

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**SAHITH THEEGALA**

**PROCORE**  
**CHAMPIONSHIP**

**MODERATOR:** Good morning. We would like to welcome our Procore Championship defending winner, Sahith Theegala.

Sahith, welcome back, back at the scene where you captured your first PGA TOUR victory. We would like to start off, what is it like to be back?

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Thank you, Haley.

It's a lot of great emotions coming back for many reasons. Obviously my win last year was incredible, but also even before the win it was one of my favorite tournaments. It was one of my first sponsor invites I got, it was probably my third or fourth event that I played that year and this is my first PGA TOUR tournament that I'm back for a fifth time, which is nuts. I feel like I just started on Tour. I guess I kind of still did just start, but coming back for a fifth time is pretty wild.

Yeah, I just know it's going to be a super fun week because a lot of my family really makes an effort to come up here, a lot of my friends come up, a lot of my girlfriend's friends will be here, and family. It will just be a really fun time. Staying with one of my best friends, Zach Sims, again. He's a legend. Feels like a second home being here. Yeah, just good vibes and just a very relaxed, chill week for sure.

**Q. You said coming back for your fifth time. What makes this place so special to you? Obviously the win, but what else makes this place so special and a place you want to keep coming back to?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yeah, Anthony, I think one of the things I really appreciate about the tournament is the awareness that they have for local charities and local stops in the Napa area. I think it's such a cool and unique spot on the Tour. We're pretty far from any big city and feel secluded in a good way. The people that come out are true golf fans. It's pretty cool to see the amount of turnout out here because it's not easy to get to.

But yeah, it just feels like my best comparison would be like a family-owned hole-in-the-wall that's super popular and that people are lining up outside the door for, that's kind of what this tournament feels like. Just like a close-knit tournament. I associate it with so many good things and I think a lot of players do as well. I think it kind of shows in the field this year, it's better than it's been the last few years, which is really cool to see. I think a lot of guys really love coming here, especially for their family and spouses.

It's just the schedule, it's always tough, we play so much golf. I think that's the main reason

why guys don't play. Yeah, I don't know, I'm a California guy, too, so any tournament in California I'm just drawn towards. The Bay area, I know this isn't technically the Bay area, I guess, but I love it up here.

**Q. Welcome home, Sahith. You backed up this tournament with a phenomenal 2024 season. Could you talk about that success you had and how much this tournament provided that confidence that you were able to carry over into 2024? You're on the Presidents Cup, played well in the FedExCup, you've had some phenomenal finishes. How big was this tournament, winning last year, how did that carry over into 2024?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yeah, thank you, Marty. It was honestly an awesome year. Again, I think I've said this a lot, but I'm not a big expectations guy. I've always said it was a matter of if, not when to win. So when I won, it definitely, it took some tension off that I didn't know I had about winning. It just freed me up even more and gave myself more confidence to show that my good golf is good enough to be in contention at least.

Maybe not to win consistently or win, but to be in contention. And if you put yourself in that position enough times, mathematically hopefully you do come out on top. I know sports don't really work that way sometimes, but it gave me a lot of confidence.

My team does a good job of keeping me grounded and they just were like, hey, just keep your expectations how they were. Just because you've won, don't expect to be winning more or be in that position more. Let's just keep doing what we've been doing, put in the work. If we keep making the progress that I've made in the last four, five years, you're just going to be in that position more naturally.

I guess the only disappointing thing about the year is I really felt like I wasn't in contention a whole lot. I could think of I think Waste Management was really my best chance this year and I still missed out by three or four shots at the end. Then PGA Championship was close, too, but both my runner-ups were a little backdoor.

Again, the year's been awesome because I feel like if I break my game into four parts, putting, chipping, iron, driver, I feel like at some point in the year every part of my game was the best it's ever been. It hasn't quite clicked together, I've never really had like more than a two and a half out of the four really click during the week, but at some point every part of my game was the best it's ever been. That's just giving me more confidence and makes me want to work harder.

Presidents Cup was a big goal for me. Not an expectation, but it was a big goal for me and I did not want to have to have Jim captain's pick me, I wanted to make the team on points. That felt really good to make the team on points and not sweat out a pick or anything.

Yeah, overall incredible year. To finish how I did at Eastlake was just cherry on top.

**Q. I wanted to kind of follow up on that question, the last question about the mindset**

**after finally breaking through. Was there a point typically on a final day where you said there was something in my game that wasn't all the way there, but I kind of figured out how I could get through that and still manage to get to the winner's circle?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yes, 100 percent. Funny enough, last year this tournament I drove it pretty poorly. I just remember being in the trees a lot and big misses, too. Luckily they're all -- I've played this course so many times, I feel like I know where you can miss it big. I missed it toward that side pretty much every time, but felt really uncomfortable off the tee.

My 3-iron is a club that I really default to when I'm not hitting my driver well, especially out here when it gets so firm you can hit 3-iron 300 yards down some of these fairways and I was not hitting my 3-iron straight that final day, too. Maybe even the third day, too, I hit some 3-irons just way offline. One of my 3-irons should have gone OB the first day, on the fence.

You need a good break or two to win. If you're not one of the -- if you're not a super worldbeater, I think you need a little bit of luck to go your way. It did for me.

It just showed like I've driven it incredible this year and if I had driven it last year at this tournament how I am this year, it would have been a lot of fairways and a lot more opportunities. I'm not going to say I would have shot a lot better, but it would have made it a lot less stressful and a lot easier.

It's just awesome to see that you don't need to play perfect golf. That's something I tell my buddies back home all the time. You want to strive for that perfection, nobody's ever going to hit it, but you want to strive for that perfection and work towards it and hopefully get as close to it as possible.

Yeah, that was a big thing for me realizing hey, only three of the four parts of the game were good. I putted really nice last year, that was definitely the best thing I did last year here, but the other two parts were good. Chipped it well, hit my irons well, but really drove it poorly. It just know that it's still possible doing that. I kind of knew it before at least with the driving part because I've never been a great driver of the ball.

Yeah, it just, it takes stress off of me and I know if I have a bad week or two of bad iron week or bad chipping week that just put in the work and you're going to get yourself out of that hole.

**Q. Given the state of the Tour and golf, how important is it to you to represent the Tour as a defending champion and represent a new sponsor here in Napa?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yeah, Nick, I just -- you know, I was asked this question last year and it kind of bugged me that they were asking like why I was here. I like how you phrased it, that was nice. They were like, why are you playing this year because I had a nie year last year, got all the Signature Events. They were like, why didn't you take some time off?

I just told 'em, it's like a PGA TOUR event, it's what I dreamed of growing up, just playing in as many PGA TOUR events as possible, and another California event. Again, it just feels like almost like a pseudo-home event. And regardless if I won last year or not, I would be here. I just love the event, love the area.

I definitely do take some pride in coming back. I think it's easily lost in everything that's going on with golf. They always talk about the strength of the fields and who's playing the events and all that stuff. When it boils down to it, for the most part I just play the events that I really enjoy, enjoy the golf course, enjoy the company, all of that.

I'm just pumped that I can be here and I will continue to be here as long as a tournament's held here. I should say Napa. Yeah, it means a lot that I can come back and provide whatever support I can to the tournament because it's definitely, it means a lot to me and I want to be a part of this tournament, and luckily winning last year I can be a part of the tournament no matter what happens in the future as well. Yeah, it's cool to be tied in with this event and just happy to be here.

**Q. Kind of following up on that, how do you view this stretch of the schedule after the Tour Championship? They've been trying to figure out sort of how to frame this for a while.**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yes.

**Q. And you obviously are part of it I'm sure preparing for the Presidents Cup.**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** For sure, yeah.

**Q. I'm just curious how you sort of approach this maybe differently than events in the heart of the season leading up to the Tour Championship?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yeah, yeah, it's definitely a blessing to be in that Top 50 and even the Top 30. These tournaments, there's a lot less stress on these events. Those guys that are fighting for their card and for those Next 10 spots and just jostling for position, these tournaments are probably more nerve wracking than any of the tournaments in the meat of the season.

I'm just thankful to be in that position. Like you said, this is a great week as a tune-up for the Presidents Cup. I love playing tournament golf and getting the juices flowing. If I don't play for two weeks or three weeks, I feel like I'm not setting myself up the best way possible. That was the reason I played 3M before the Playoffs, too. I just wanted another competitive rep before I got into really important part of the season. Presidents Cup is going to be one of the biggest events I've ever played in, so just having that extra week of prep was going to be really nice.

I'm addicted to playing tournaments, so I do -- my team has notified me I need to just relax a

little bit. Luckily I've been very healthy, but if I keep playing 30 -- I don't even know what I played the first two years, I think it was like 34 and 32. If I keep going down that road, the body's not meant to hold up playing that many tournaments. Being lucky to be healthy and still playing. I think including Grant Thornton I'm still going to play 27 this year. I just feel like I've taken so many weeks off.

Yeah, still going to play here, Japan, Grant Thornton, so three more. Still taking it very seriously, PGA TOUR events and a lot on the line and all that. I'm definitely not practicing as hard as I am during the meat of the season, January to the end of August. More fun golf with my buddies and just playing just to make sure -- I can't even take three weeks off if I tried, can't put the clubs away for that long. More fun golf. But when it gets to tournament time, I think a lot of us are so competitive and especially me, I don't know why, I just end up walking in on Wednesday usually and that's when I know it's tournament time.

It's a bit of both. It's a fun part of the season when I've had a nice season, but also when it comes tournament time, it's really nice to get those juices following.

**Q. A couple for you, Sahith. First of all, how's the state of your health, wrist, back, et cetera?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Yeah, it's funny, knock on wood I've been very healthy since my surgery in 2019 on my wrist, haven't missed an event, but I've had some little injuries.

Probably the scariest one I had was in Denver. On Tuesday I was hitting balls in the morning, something in my hand felt funny. I thought it was cramping, thought it was cramping just because we were at elevation, I didn't get enough electrolytes or whatever.

Went on the course, legitimately you can ask Akshay, I probably hit six or seven balls out of bounds. I'm like, what the heck's going on?

Finally hit a shot out of the rough on 15 on the back and just felt a pop in my hand. I was like, ow, it hurts. Then Didn't hit another shot there, walked in. Popped I guess like a hamate bone in my hand. It was just out of place and it was just pressing on a ligament and it was just painful.

We got it back in. It still hurt a lot, but it was back in. They said just rest for a day, can't make it worse but you cannot play tomorrow. So I didn't play the pro-am. I was genuinely, I wasn't 50/50 on playing or not, I was probably 60/40, but I woke up Thursday, felt a lot better than I thought I would. It sucked that I didn't get the normal reps, but I knew I wanted to play just to get reps for Eastlake.

I actually played -- I know I came in last place by like 5, but I played pretty well other than my putting. But the hand felt good and then by Sunday I had full confidence in my health again. Then Wednesday of Eastlake I probably just hit too many balls at Eastlake practicing.

I had a rib issue earlier in the year, and once you slip a rib, you're very likely to slip it again. We're working on it. This offseason is going to be big for me strengthening those muscles around it. Slipped it again on Wednesday of Eastlake but I caught it right away, went and got adjusted, got it back in within the hour and felt good starting Friday I would say. Thursday I would say was a little rough, just kind of cramping on the way through the ball, but by Friday I was fine. Adrenaline was taking over and kicking in, I was good.

I had last week to rest it, so I feel incredible right now. I wish I felt like this during the Playoffs, but I feel great right now. Healthy as I've been pre-Playoffs, which is important for me important for me this week and Presidents Cup.

### **Q. What's been the response to you calling the penalty on yourself?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** It's been incredible. The media's a funny thing, it's always a funny thing. Sometimes the negative goes really bad, sometimes the positive is really positive. I'm just thankful for the media spin last week to be so, so positive because in the moment I was just upset. I was just like, dang, I touched the sand, like two-shot penalty. Obviously I didn't think about media response or how the world was going to view it, I was just like dang, like how did I even let myself touch the sand.

Yeah, at first I told Xander right away and I told Kais, Carl, I was like, hey, I'm going to finish off this hole, I just want to clear it up, just want to make sure what the rule is, give me an explanation. If I have any issues about that, I always call a rules official and just want to double check.

Honestly, at the moment I did not think it was a penalty. If I had known it was a penalty walking to the next tee, I would have still done the exact same thing and be like, hey, I touched the sand, two-shot penalty or whatever, but at the moment I did not know it was a two-shot penalty when I touched the sand. I thought at worst it was a one, but I didn't know the Rules of Golf that well.

So a two-shot penalty, which is crazy. If you look at the rule, there's so many things you can do in a bunker that are fine. You can slip and fall and if you fall like in the proximity of your ball, it's still fine. You can claim the club slipped out of your hand and hit a part of the bunker, it's fine. You can use your club to get into a bunker, it's fine.

It's just the gray area around that. Whatever grains of sand I moved, it didn't change the lie, but the Rules of Golf, it did. I guess it did, I guess it did. If you moved a few grains of sand, the lie was physically different, but didn't actually change the lie.

I was very frustrated for a hole or two. Just saw how everyone reacted to it after and I was like that's really cool. But for me it was just not like gloating or bragging, I think it was just natural. I was like I don't know how anyone could live with knowing that they did that. Even if it wasn't a penalty and didn't tell anyone, like I don't even know how you live with that. I guess it was just the way my dad instilled values in me as a kid with golf specifically and my

mom with the non-golf stuff. It was just second nature. I felt I did something wrong, I just want to clear it up.

Yeah, media spun me really nicely. I appreciate that. Thanks, guys.

**Q. Anybody unique kind of reach out to you and talk to you about it?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** About the rules stuff, not really. I had some people I haven't talked to in a while like, did you touch the sand, like you've got to let me know, what happened in the scoring tent and all this stuff. They wanted it to be like super juicy or something, but it was just Gary showing me a grainy video for 10 minutes and Xander getting pissed off at him for a little bit, like sand didn't move, it was a shadow.

**Q. You're saying Xander was defending you, didn't think you should be penalized?**

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** I mean, the rules are the rules, we knew. I didn't even think for a second that I wouldn't be penalized, I knew it was a penalty. Like forget the video evidence, I called it. You're not just going to go back on what you called, right? Pretend there's no video, it's really sketchy to say, hey, I touched the sand, and then you find out it's a two-shot penalty and be like, oh, no, no, no, I don't know if I touched the sand.

We knew I was going to get penalized, it was just the way the video was shown and then him saying that it's unanimous that they thought sand moved when in the video it was so grainy. It was actually the shadow of the club was directly over where the ball had hit in the sand, so they were looking at the shadow and the movement of the shadow and like, oh, the ridge of sand moved. I was like, I promise you guys no ridges of sand moved, it was like grains of sand that moved.

He was just saying like this is not conclusive. It wasn't conclusive. Even Gary to a point agreed, but the main point was just pretend the video almost doesn't exist. The only reason they looked at video is that there was absolute conclusive evidence that there was some high definition footage of zoomed-in sand and there's nothing moving. Everyone agreed on that. That would be the only way that it wouldn't have been a penalty because then they're just protecting me in case I saw something funny or something. Yeah, that was kind of the extent of it, to be honest.

**MODERATOR:** Perfect. That's all the questions we have. Sahith, thank you for the time. Good luck this week.

**SAHITH THEEGALA:** Thank you. Thanks, Haley. Thanks, guys.