins, 52 top-10 finishes I think dating all the way back I think to your first professional start if I looked it up correctly was the '91 Honda Classic. Does that round right?

**AARON BADDELEY:** 2000, 2000.

**DOUG MILNE:** OK, 2000 Honda. I'm dating you.

**AARON BADDELEY:** Yeah, yeah.

**DOUG MILNE:** Just some thoughts on hitting that milestone. Is that something you ever could have imagined, 500 PGA TOUR starts?

**AARON BADDELEY:** Honestly, I never really thought about it. I didn't even know that I was coming up to that until last week I was doing a day for my sponsor, PWA, and they read off some stats and they said I was at 499 and my next start here at the Fortinet was going to be 500. So I was like wait, no way.

Yeah, it's really cool to play that many. I think the only year that I haven't played like a full schedule is last year, I think I only played like 13 events last year. To be out here that long, 24 years, and playing pretty much a full schedule, yeah, it's been pretty great. Also feel like I've got some great golf in front of me, too, which is more exciting.

**DOUG MILNE:** Well, you're the sixth Australian, just in case you want to know, to cross 500. With that, we'll open it up and take a few questions.

**Q. Aaron, can you talk about the FedExCup now being in the fall, starting in the fall and how that changes your whole thought process?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** Starting in --

**Q. With the FedExCup --**

**AARON BADDELEY:** Still going?

**Q. -- going in the fall, correct.**

**AARON BADDELEY:** I think the difference like this time playing in the fall compared to like when we first started with the fall, you know, I feel like there's more incentives to play in the Fall Series. Like if you win, you get into the Masters, where back in like '07 or '08 you didn't get into Augusta. You can play your way into the signature events. So there's definitely a lot of good reasons to play on top of the fall having some great events on top of that.

**Q. With this being your 500th start, obviously a great chance to reflect. I saw you walking up 18 with your boys a little bit ago. Just wondering how much has changed for you in the 500 starts since number one to now, and not necessarily on the golf course but just in life.**

**AARON BADDELEY:** Yeah, it's pretty crazy. My first event I was 18, now I'm 42 and got six kids. I mean, the boys love their golf as well. They're very sporty, but they also love their golf. To have them out here just walk alongside is something I cherish when they're here. Because you're out on the road, you miss a lot when you're gone, but to have them out here and be part of the practice, and when I'm home we practice a lot and play together.

So it's just very special how it's transitioned and changed over the time. I would say my love for the game hasn't changed at all, it's definitely not a grind at all. I definitely love being out here, love playing the PGA TOUR, love the game of golf. That's remained the same throughout the years even though things have changed.

**Q. And obviously got quite a bit of experience here at the course. They've changed up the routing this year and got some of the holes going -- no new holes, but just kind of different routing and ordering of the holes. Have you noticed in your time out there and does that change any of your approach going into the weekend?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** No. I feel like the routing doesn't change how you play each hole, you know, because each hole has its own design or own like way to play the hole. Whether it's the 16th or whether it's the fourth, like doesn't matter the number, the same hole requires a certain strategy of golf.

I think the finish is going to be great. I feel like coming down to the end of the tournament, 16, 17 and 18 holes all right next to each other, there's going to be a lot of people just in that one area, so should create a lot of excitement and great atmosphere coming down the stretch there.

**Q. Going back to the big milestone with 500 starts, you had four wins, but is there any one particular moment -- I know it's kind of hard to narrow it down to one -- through your career that has stood out or seemed the most special?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** I'd say with the wins that they're all being uniquely special because I couldn't nail it to one. Hilton Head, my first win, was the day after Richelle's and mine first wedding anniversary and also Easter Sunday, myself being a Christian, so those are the two big days.

Then winning in my new hometown of Phoenix, winning the Phoenix Open, having over 100 friends and family out watching, that was super special. Got to celebrate with them afterwards.

L.A. was the first one with kids, so my two girls, and then winning at Barbasol after struggling for a few years and then having the four kids there at the time.

They're all uniquely special, so I can't pinpoint one thing. Yeah, they're all just unique.

**Q. And then going back to your start this time last year, got in as an open qualifier, where have you just seen kind of your season trending and progress so far?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** Yeah, it's been a good year for the most part. Like playing out of the past champions category, not sure when I was getting in. And to be 96 on the FedEx right now, my game has been trending that way for a little while. It's nice to get some, as we say in Australia, some runs on the board so you can see some results. I feel like I'll have a good Fall Series and try to push my way more up there and try to get a win here soon because I feel like the game's right there.

**Q. It's been a year with Pete on the bag. Was this time last year the first time that he**

**joined you on the bag?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** Yeah, it was. We Monday qualified together and we've been together ever since. Feel like we do a good job out there together, we get the clubs and the strategy right most of the time. He's been great, and he's great with the boys. The boys love him, so it's a lot of fun.

**Q. How did that connection start other than he looked like he'd be part of the family with the hair?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** Exactly. I would say it was the final Korn Ferry event -- I've known Pete, we've been friends and we sort of happened to go to the same poke spot for dinner and we sort of just sat and chatted a little bit, and he was like, hey, if anything opens up next year. He texted me and he said if you need someone to Monday qualify with, I was like sure. that's how it started. Yeah, pretty -- yeah, it's worked out well.

**DOUG MILNE:** I mentioned the 52 top-10s. Your most recent one was just a few weeks ago at 3M. What are you most confident about right now with your game, something that's kind of you're leaning on for lack of a better term right now?

**AARON BADDELEY:** Yeah, I feel like my iron play is really good. I feel like I have -- I've noticed my statistics, I keep my own stats and I've noticed that I'm hitting more greens in regulation and I'm hitting them closer so I get more birdie opportunities. So I feel like that's a real strength. If I can keep driving it well and take advantage of a few putts, then should be right there and have a chance on Sunday.

**Q. First of all, congratulations on 500 starts. That's a tremendous accomplishment. Speaking about Napa, many players talk about Napa being such a great place to come. In your 16 years coming here, have you built any traditions or anything special, highlights that you had that you can share with us?**

**AARON BADDELEY:** The Oxbow Market is a place that we always go with the family, that's been a tradition.

Then when the tournament was a little bit later in October, there was a pumpkin patch here that we used to always go to. Since it's now moved forward into September, the pumpkin patch hasn't been there the last couple years. That pumpkin patch was always a tradition, we would always go there for sure. I would say those are the two things that we as a family would always do.

**DOUG MILNE:** All good? Well, like I said, short and sweet, that's awesome. Thank you. Congrats on the couple of good milestones there.

**AARON BADDELEY:** Thank you.