

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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AARON WISE



MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Aaron wise here in the interview room at the 3M Open.

Aaron, I think your second or third time back here. I guess, just to open it up, what are some of your takeaways of TPC Twin Cities after your first two days here?

AARON WISE: Yeah, no, it's a great golf course and it's in awesome shape this year. 3M and the tournament seem like they're putting on a really good event. There's been a lot of people out here the last couple days, which is awesome to see. As far as how it's run for us and the dining and the logistics, it's been awesome, so looking forward to a good week.

MODERATOR: You're coming off a hot three-week stretch, T-3 at ISCO and then top-15 last week in Puntacana. Is there anything specifically that you can kind of credit your last three weeks to in your game?

AARON WISE: Just a lot of hard work. Actually, a big part of that too has been I've switched a good amount of my equipment over. I was still playing a lot of my old stuff from kind of 2020 when I first came back. Worked into T-100 Titleist irons and a Titleist driver. The new equipment has definitely helped put the ball more in a window that I'm used to because when I switched, when I first came back, I came back with the new Pro V1 and it was just kind of low and hot and I was feeling I kept having to hit it higher and higher and higher and my swing wasn't in a good spot because of that.

Some of this new equipment kind of just hits it higher for me and I've been able to keep my swing where I want it, keep the ball flight and the window where I want it and that's kind of been a big part of leading to some of these better scores also.

MODERATOR: Looking back kind of from the start of the year until now, you've talked about learning, whether it's round by round or looking back on the previous week. When you look on this season as a whole at this point, what do you feel like you've learned about yourself?

AARON WISE: Yeah, a lot. You know, when I first came back I didn't even know if I could play at a high level anymore. You shoot the scores at home but you don't know how it's going to translate out here. A lot of it was just that, and then just putting in the reps. Like you said, just hey, this is what didn't go well today, how do I fix it for the next round. It was honestly pretty tough because those first few months like I only played I think maybe six events before this stretch kind of started this year and all those were only two days' worth of competitive rounds. So to have only 12 competitive rounds going into June isn't very much.



There wasn't that many learning experiences to be had.

As I just kind of keep going, and like Myrtle Beach I had an incredible first round. That was kind of the first event that like hey, when I feel like if I play well I'm up at the top of the leaderboard, that was the first time for that and that was cool to see.

Then it became how do I make it two rounds, how do I make it three rounds. Now I feel like how do I keep putting together good tournaments. Things are in a good spot, how do I keep them there.

All of us out here, our good golf is great, it's just a matter of how do we keep it there and not kind of go through the ebbs and flows of I'm playing good, I'm playing bad. I feel like I'm kind of in that part now where it's like hey, my game and my scores are good. What am I doing, how do I keep it there, how do I extend that period of time as long as I can.

Q. You've been open about in your comeback your struggles with mental health. Can you kind of update how that's worked for you and what kind of things you're doing to kind of make that work?

AARON WISE: Yeah, no, it's a constant daily battle out here. What we do is very stressful. To have to be on for as long as we are, for five, six, seven hours out here every day. Then especially when you start stacking weeks and weeks. Like this is my fourth week in a row now and I'm going to play all the way through, so I've got six.

It's just a matter of like how do you -- the days are stressful, so how do you then calm yourself down, how do you even deal with the stress as the day's going on. Keeping your mind in a good frame to where you feel like you can go keep hitting good shots and keep playing well, and on top of it, enjoying it.

Even though it's stressful, we're supposed to like being out here. We started playing golf because we love the game. Kind of keep that at the forefront even when, hey, you may hit a bad shot in a very high pressure moment, like it's not the end of the world, you know?

Q. Aaron, you made it look really easy in the beginning of your career, a quick win, Rookie of the Year. When did things start would you say going -- when did you have like a tailspin or how did things change?

AARON WISE: Yeah, that's a good question. Even before -- so I ended up taking off kind of in April of whatever year that was, I forget, and the year before that I made it to East Lake. So like it was a pretty rapid decline.

I felt like the Fall Series after that year I made it to East Lake, I could tell something was off but I didn't really know what it was. I think even there like my last event -- well, I don't know. I'm not going to say that because I don't know. I could tell something was off there in that Fall Series and I didn't know what it was. It was kind of easy in the break off or the holidays



and Christmas and whatnot to kind of forget about it.

Then I came back in Hawaii and again just my mind wasn't in a good place. I wasn't really enjoying it, wasn't playing good because of that. That just kind of -- honestly, it snowballed really, really fast to the point where I got to WGC Match Play, I think I even won my first match there that week. I knew coming off the course like I was just pretty miserable and didn't want to be playing golf. It was affecting more like even that week I think my wife's mom was there and I didn't even want to go to dinner with them. I was just really, really not in a good place.

I kind of credit that to a lot of just -- a lot of stressful golf, a lot of maybe not playing as good as I wanted, and I just don't feel like I really knew anything about mental health or what was going on so I just kept trying to go with the old adage of going to push through it, I'm going to try harder, I'm going to keep working harder at it. When things are going south and you're working harder and harder and as hard as you can, like I think that all just snowballed into me being in a very bad place and not happy with what I was doing.

Q. What did you do during the time that you were away and when did you feel like you turned the corner and realized you wanted to come back?

AARON WISE: Yeah. So the first few months of my time away I really didn't golf much and just kind of tried to get back to feeling like myself off the golf course.

Honestly, I didn't feel like that happened very quickly. Well, I don't feel like any of this process has happened very quickly.

About four, five months after I stopped golfing I met an individual who is kind of in the neuroscience world, his name's Dr. Izzy Justice. He was the first person who kind of sat down and explained to me like what you're feeling isn't just random, it's a culmination of what you're doing off the course, things that have happened in your life, what's happened on the course. This is kind of where your brain is and this is why you feel the way you feel and this is why you have the thoughts you're having. He was the first person that kind of simplified all that and made it make sense to me.

Then once I understood it, we were able to kind of lay out a plan, which included a lot of stuff at home, a lot of stuff just to kind of like clear the noise out of my head if that makes sense. Like my head was very busy with a lot of thoughts, stuff you wouldn't even think kind of played into that, whether it was like a messy home or stuff out of place or all sorts of things that your brain has to process every day. That was a big part of cleaning up that.

And then he explained, hey, if we're going to get back into golf, here's how we need to do it. He was able to also measure kind of your brain waves with like a mobile EEG scan basically of what's going on in your head and what thoughts are happening and how many hertz your brain is operating at.



Like basically when I first started working with him I was at -- I mean, the numbers don't mean much to you, but I was at about 70 or 80 hertz just sitting here talking. Now where I sit I'm at about 25 hertz, 30 hertz. So my brain is working at, you know, it's got half the stuff going on in its own head that it used to have and that you kind of see translate through your daily life.

Obviously when I talk about like the stresses of being out here, that's going to raise your hertz and it's my job to try to keep my brain waves as low as possible as the weeks go on and that's how I'll play my best golf.

Q. When did you feel like you wanted to come back and do this again?

AARON WISE: I wanted to come back the whole time, it was just a matter of how do I feel I can get back to being myself and playing good enough golf to get back out here.

That process was a long time. I would say -- I mean, I've been playing out here for a year and a couple months now I would say. Probably only three or four months before that did I think even making a return was possible with where I was at.

So it was a solid year and a half at home. Probably the first six months just being off the course, the next year being on the course just trying to get to a place where I could kind of control my brain enough to do the things that I wanted to do, to hit high enough quality golf shots to even be out here.

Q. Why has it worked for you to have your wife on your bag as your caddie?

AARON WISE: Yeah, no, she's been a huge part of it, of me coming back. It's obviously just a big comfort level.

There's still days out here to me where things happen or stuff and I get really stressed. She's a big part of calming me down. She's someone that I can turn to and however I'm feeling, whatever thoughts I'm having, whatever I'm going through, I can just be 100 truthful and honest with her and we can kind of work through whatever comes up together.

I feel like that's the one thing she can do for me that maybe necessarily another caddie can't is just because she truly knows me and she's been through with me through this whole process. She knows what I've worked on through this whole process and she's kind of on the exact same page with me on that.

I feel like having someone on my bag that knows what I've been through and knows how to calm my brain down is way more important for me than someone right now who can help me pull the right club if that makes sense.

Q. You talk about trying to get your game in shape coming back. What's been the easiest and most difficult part there?



AARON WISE: Yeah, that's a good question.

Easiest part, I don't know if any of it was easy. The easiest part I would say is my love for the game if that makes sense in a weird way. Like even when I was going through the tough times and felt like not myself and I couldn't control my brain to hit a good golf shot at all, I still loved golf. Like I loved the challenge of getting better. In a weird way, even though I wasn't very good and I was hitting horrible shots, like I enjoyed even the one percent better shot than it was the day before. That was kind of the easiest part is I've always loved the challenge of getting better, I've always loved working hard at it. It's a game that I've loved since I was a kid.

The hardest part is definitely just -- the hardest part to me was I could go through a round of golf at home, let's say, by myself and play just fine, but then as soon as you added other people around or you added other stressful things in my day, all of a sudden I couldn't play very well. It was like, OK, why is that?

Then just kind of the next steps of like, OK, when I first started coming back I tried to play in the pro-am before I competed and like that day ruined me and I withdrew. I'm like, I can't do this anymore, this is crazy.

Just kind of the building up of like having all the -- everything that includes the Tour event and still being able to be at the same level that I'm at at home when I'm playing by myself, that's probably been the toughest part because kind of like I alluded to before, there wasn't that many reps of those rounds if that makes sense. That's the hardest thing to find.

I feel like I'm still working on it, but I'm getting to a place where the noise of like the Tour life and the Tour events and the media and the cameras, whatever it may be, I can still kind of feel like they're not there in a weird way if that makes sense. That's very recent and really nice.

Q. Aaron, since you've returned, what has the support been like from your fellow players and the fans in general?

AARON WISE: Yeah, it's been amazing. I feel like obviously not a lot of people know what happened to me or what I was going through. You guys will keep finding out as we keep asking more questions.

But the support has been amazing, you know, from fans and players. The more I tell my story, the more it feels like people understand it and they're kind of on my side on it a little bit and root for me more. That part's really cool. I've enjoyed that a lot. Hopefully I can keep playing well and keep the good story going.

The support I've received, especially the last few weeks as I play better and my story's become more apparent has been amazing.



Q. Just a couple of weeks ago you were in the final group on the final day at the ISCO Championship and it had been a good three or four years I guess since you had been in that position. Can you describe what those feelings were like and was it similar to what it was three or four years ago when you experienced it or was it different this time?

AARON WISE: Yeah, I would say it was similar. Actually, the week before I played John Deere and I was not like close to the lead, but I could have won it. Gotterup was actually ahead of me and won it ahead of me, so I knew I had a chance to win at John Deere going into Sunday.

And I got paired with Rickie, who obviously comes with huge crowds and a lot of distractions and stuff. I feel like I learned a lot from that day in some of the mistakes I made and some of the little things. Like it's just like I remember one shot on a par 3 where I wasn't fully locked into my process and I hit it in the hazard. Those little things add up out here. Just trying to key on eliminating as much as that as possible.

I felt like I did a pretty good job of it at ISCO there. I felt like I struggled with my putting on Sunday, I felt like I would have won that tournament if I putted better.

I took a lot from that and I figured out, really dove into it and figured out why I don't feel like I putted well. Last week I was in the second-to-last group and I felt like I missed one or two short ones on Sunday again, but I felt like both of those, I knew why I missed them versus ISCO, I didn't know -- I wasn't able to pay attention and I just putted bad if that makes sense. The two putts I missed on Sunday this last week, I knew why. And I was more mad at myself for knowing why I missed it than I was just hitting a bad putt if that makes sense.

Q. And one last one from me. You mentioned earlier about changing your equipment and using old stuff from a couple years ago. In those couple of years that you've been away, have you seen not just changes in the equipment now, but have you seen other changes on Tour no matter how minor just being away from it for a stretch?

AARON WISE: I feel like maybe it seems slightly bigger out here. It's definitely younger, I'll give you that. Like the Tour seems like it gets younger and younger every year and kids are hitting it farther and farther every year they come out. That's definitely something that was eye opening.

Honestly, the equipment was one of the biggest eye-opening parts. When I left, even though it's only been three or four years, like no one played a 7-wood back then, mini drivers weren't around back then, a lot of people didn't play like these big 4-irons they play now.

The equipment I feel like was a big part of it. I was definitely hampering myself playing some of the old stuff I was playing.



Again, like going through what I was going through, that old equipment, I knew if it was me or the club if that makes sense because I had played at a really high level with those clubs, so that had a lot of value to me at some point. Eventually I kind of had to let that go and say, hey, everyone's playing this new stuff and they're hitting shots that I didn't necessarily have available to me. Once I switched equipment, it was like OK, I feel like I have those shots now, so that's been pretty cool.

MODERATOR: Aaron, thanks for the time. Best of luck this week.

AARON WISE: Thank you.

