PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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ZACH JOHNSON

MODERATOR: Zach, welcome to Phoenix. It's been an incredible season so far. What have you been thinking about going into this week?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I mean, the generic answer to that but also the truth is trying to get better. I mean, I played a lot lately. I'm not used to playing this much in the fall so my body's obviously the utmost priority, but also rest has been imperative. I slept 10 hours last night. I can't remember the last time that's happened, it was nice. I had a busy off week.

Yeah, I feel good. Like it's just I'm trying to stay right where my feet are and get better. The way I look at it, my opponent this week is the golf course. I've seen the front, I'm going to see the back today, I'm going to play the pro-am tomorrow. I'll see it twice if the weather holds out. That's kind of a joke.

So that's where I'm at. My mentality is to beat this course and again just try to improve on and off the course every day.

Q. What's your scouting report on your opponent this week, the course? What have you seen so far?

ZACH JOHNSON: She's pretty good. Some good rough in areas, number one. It has so many semblances to some of the places I've played over the years. You know, I don't know who it was, somebody said it was kind of a combination of Hualalai, which is the Sony tournament now on Oahu, a combination of that and La Quinta Country Club in, would that be La Quinta? Yeah, La Quinta, California. I see that.

I mean, there's some single file pews, aisles down these fairways, so you've got to hit it straight off the tee. I don't know if it's a first-shot course yet, I can't really determine that. What I mean by that, like if you get the ball in the fairway, you can be aggressive. I don't know if it's quite that. I think it may be both depending upon the hole. Like you've got to get the ball in the fairway and in some instances just get the ball in the middle of the green because the greens are small.

So far I've been very impressed. The conditions are very good. I know they've had a lot of rain over the last week or two. With the overseed, I don't know if that's ideal or not, but at the same time it's pretty good. Conditions, I'm impressed. It will only get better as the week goes on.

Q. You and Stewart go back a ways. It's down to you two. Is it kind of fun going head to head with somebody you've known for so long?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, yeah, you know, I've asked a lot of questions leading up to this year to a bunch of my buddies out here and he would probably be the one I talked to the most. Maybe I had some expectations, but whatever expectations I've had they've been exceeded. This place is pretty fantastic.

He's been a great resource. He's legitimately one of my best friends in the world. I would say the family is as well.

The fact that one of us will hold it and the other one -- I'm telling you, I'll be the first one to give him a hug if I don't win it, but at the same time -- well, my wife will be, but I'll be in the top two or three after Lisa.

Ultimately, I kind of feel like I've already won out here, and I know again that kind of sounds generic. Man, I didn't know what was going to happen. I felt great about my game coming into this year just given the work I've put in. Again, you don't know how it's going to manifest. So whatever happens this week I feel like I'm already a winner.

Q. You've raved about this tour. Is there something that you learned along the way, maybe had a misconception about the tour itself and now that you've seen it, is there one or two things you've learned?

ZACH JOHNSON: I don't know if I've -- well, I think it's one of the purest forms of professional golf I've experienced. I really appreciate going to communities that really desire and want us, that want high-level golf, that want to serve the community that they have a presence in. Our title sponsors understand that. I know there's analytics behind this, that and the other, you can look at ratings. I don't know if that's a pure motivation of our support staff, of our partners, of our constituents.

But what I do know is that we go to a lot of pretty cool communities that really want us and that give back to the community tenfold. Like to me, that's what a platform of professional golf should be about.

I know it comes down to dollars and cents, I get that in some respects, but at the same time out here I feel again like I've already won. Just to have the opportunity to compete still at 50, that's amazing. Playing great golf courses, that's amazing, against phenomenal competition, good dudes, amazing. Again, we're serving great communities. So it checks every box and I think that's the coolest thing about this tour.

Q. I want to ask you about Bernhard Langer. This is the first time that he's not here. Do you have a funny story, an anecdote, the first time you met him? When I say Bernhard Langer, what comes to mind?

ZACH JOHNSON: Oh, man, I don't know our time right now, I don't know if I can express all of it.

He's a stud in all senses of it. I consider him a role model on and off the golf course. His resume speaks for himself. I don't know if the numbers he's acquired out here will ever be attained. Maybe at some point but probably not in my lifetime. He has amazing records. If he didn't get injured, it would be more.

You know what, I think he can still win out here. He's 69 now I think? I played with him a handful of times out here, he can still win out here because he does everything, everything well.

What does he not do well? He and I are probably -- we don't hit it very far but that's about it with him, that's it. Like he hits it straight, he knows where not to go, great course management, great short game. He's amazing.

Now, off the golf course, again a role model. So appreciate how he works. When it's golf time, it's golf time. When it's family time, it's family time. He has his priorities from my vantage, certainly what I'm seeing in line and appropriate. Christian faith is important. Number one, family, et cetera, et cetera, important.

I'm just grateful that I have somebody like that I can look to. I can call him for anything. Whatever formula or recipe he has, it works. I know in the big picture that with Bernhard, he just likes to compete. Obviously winning is fun as a competitor, but that's not what defines him. He just, he does it the right way.

Strange and surreal that he's not here, but at the same time this tour's going to get younger. There's more guys coming and it's hard. I felt that my last four, five years on the big tour, it is hard because the game's evolving and changing essentially for the most part for the better. Yeah, Bernhard is a guy I admire deeply.

Q. Did you get to play Augusta much with him?

ZACH JOHNSON: I probably played with him a handful of times now that I think about it.

Q. Nothing stands out?

ZACH JOHNSON: My wife would be like, well, he's not going to remember that. That's probably true.

Again, he knows where not to go and he does that efficiently. So when he has opportunities to be aggressive, he is, and he executes appropriately.

He works, man. I played a lot of practice rounds with him. Man, I can go back a couple times this year, one was in Portugal, another one was not too long ago. Where was that, Pebble or Sioux Falls maybe? He works. Like he's plotting himself around the golf course and certainly taking mental notes, maybe physical notes in his book on how to navigate the course. He's a

course management genius.

Q. A couple fun questions. Obviously here the golf culture's deep in Phoenix. How is preparing for a tournament at 50 different than a decade ago for you?

ZACH JOHNSON: It's quite a bit different. Depends on the week. Like if I've seen the venue a number of times I don't have the stress about -- I want to see this place twice. I want my feet on the grounds twice so I'll have that.

If you take that aside, I think my preparation's pretty similar. I put a lot of time into work on the table with physios, I put a lot of time in the gym, I rest a lot. My family's coming in so I've got to get my rest now.

Q. You've got 10 hours.

ZACH JOHNSON: That's like college right there, right? Although I passed out at 8:45, so woke up at 6:45.

Yeah, I appreciate what it takes. I don't mind it, I don't mind the work, I don't mind the grind. I don't hit nearly as many balls as I once did. I can't, but that's OK. I'm wearing a back brace to putt. I've got tape on me oftentimes or needles in me at times, cups. I'm doing it all just so I can go compete. My body is my priority when it comes to the physical side of this game.

Yeah, this community's rich when it comes to golf. Love that we're here. I texted my manager today or last night, this is the most amount of tickets I left at will call outside of Augusta and probably the Waste Management. Or John Deere. Oh, jeez, John Deere's a lot but that's where I'm kind of from.

My point is it's in the top three or four. When you look at my TicketMaster account, I think I had six or seven, seven or eight different emails with tickets, which is amazing. It feels like southern Iowa, that's where I'm from. Snowbirds come down here. But I've also got friends who are local. I love that, love that support. This is a golf knowledgeable, golf enthusiastic community.