

ROUND 4 PRESS CONFERENCE
October 27, 2024

NICO ECHAVARRIA (-20)



MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the 2024 ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP winner, Nico Echavarria.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Sorry. I was taking a picture of the --

MODERATOR: Nico, what does it mean for you to win your second PGA TOUR title here in Japan at the ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: It's surreal. This moment is very special. It's been a good year for me, I just haven't had that top result. I've been very consistent, I've learned a lot this year. To finish the year this way is, it's incredible, especially doing it here in Japan in such an amazing country.

MODERATOR: You looked so calm out there, Nico, during your final round and made those two birdies on 16 and 18. Just talk about those two moments, especially the one that helped you win by one.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, it was very close all day, it was fun. They got off to a hot start and it was very level during the last, I don't know, 13 holes or 10 holes. Max played great. Justin has been playing incredible, he hit a lot of good putts that didn't go in. But overall it was special to finish birdie-par-birdie and take this home.

MODERATOR: You talked a little bit about making a putting grip change at the start of the week and you ranked eighth in putting strokes gained this week. What prompted that change and what exactly was the new grip?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: I had my coach last week in Vegas and he gave me a couple drills that we could work on in putting because I was hitting the ball fine, I was just not making a lot of putts out there. I still felt like I needed something to change and I got here on Tuesday morning and I changed the grip and it paid off.

MODERATOR: We'll go to questions.

Q. Tell us the importance of winning in Puerto Rico and what it did for you in this round today.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, I said it before, I don't think I would have won this week without the victory in Puerto Rico. I pulled a lot of that moment in the last round on Sunday in Puerto Rico, I used it a lot this week to stay patient, stay calm. This is a very challenging

course, there's a lot of hard holes and I was able to use that in my favor and I was able to get it done and beat two amazing players.

Q. Nico, I think you called your mom straight after the win and the emotions came out. Just talk us through why that happened. Did you expect that to happen?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: No, I wasn't trying to cry or be emotional. I'm a very emotional person. Claudia's here so she was able to watch, but my parents are at home in Medellin and it's pretty late there. They stayed up all night watching the golf and I'm glad they did. Yeah, very happy and emotional just being able to talk to them because my parents are the reason I play this beautiful sport.

Q. Congrats on your victory. You said you have been having great season this year, you have been playing consistently. What kind of improvement did you make -- have you made compared to the last year?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, this year I had better results, I made more cuts. Overall, I think every part of my game stats-wise improved, I just needed one week for the putter to get hot and this week was it. With my team and my girlfriend, we were talking that it was just a matter of making putts to have a chance of winning on Sunday and that's what happened this week.

Q. According to the stats, your strokes gained approach to the green is very well this week, it is ranked number two. Do you have that feeling?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, it was amazing this week, I played the par 3s I don't know how many under par. It was I think 12 under par on the par 3s, that's pretty incredible. Played 3 under today, I think I played 4 under the first day, 2 under yesterday and I don't know what the second day. Yes, the iron play was on point this week.

Q. This is your second year on PGA TOUR. There are many Japanese players who aspire to join this tournament. What kind of advice could you give to them who wants to make their way to PGA TOUR?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, there was -- I am very impressed with the Japanese culture giving the opportunity to a lot of players to play. That is the best thing the country can do for golf is give them a chance to play on the PGA TOUR. Hideki obviously is a hero here because of the incredible career he's had. I see that there's a lot of good golf from Japan coming up, so the future of Japanese golf is in good hands.

Q. You scored 20 under this year, but it's better score compared to Tiger's win in 2019 win here, so what do you think about that, you scored better than Tiger?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, it's incredible to win a tournament that Tiger's won. This is my second victory, so I just need 80 more victories to catch him. I'm on my way, though.

Q. I'm not sure if you have been to Japan before, but what do you think about staying in Japan this year and also what do you think about playing in front of Japanese fans this week?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yes, I'll answer the first part. This was my second time in Japan, first time was in 2014, I played the World Amateur representing Columbia, that was in Karuizawa. I was shocked and impressed with the culture, the cleanness, the politeness of the people here. So when we were able to get in the field this year, we were super happy. It's Claudia's first time, but it was my second time and I knew that it was going to be very special. And here we are.

Playing in front of the fans here, they're so kind. They clap a lot, they cheer for you and just very, very happy to win here in front of such amazing people.

Q. How are you going to celebrate with your girlfriend tonight? Do you have any plan to eat Japanese food or anything?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: We're going to try to eat more steak. We ate steak on Wednesday and it was the best steak I've ever had, so I think we deserve to go one more time before we leave Japan.

MODERATOR: This win gets you into the Masters, into the PGA Championship. How special is it to be able to get in those majors along with THE PLAYERS Championship as well?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, I'm very excited to go for the first time to Augusta, I've never been. I was waiting to win myself that trip before going and we've done that, so we're going to be very happy to play the Masters in a couple months.

Q. Nico, how important is it to you to represent Colombia around the world. You and Camilo are good friends, I believe you have the Nico Open back at home, you played in the Olympics representing Colombia. How important is that to you and your heritage?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, it was incredible playing in the Olympics and representing Colombia this year because it was the first time since I was an amateur. So I turned pro in 2017 and it took me seven years to represent Colombia. Obviously we're playing for Colombia in some way or form, but in the Olympics it was very cool.

I always try to represent my country the best way I can. It's very cool to win twice internationally and give another victory to such a small sport in our country because golf in Colombia's tiny Hopefully this will make it more popular and bigger.

MODERATOR: With that, we'll wrap up the press conference. Nico, congratulations once

again on being the 2024 ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP winner.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Thank you very much.