

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**NICOLAI HØJGAARD**



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**Q. Nicolai Højgaard, welcome to the interview room at the '24 Corales Puntacana Championship. You've been here before, obviously you finished second here, had some success, but how's it been the last few days after playing in the Masters and sort of being in the focus on Sunday to now be here at Puntacana?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, it's been a good couple days off the course. I was at the beach yesterday, so that was quite nice for a change.

But I've been excited to play. It's a course I know well, played well last year, so it's a familiar one when you get out. When we played the pro-am today, you see all the shots you hit from last year, so really excited to get going this week.

**Q. Have you seen any changes at all on the golf course? How different is it from the last couple of times you played?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** It feels a little bit softer and longer at the moment. It's been raining quite a bit, but the course is in good condition. I would expect it to be a little bit firmer during the week. It depends if comes more rain, I don't know what the weather forecast looks like. It's looking good. And I feel like sometimes maybe the rough around the greens is up a little bit compared to last year, certain places, but it looks very similar.

**Q. When you come back here, do you have like an affinity for this place just because it's kind of where you kicked off your PGA TOUR career with your runner-up finish, got you into Valero Texas Open where you played well and secured your temporary status and then now you're a full member? When you come back here, how's the feeling?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, it's the kickstart of last season so it is a pretty cool place thinking about what's happened the last year. Yeah, just good to be back in a familiar place, and very sweaty weather, hot and humid, but it's nice as well. Off the course you can go to the beach, chill out. I think that's nice sometimes having that option.

**Q. What was that experience like for you last week at Augusta National? Can you kind of describe it a little bit for us?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** It was great, I had a great week. It was fun playing some good golf after maybe not the best stretch I've had and with the good preparation leading in the week and playing that course and see that course change so much during the week while playing some really good golf and get out in some of the last groups last couple days was pretty



cool.

I wish I played Amen Corner a little bit better the last couple days, but in general the game felt pretty good and I can't wait to be back again.

**Q. Was there anything about the whole week or the environment, not just the golf course or the golf, that really stood out to you that kind of stunned you or impressed you?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** First of all, when we got to tenth tee, I played with Jon Rahm on Tuesday and when we stood on the tenth tee, I was like wow, I knew it was slopy but I was really, really surprised. From Monday morning it was rammed with people, and the vibe there is a bit more respectful vibe. I actually think that's pretty cool getting to such an iconic place and having some strict rules but in a way everybody respects. It creates a really good vibe and seeing that many people on a Monday is pretty cool.

(Technical difficulty.)

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** It's been fun. From last week to PLAYERS, it's been great. To L.A. and Pebble, it's been fun. But there's a lot to look forward to as well the upcoming weeks and the next three months with majors coming. So I'm looking forward to the next few majors as well.

**Q. At this event this week, this course has a European contingent, (inaudible) and Alex Noren. It might be nice to see quite a few familiar places and European big names here as well?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, it is. We've got a good vibe. They're great guys and I've spent a little bit of time with them off the course. Great players. And when you play together for a few years in Europe and then get over here now, you have a good relationship, so it's cool to see a lot of Europeans playing.

**Q. You almost won here last year, you played pretty well and you won in Dubai in 2023. After the Masters, Scottie Scheffler sort of spoke about how he hates losing. How important is winning to you? Are you desperate to win every week or what's it like?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** I think if that's the only thing that really matters, I think you're going to have a really tough career if the only thing you have on your mind is winning all the time because everything else feels like a loss.

Yeah, I hate losing. I absolutely hate it. I hate having a Sunday like I had last week. I mean, I absolutely hated it. I'm sitting there with my notes writing a thousand notes on how we could do better and blah, blah, blah.



It's part of it. That's also the beauty of the game, trying to figure it out, and sometimes you feel like you've got it and sometimes you're in a situation where you feel like you've got no control. Winning is fun, but it's also sometimes when you have a back nine like I had on Sunday, that gets you more motivated, that gets you more focused on what you need to do and that's probably more important sometimes than just winning.

**Q. You played with Jon Rahm at the start of the week at Augusta. I think after Sunday, Tyrrell Hatton sort of said he was a bit nervous (indiscernible). I suppose with those players is it a bit business as usual with you, like the friendships are still there?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** A hundred percent. I don't hold anything against him. I spent some time with Jon last week, that was pretty cool, I haven't seen him for a while. And to learn from him around a place he's won and they say a specialist is very useful for me. I could feel it going into the week and going into the back nine, obviously I had some very useful information from playing with Jon. We still have a group chat and it's a good vibe and there's joking around a little bit, but nothing's changed certainly not from my side.

**Q. You mentioned taking some notes and kind of reflecting on your experience. What did you learn about yourself last week?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** It's a very, very easy to get caught up in the moment of what could go right and what could happen if you play really good golf. I think Max Homa said it pretty well, sometimes you catch yourself thinking about what could potentially happen if you play some really good golf now and you just need to get away from it. You need to get away from the outcome and the process more like on every shot in a given moment, what situation do you have now, what do I need to do. I feel like it's so easy in a stretch like that you're thinking a bit too far ahead.

I also learned that in major golf, sometimes pars are really good and you've got to be really disciplined on every hole. I know there's certain par 5s you want to make birdies at, but if you make pars around Augusta, you've done a really good job and especially how you see that tournament turns out. When you see that leaderboard at the end of Sunday, you probably look at surprise that scoring is that way compared to the first couple days. So I think that's very important going forward that in a major championship, it's very unusual that somebody runs away with it, but you've just got to stay in there somehow.

**Q. It's kind of your first time in that moment. Can you describe what those emotions were like when you saw -- I don't know if you saw your name on top of the leaderboard, but if you kind of knew where you were in the tournament, what was that kind of point in time like?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, I mean, I obviously knew the situation pretty well after 10 in the third round playing with Scottie, it's a pretty cool moment. It's what you dream of, it's what you work towards, having a lead in a major.



And then there's a difference of leading on Saturday after 10 holes and then on Sunday when stuff needs to happen. I think that's a fine line of knowing what to do from there and I think -- I've been talking with the people around me and how we deal with this now and how we're going to get ready for PGA and so on. I'm looking forward to the next few and preparation is already going on now.

**Q. Next week will be a little bit of a different format, you'll be playing with your brother at New Orleans at the Zurich Classic. What do you think that will be like for you guys?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, it will be great, really looking forward to it. We haven't seen each other for a while. Finally have a chance at Zurich to do it. We've been talking about it the last couple years and finally it turns out the way we want to. Having him on my side and trying to battle it out next week will be fun. We're really looking forward to it. He's back home preparing at the moment, so hopefully he brings out his A-game. I'm really looking forward to it, can't wait to play with Ras.

**Q. I just want to touch on the Olympics. You're right up there in the rankings now. How meaningful would that be and what do you look forward to with that?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, I really hope I qualify for the Olympics. It's something I really want to. I played the Junior Olympics back in '18 and it was pretty cool. Playing the real one will be fun.

Denmark is an Olympic country, it means so much to Denmark to potentially have some medals. As a golfer you probably don't think about it too much, about an Olympic medal, but to potentially be the first one in Denmark to have that or maybe achieve that would be something really cool. It would mean a lot to myself, but also for Denmark as a nation. Everyone's career in Denmark in every sport is almost looked at from an Olympic side and medals mean a lot in Denmark, so that would be pretty cool.

**Q. There's probably more winter Olympics focus from your country, but when you were growing up, did you watch the Olympics? Were you interested in certain sports that were in there? What did you pay attention to?**

**NICOLAI HØJGAARD:** Yeah, definitely. I watched a lot of 100-meter sprint, 200-meter, Usain Bolt dominating in Jamaica, I remember that a lot.

And then watching handball, Denmark has always been a great handball nation and we won the Olympics back in 2016, so I was watching that and seeing the impact that had in Denmark as well and the Olympic medalists is something now we have a chance in golf to have a big impact. I think a medal in golf could really change, have a positive impact in Danish golf.

