

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE

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PATTON KIZZIRE



JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Patton Kizzire into the interview room here at the RSM Classic.

Patton, home game this week, you're making your tenth consecutive start at the RSM Classic. How does it feel to be back playing Sea Island?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Feels good to be home. Feels good to sleep in my own bed and feel like I'm not going out there trying to learn the golf course. I'm very familiar with this place and looking forward to a fun week.

JACK RYAN: Coming into the week No. 130 in the FedExCup standings, obviously this being the last week of the regular season, how much is that on your mind and what are you hoping to accomplish this week?

PATTON KIZZIRE: You know, it's on my mind, but at the same time I've got a job to do and just go out there and compete. I'm not protecting anything, I don't feel like I'm trying not to screw up. I've got to go out there and make it happen.

But win, lose or draw, my family's here. It's going to be a battle, but at the end of the day my kids will be there, my whole family will be here, so I'm looking forward to that.

JACK RYAN: Special announcement yesterday that you were here for Chris Kirk. How cool was that to see one of your close friends receive the PGA TOUR Courage Award?

PATTON KIZZIRE: It's so cool, he's very deserving. Although Chris is just like a year older than me, he seems a lot more, he seems like a mentor as well as a buddy. I was so proud that he received that award and he's somebody that we can all look up to. It took a lot of courage to do what he did.

Q. Chris spoke a little bit about playing some Yahtzee with some guys in his rental houses. Was wondering if you've ever been part of those games, if you've stayed in the rental houses with him.

And then also to what extent have you kind of dealt with loneliness in the off hours of playing on the PGA TOUR? It's a very lonely sport to begin with and there's a lot of time in hotel rooms. How do you combat that?

PATTON KIZZIRE: It can be a lonely game. You're not really part of a team, but it's good that we've been able to create a lot of camaraderie. I'm a regular in the Chris Kirk household

and I have been on the wrong end of plenty of the Yahtzee games. Kirk and Sepp, those are probably the two, and Denny's pretty good, but those are probably the top three ranked Yahtzee players. I'm better at gin, so I would put myself towards the top of the rankings on the gin table.

It is, it's a grind. You spend a lot of time away from your family and sometimes you do find yourself alone and managing your thoughts and your habits. It's not easy, but it's good to have a group of guys to lean on, and I think Kirk leans on us to hold him accountable a little bit, but he's done a great job by himself. He's stayed pretty dedicated, very dedicated, and I commend him for that. Mentally, he is now stronger than probably all of rest of us.

Q. And then on a different topic, how much does it kind of feel to you when you see a guy like Camilo do what he's done the last two weeks, he was in a similar position to yourself, he was actually quite a bit farther outside the Top-125 and now he's well inside. Does it give guys who are in the struggle a little bit of hope?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Of course. I think Camilo had those two good weeks long before recently. I think he's put in a lot of work and a lot of guys were putting in a lot of work, but he stayed really dedicated to what he's doing. He's a freak physically and -- physically he's as good as anybody and I know he's worked really hard. It is encouraging to see that, to see hard work pay off for your peers. He's well deserving. And I don't think it surprised anybody that he won last week after what he did in Mexico, he was so solid and he just had the momentum going. Everybody on Tour is very impressed with what he's done these last two weeks.

Q. Patton, just talking about a couple of guys that have problems that everyday people deal with, a tragic death in the family, a struggle with substance abuse. Do sometimes fans see the things you guy do on a golf course, the athletes that you are and perhaps forget that you're just as susceptible to the pressures and the temptations and the unforeseen tragedies that can happen to anybody to them? I don't know, do you somehow think people feel you guys are somehow immune to it?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Yeah, we still live life just like everybody else does. I was speaking to my caddie just the other day, I was talking to him about I wonder why people can't learn from other people's mistakes. It takes something very tragic a lot of the time or painful to learn from it. We just talked about how it's just human, we're just humans, we're imperfect. And I wish I could learn from other people's mistakes and I'm sure everybody feels the same way.

Golf is difficult. Traveling and competing at a high level, it's not easy. We make a lot of sacrifices, a lot of that has to do with our time away from family, but at the end of the day we're all human, we're imperfect and everybody's dealing with something. It's always a grind.

Q. With all things being equal, or all things being perfect, this is a really hard game to make a living out of, what do you think is in somebody to recover from substance

abuse and somebody to lose a baby and come back and somehow get themselves together? Is it extraordinary or is it maybe no different than the guy who has a regular 9:00 to 5:00 job and has the same thing and he comes back and does his job effectively?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Well, golf requires a lot of mental strength. These unfortunate things that have happened to some of the guys out here, it's unfortunate, but these are the kind of people that can use that to propel them forward and that's what we've seen, Camilo especially recently and Kirk has come back and done really well.

So mental strength is a very important part of this game and those two guys definitely have it.

Q. Obviously the host has great roots in this area, talking about Davis. He seems to have had such great influence, mentorship towards a lot of players here. How would you describe that influence that he has on the players that live around this area?

PATTON KIZZIRE: He's had so much influence on this area in general. It started with his father and a lot of the people who started Sea Island, Mr. Jones and a lot of guys. And Davis really took it to the next level being such a world-class player and a great mentor and one of the best to ever do it.

He drew a lot of people to this area and I'm very fortunate to call him a friend and a mentor. I just, I pinch myself every day when people say, "You live in Sea Island," and I'm like, "Yeah." I have to remember how special this place is. It's a great place to raise a family and improve your golf game and be around some of the best people to be around.

Q. (No microphone.)

PATTON KIZZIRE: Well, he's such a low-key guy. He doesn't hold himself in a high light. He's very humble and he leads by example and lends hands. He's a friend, he's a really good friend. I know what kind of impact he's had on a lot of the guys especially around my age. We moved here and we competed in tournaments against him a little bit and played around town with him and competed. He's always, you know, we'll do cookouts and hangouts with him. He's just been there for all of us.

Q. Patton, I appreciate your transparency answering those important questions, you know what I mean? It made me think of something which could also be a difficult question, but I'm going to shift gears.

The Sea Island guys, your record here at the tournament, it's a very unique situation. There's so many of you who live here and play in this event, but overall the record of the guys who play here, I'm curious why it isn't better. Like Matt Kuchar's played here 11 times, he has one top-10. Brian Harman never won, only a couple top-10s, played here more than 10 times.

I'm wondering why you think that is. Too many parties during the week or what's going on?

PATTON KIZZIRE: That could be the case. I know that we definitely enjoy ourselves this week. A lot of us are at the point where we have kids and a family, so we're kind of beyond that.

Kooch might have moved away from here so he can play better here now. No, just joking.

There's a lot of good players in this field. It might just be a coincidence. I don't think anybody treats it a whole lot differently than a regular week other than just there are family gatherings or get-togethers, but I think we're all looking to break the narrative and do something this week.

Q. How do you describe the difference between securing your card this week and what it would mean if you don't?

PATTON KIZZIRE: That's what I touched on earlier. I'm at peace either way. I think whatever happens, happens. It may be for the best if I don't.

I saw a video of something about a Chinese proverb, you know, the farmer's horse dies and people come up to him and say, "Oh, I'm so sorry." he's like, "Maybe." Then the next day seven wild horses come up. "Oh, this is great." He's like, "Maybe." It goes on and on down the line.

I don't think that it's definitive -- you know, it could be better for me to be in a different situation, you never know. I fully plan on playing well and getting it done. If it doesn't, I'm at peace. I think God has a plan for me and whatever it is, we'll find out.

Q. Where did you see that Chinese proverb?

PATTON KIZZIRE: I spend a little bit too much time on Instagram, so it was just I like videos like that, philosophy, philosophy stuff like that and that's where I saw it.

Q. If you were to dissect your game while you're in the position you are, what's held you back this season?

PATTON KIZZIRE: I would say just a little bit of everything. My strength in my game forever has been my putting and I haven't -- I haven't putted like myself. Maybe miss a fairway or two here, miss a putt or two there and it just has happened too often.

I think my preparation, I've learned a lot. I think I'm beginning to learn how to prepare. And the mental game has not been where I need it to be and that's what I've been putting the most work into. People don't realize how important that is. All the guys that are playing well

week in, week out physically are doing well, but mentally you've got to be on point.

Q. Since you like philosophy, what type of player do you think the PGA TOUR needs, what type of player does the PGA TOUR need to fill Rory's shoes on the board?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Oh, somebody with some experience. I really hadn't put too much thought into that. I know he'll be missed, but that's -- that's for them to decide. I think Brian Harman provides a lot of wisdom and insight. Whether he's willing to do that or not, we'll see.

Q. What you've got to do this week, does it in any way help -- you talked about you not trying to protect anything or you can't approach it that way. Does it help playing on a course where you know you've got to make a lot of birdies given the fact if the wind doesn't blow, you know you've got to shoot 18, 20, 22 under to win this? Does that kind of sharpen your focus and help you?

PATTON KIZZIRE: Yeah, certainly. I was talking to my trainer just before I walked in. I said, "Well, I'm not protecting anything." I like being the hunter and not the hunted. Certainly won't be looking over my shoulder or anything. Be looking for aggressive. And weather dependent, the scores will be pretty low if the weather cooperates. It's still a challenging golf course where you have to take some calculated risk, but for me it's stay right here right where my feet are and execute like I know how and keep going.

Mentally, just that's where I feel like I'm stronger than I was. So mentally being right where my feet are, that's all I'm looking forward to doing.

JACK RYAN: Patton, those are all the questions we have. Thank you for your time and insight and best of luck this week.

PATTON KIZZIRE: I appreciate it.