

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**JOHNNY KEEFER**



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**MODERATOR:** We would like to welcome Johnny Keefe to the interview room here at the RSM Classic.

Johnny, you're making your second Tour start since clinching the No. 1 spot on the Korn Ferry Tour and setting up your season next year on the PGA TOUR. What's the experience been like so far, Cabo and then coming into this week?

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Yeah, it's been an awesome experience just between trying to get used to the practice rounds and kind of just meeting all the guys, kind of introducing myself. It's been a lot of fun getting to compete against these great players on the PGA TOUR and continuing to test my game and test myself outside of the Americas and Korn Ferry Tour.

**MODERATOR:** We just dropped a pin to get you here to the media center, first time here at the RSM Classic. What's your early impressions of the tournament and the golf course?

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** The golf course is great, both of them. I played Seaside yesterday and it was definitely a treat. It's definitely a little different than it looked on TV.

And same with Plantation, it's a great golf course and it's always in -- it seems like it's in really good shape and it will stay that way I'm sure. Yeah, no, it's been a lot of fun so far.

**MODERATOR:** And last for me, earlier today the PGA TOUR announced the 2026 Korn Ferry Tour schedule. As a player who has had success on both PGA TOUR Americas and the Korn Ferry Tour, how much have those pathway tours set you up for your professional career?

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Yeah, I mean, I can't thank both of those tours enough. Between learning how to travel, between learning how to manage my game, my body, I mean the schedule's rigorous, the players are really, really good, you've got to play really well. Just being able to come out here with a lot of confidence and know that the good golf will travel regardless of what tour it's on, I think that stays true. I think Korn Ferry definitely prepped me really well.

**Q. Johnny, how long -- when did you move to San Antonio when you were a kid?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Probably around 13 or 14 years old.

**Q. Are you still an Orioles fan?**



**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I still am a little bit. It was a tough year but yeah, I still watch 'em.

**Q. And where are you going to kind of set up your base of operations right now? Where are you living?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I'm in San Antonio right now, I'm still living with the parents trying to save up a little bit of money. My fiancée's actually in med school right now, so whenever she gets out and finds her place for residency we'll start looking. I'm kind of just going to follow her.

**Q. And then of all the perks that you get for what you've done this year, one of them is a spot in THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP. I'm wondering, where was that tournament on your radar when you were growing up? How much did you watch it on TV? I know you were there last week, right?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Yeah, yeah, about maybe three weeks ago now. Yeah, it's a tournament that you grow up watching. I still remember the playoff between Rickie and Kevin Kisner. I mean, and Rickie's always been one of my favorites. Just growing up watching and seeing the special moments and all the winners that have come out of there, proven to be really, really good golfers and continue to play great after that. Just having the opportunity to go play that is going to be amazing.

**Q. Did you ever get in the Junior Players?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I did, yeah.

**Q. How many times did you play that?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I played it one time and yeah, it was just as special. It felt unreal.

**Q. So you won't be going in there cold, you've played the course?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I've played the course. It's a little different game now than it was when I was in high school.

**Q. What's been your biggest surprise in playing PGA TOUR events versus Korn Ferry or any place else you've ever played?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Honestly, I think it's a lot of just the scale. Between the fans, all the operations, even interview processes, it's just a little bit bigger. I think Korn Ferry and Americas prepped me really well, but it's only something that you can experience when you're out here. I'm trying to gain those experiences and learn and continue to grow.

**Q. Johnny, you got your card with a pretty big accomplishment, in the Nationwide -- Korn Ferry Player of the Year. Shows how old I am, I lapsed into**



**Nationwide Tour there. It's not going to get any easier going forward. This year they reduced the Korn Ferry exemptions to 20, the Tour exemptions are 100 on the points list, fields are going to get reduced. So as you go forward knowing you're out here for at least another year, do you feel like I've got to go out there and work -- you know, double my efforts and work even harder to stay here now that you're here?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I mean, good question. For me, I've always just thought come out here and do my best. I don't think I need to put in any crazy extra hours, I don't think I need to try harder. I'm already trying to do my best, I'm already doing the work that I will continue to do.

And obviously the game evolves and it's going to have to evolve and get better and better, but that's always been the goal. I don't think whether I would be on Korn Ferry or PGA or even Americas, I think the goal's always to try and get better and ultimately try and win. I try not to think about that stuff too much, I just come out here and try to play the best I can.

**Q. You're obviously laser focused and ready to roll. Do you think playing here might give you a false sense of what you've gotten yourself into considering the chill vibe that Davis and RSM have created on Sea Island?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** It's definitely a good vibe out here. It is a little bit different. It's a slight bit more intense situation between learning the golf courses and just outside factors and stuff like that, but at the end of the day it's just golf. Coming out here and enjoying what we get to do for a living, you know, waking up and playing golf and doing all that stuff is great. Just really enjoying the process and trying to do my best.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Yeah, I mean, the course is fantastic. Actually, it reminded me a lot of Q-School last year, reminded me a lot of Savannah, Georgia, on the Korn Ferry Tour, both courses that I really liked and really enjoyed. You've got to hit a lot of really good shots, you've got to hit a lot of fairways. So I think that's the most important part when you're out here, you want to play well, so you're obviously going to want to hit those fairways anyways. Just emphasizing solid ball-striking and trying to make a putt.

**Q. How much are you thinking about another tournament in Georgia this week?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Not really, to be honest with you.

Obviously, like I've said, I just want to play the absolute best that I can. I don't think looking forward or -- obviously the Masters would be fantastic, but it's just another opportunity to get out here and kind of prove to myself, prove to a lot of people as well that I can compete out here and I can compete on a different level as well.

You know, I'm just coming out here enjoying the process.



**Q. You mentioned Rickie Fowler earlier. What was that experience like playing a practice round with him?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** I actually have not played a practice round with him.

**Q. OK. I thought at The Open. Has he passed along some words of wisdom to you though yet?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** No, not yet. Obviously I'm hoping to connect with Rickie. Seems like a great person, I'd love to meet him. My college coach actually coached him at Oklahoma State. Definitely someone that I look up to, seems like a good guy.

**Q. Do you have a coach that you work with or somebody who taught you growing up?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Yeah, yeah. So I have a swing coach, Brian Gathright. He actually works out here with Mac Meissner, who's going to be playing this week as well. He's in San Antonio. I grew up kind of knowing that Mac was one of the best guys in San Antonio, and his brother Mitchell's on the Korn Ferry, who just narrowly missed, he was the 21st spot. It was tough.

Brian's done a really, really good job with me, Mac and Mitchell traveling and working with us, laying the foundations that we need to improve and get better.

**Q. Has he told you what to expect and everything?**

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** A little bit, yeah, yeah.

**MODERATOR:** All right. Any final questions for Johnny? Johnny, thanks so much for your time and best of luck this week.

**JOHNNY KEEFER:** Thank you.

