

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE**

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**Q. Like to welcome Thirston Lawrence to the interview room here at Corales Puntacana Championship 2024. You've had a look at the course, Thirston. What do you think of it first appearance?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, it's really good. Obviously I think the defense is the wind. Around here I think it's pretty straightforward off the tee, wide fairways and tricky around the greens, a lot of slopes, a lot of runoffs. Yeah, it seems good and weather's good. Used to the warm, humid climate, so yeah, really excited.

**Q. Was there any particular hole or holes that kind of stood out to you during your practice rounds?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** I mean, there's obviously a lot of nice holes. Regarding tricky holes, around the back nine, 17, 18's really good finishing holes, especially with the wind coming from the ocean. I'm not sure what's the prevailing wind, but yeah 17, 18 is really going to be tough holes coming down the stretch on Sunday. Other than that, the golf course is really good. A lot of nice holes. Par 5s on the back nine's really long. With that wind coming from the ocean, it's not reachable for me. Yeah, other than that, all good.

**Q. You're playing here on a sponsor exemption this week. What was the incentive for you to come here and play at Corales Puntacana?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** I want to be on the PGA TOUR, everybody wants to be on the PGA TOUR. So every opportunity I get, I'll always come down. Had a couple of opportunities last year and didn't make the most of it, but I've got a nice run now, I'm playing Zurich next week and then Myrtle Beach in a couple of weeks and hopefully the PGA, so should be four weeks in the next five. Yeah, it's obviously a great incentive for me if all goes well and yeah, really just appreciative of the invitation.

**Q. You mentioned Zurich. Who are you playing with next week?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** I'm not sure yet. There's talk of Aldrich Potgieter, they're trying to get him in. Would be nice, fellow South African. And he's obviously doing well, won on the Korn Ferry. Would be nice, but I mean, I'm just happy to be in the field.

**Q. This is your ninth PGA TOUR start, a lot of them have been British Opens or events in Europe. What do you like about playing -- I mean, we're not in the United States, but what do you like about playing the PGA TOUR?**



**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Like I've said before, it's the tour where I want to be, it's the tour with the most exposure. I don't think the DP World Tour's really getting what they should get. I think the world ranking points we get there is ridiculous, to be honest. So to be -- to get all these points the guys are getting week in and week out is where I want to base myself and try to get into that top-50 in the world.

**Q. Wanting to get to know you a little bit, you won the Rookie of the Year on the DP World Tour in '22. You've won four tournaments on that tour. You've won in all different sort of manners, playoffs, from the front, from the back. What is sort of your particular memories of those victories?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, victories, doesn't happen often. Yeah, like you said, they've been playoffs, in the lead, coming from behind.

Yeah, the memories, just the patience I showed. I think that's what I do really well, I try to stay grounded and stay patient, not really show a lot of emotion. That's sort of the memories I get back from them.

Winning doesn't happen often and you sort of forget what happened during the time of winning, so I think we're just trying to stick to the process and focus on what we're working on to get those victories. Yeah, just staying patient is sort of what I remember from those.

**Q. I found it interesting, the playoff that you won was over Matt Wallace, who won this tournament here in Corales last year. What do you remember about that victory?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, it was good. It felt like I could have won it by four or five shots, but Matt made a run at me. Yeah, being up there in the mountains in Switzerland was really good. To see he won here means that, you know, obviously that my play sort of suits this golf course. Maybe, I don't know. We'll see over the week. Yeah, it was a cool week.

**Q. You've had a couple of top-10s in your last three starts on the DP World Tour. How would you assess your form coming into this week?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, it's been good. I haven't played in three weeks, struggled with a bit of a back injury, took some time off. Yeah, my form's been good for the last two and a half years. I wouldn't really compare the last couple of weeks to the last two and a half. I think it's just a bit of a momentum thing for me. Once the putter gets going, I seem to be in good form. Yeah, just hoping for some nice solid six-foot -- I struggled around six-footers and keep that momentum and stuff. Yeah, if I can get the putter going, long game's really feeling good.

**Q. So you're so far away from home right now. What do you think about the place, the Dominican republic, the people?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, it's nice. I think we have a lot of spots like this in South



Africa, down the coast and some of the type of golf courses. The food's not too different to South Africa. Obviously it's a lot of Spanish. We travel to Spain quite a lot in Europe, so it's familiar for me, it's not too different.

**Q. How's your Spanish right now?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** No good. I don't speak any -- I don't really try to -- I know a couple of words just to greet and goodbye, stuff like that, but I wouldn't say I'm any good in Spanish.

**Q. I want to ask you about the state of South African golf. Obviously a ton of talent coming up. You mentioned your potential partner next week. I just want to get your thoughts on the state of South African golf right now.**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, it's really good I would say, especially the younger guys, amateurs are really good. You see Christo and obviously Aldrich in his first year won on the Korn Ferry. Guys playing on the Sunshine Tour, got their DP World Tour cards. Golf is really good.

I think what helps is from junior you get to play 40 tournaments a year where in the States, I don't know, I think college golf sometimes the guys only play seven or 10 events a year. We sort of push the guys to play a lot of golf from a young age. I think every year there will be someone spectacular coming from South Africa. Yeah, I hope to see a few more guys on the PGA TOUR.

**Q. Just going to that, I think there's a couple of South Africans ahead of you on the official World Golf rankings. Have you sort of thought about the Olympics in the back of your mind?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, definitely. Yeah, that's definitely a goal of mine, but like I just said, the points we get in Europe, we can't compete. Like Christo and Aldrich, they play week in and week out on the PGA TOUR, they play elevated events, they're getting four, five, six times more points than I do. I finish top-10 and I move back in the world ranking; they finish top-10 and they go 20 spots ahead.

I'd say it's a bit unfair, but I'm pushing and that's why I'm here. Thankfully got this opportunity the next couple of weeks and hopefully to maybe get a victory and that will sort of secure my spot into the Olympics.

**Q. Growing up in South Africa, I would guess most young lads either played rugby or cricket. I don't know if you did, whether you did or not. How did you sort of get into golf?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, primary school I did just about everything. My father was quite good in tennis and hockey. I played tennis, I played rugby, cricket, athletics, golf, we



did everything. That's also one thing from South Africans, primary school, all the kids they do every single sport and then from sort of high school, they sort of narrow it down to one or two and they choose from there.

That's what I did. I think grade five or six when I was 12 or 13 years old I decided golf is what I want to do and was full time from then. But yeah, from there on. Yeah, like I say, we play every single sport there is.

**Q. Who did you sort of look up to when you started playing in South Africa?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Ernie Els. I was in his foundation when I was a kid as well. Yeah, when I grew up watching golf for the first time, he was sort of when Tiger came, say early 2000s, that's when Ernie was at his peak and Tiger was at his peak. It was a nice time for me to learn about golf.

And Ernie's always been a fan favorite for all South Africans out there. I didn't really know much of Gary Player, he was obviously way before my time. Yeah, Ernie's a hero, was a hero and still is.

**Q. Your first name is spelled a little bit different from how it's pronounced. How many times have people butchered that name or have you had to correct them?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Yeah, quite a few times. It's a silent H, so people say Thurston or Thirstin or whatever. Yeah, there's been many names called at me, but it is what it is.

**Q. Any funny instances that you can recall on the first tee or --**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** Going through the Asian countries, they struggle with that name. There's been a couple of times where I struggled to hit my first tee shot because I tend to laugh at what they pronounced. Yeah, it's been fairly fine.

**Q. Final one for I guess those who maybe would be less familiar with your game, where would you say your strengths are?**

**THIRSTON LAWRENCE:** I would say from the tee, tend to hit a lot of fairways. Stroke averages, although the driving averages wouldn't really say that, but when I do, most of the fairways just off. Sometimes I hit it into the rough, just very aggressive not just from the tee but iron play going into the greens. So yeah, very comfortable with the long game and I've improved a lot with the short game, pitching and stuff like that. Always been good around the greens. Not a bad putter, but seem to lack sometimes on the crucial momentum putts and stuff. Yeah, long game from the tee I'm really comfortable.

