

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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BEN GRIFFIN



MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Ben Griffin to the interview room here at the RSM Classic.

Ben, you're making your fourth start here at the RSM Classic where you are a Sea Island resident, coming off a T-8 last year. Just talk a little bit about being here this week.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, really excited. These are two golf courses that I'm very familiar with. I've played a lot of rounds with all the PGA TOUR pros and other pros that live in this area and it's a place I'm very comfortable, so I'm excited to tee it up again. I wish this tournament was on the Plantation course all four rounds because I love that course a lot more, but it is what it is.

MODERATOR: Five top-10s this season, coming off an eighth last week, just overall state of your game, Ben?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I feel like I've had a pretty consistent fall. I didn't finish as well as I would have liked in Cabo, I don't think my result shows how good I felt about my game, but it happens.

Yeah, I feel like I'm trending in the right direction, playing pretty consistent all across the board, driving, iron play, putting, chipping, everything's been pretty solid. So hopefully can sync everything up this week and take it down.

MODERATOR: And with this being the final event of the fall, there are several competitive consequences on the line, one of which is the Aon Next 10 with eligibility into next year's early Signature Events. You were part of this last year with your inaugural Aon Next 10 and are in position again. How important is that competitive pathway?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, it's very important. It's a huge opportunity in the fall if you didn't finish top-50 to get in that Aon Next 10 and get into at least the first two Signatures and throughout the year you can still continue to be either in that Aon Next 10 or Swing 5 throughout the year.

A little bummed to not finish top-50 earlier in the year, but yeah, the fall's a good chance to catch up and get back in because next year's going to be probably a pretty competitive year after some of these changes. It's very important for me to get a little bit of a head start and be in those first two events.

Q. In what ways does Seaside challenge you that makes it not your favorite of the two?

BEN GRIFFIN: I have the course record on the Plantation course and I've played really well there. Pretty much every time I play with the pros around here they know that they probably shouldn't play against me on the Plantation course. You can ask Andrew Novak that, he likes to be my partner over there.

Yeah, I finished well on the Seaside course last year with a final round I shot 61, so I guess I figured something out then. Yeah, in reality I'm comfortable on both courses, I just feel like if it was on the Plantation course all four, I'd feel even better.

Q. This will be your 7th start of the fall. Is that all in pursuit of that Aon Next 10 or are you the kind of guy if there's a tournament, I'm going to sign up and play it?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I think a combination of both. I don't have kids, I have a fiancee but we travel together, so why not play as many as I can. There's still a lot to play for. The Aon Next 10 is huge, getting into Pebble and Riviera with the elevated points and the Signature Events playing against the best players is what I want to do.

I feel like a lot of guys don't necessarily take advantage of that that probably should and it just gives me a head start on them and I'm not afraid to play a lot of events in the row. I think this is going to be my 35th event of the season so I've gotten a lot of reps in, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Q. Ben, could I get your thoughts on all the changes that were approved yesterday?

BEN GRIFFIN: How did I know this question was going to come up?

Q. Amazing, right?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, amazing.

Yeah, there's a lot of different thoughts about these changes. As a player, you know, I don't necessarily have the authority without being on the PAC or the board to vote on these decisions. For me, my goal is just to play as well as possible. I think as a result of some of these changes, what we're going to see next year is going to be extremely competitive.

I don't mind playing a lot of golf, but I think more guys are going to maybe play more tournaments because it will be more important to finish in the top 120, which was what, was it the Top-125 last season.

I don't think there's ever been a time on Tour where there's more to play for, still a lot of things on the line and I'm just excited to challenge myself.

I think I learned going back two years ago when I didn't play the RBC Canadian Open, but I remember that was right when they announced the LIV-PGA TOUR merger and there was cameras. I was watching on Golf Channel because I was like, wow, I can't believe this is happening. Everybody was rushing in to go to the player meetings, they turned to the range and it was Tommy Fleetwood hitting balls. I was like, wow, it's pretty interesting that he wouldn't want to go in.

I think Steve Sands or someone ended up going up and interviewing him and he was like, yeah it's just another week, I'm going to play, these changes, I'm not too worried about it, it is what it is and I'm just going to focus on winning this week.

So I've tried to use that mindset that he's had over the last year and a half to not get myself too involved with a lot of policies and focus more on my career and what's at stake because ultimately that's all that matters to me. The policies are going to be what they are and my goal is just to try to win and play as good as I can.

Q. And so I think you just answered this so I apologize for asking this, it sounds like you're not saying I don't want to tell you my opinion, you're saying I'm trying to get in a mental head space where I almost literally don't have an opinion?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, it's just to me in my position, it's not worth something -- it's not worth me, you know, being for or against any sort of changes. They are what they are and my goal is just to play as good of golf as possible. The system's going to be whatever the policy board and the PAC and, you know, all those guys think is best for the fans and for the Tour and for the product. If that's what's going to be best and we're going to see over time with what changes worked, what changes maybe didn't, they assess each year on what could be better, what could be worse. Right now this is what they think is going to be the best possible product for the PGA TOUR and the most competitive and I'm ready to fight for whatever I need to to keep my card and play as good as possible.

You know, if you dive into the exact changes, you know, we see the Korn Ferry going from 30 to 20. I think historically the last 20 years it's oscillated between 20 and 30. If you go back to early 2000s, mid 2000s, I believe it was always top-20, then they moved to top-25 and it was only I think last year when they moved it to 30. Granted, we had the Finals 25. So you see that change. Historically it feels like a big change, it's going from 30 to 20. Right now if you look at historical data, it's always been between 20 and 30.

But now we have PGA TOUR U so we have a newer access for the guys coming out of college that are playing really well to earn their Tour card, that's still there.

Monday qualifiers, those have made some changes, guys have opinions on those. I think there's still enough access to where if you play really well and play good golf on the Korn Ferry Tour, play well at Q-School this fall for some guys, like instead of those younger guys that are looking at these changes thinking, oh, man, my back's against

the wall, use it as motivation. You can still play really good golf this fall and Q-School and you can get on Tour right away. Like I didn't have that option when I came out, I couldn't finish top-5 at final stage and get on Tour. Now we have that.

There's still plenty of access routes for players. Yes, it feels like maybe 20 to 25 percent of the access has kind of gone away in a certain way, but if you still play really good golf it's going to take care of itself and it's going to create a compelling product, which is what the PGA TOUR wants. The best players are going to rise to the top still and we'll see how everything shakes out.

Q. On a lighter note, as a Duke guy, I have to ask you do you lay awake at night fearing Cooper Flagg?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I like UNC basketball's chances against most opponents, let's put it that way.

Q. You had about six weeks off after FedEx St. Jude. Is there anything you felt like you worked on in your game or you had time to address to get ready for the fall?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I think for me, if you look at my career, when I was first playing professional golf stepped away, I felt like I had a really good mental reset when I was away from golf for a few months there and started kind of coming back. I feel like I learned from that that it's good to get away from golf from time to time, especially with the amount of golf that I play.

So for me, I took the Fort -- well, Procore Championship off and that allowed me to have a month and a half where I could take three -- I took probably three weeks off more or less without touching a club. I mean, I did play golf like once or twice, but it was really for fun and it was with a transfusion in my hand and it was good.

Yeah, I like to freshen up in my off time and get away from golf. I think having that month, month and a half off is awesome because I can take three weeks off and I can also work for a few weeks on things that I needed to clean up.

So yeah, I felt like that off period was really more just a mental reset, get away from it and then get that hunger back to come back and try to play well.

MODERATOR: Final question, how is wedding planning going?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I play so much, so my mind's more on the golf. Dana, my fiancee, she's been a trouper getting all that planned out, and our wedding planner. I'm staying out of that. I'm going to show up and help when I can, but yeah, I don't know what the floral decorations or any of that look like and I don't really want to right now.

MODERATOR: Fair enough. Best of luck this week, Ben.