PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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KEITH MITCHELL

MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Keith Mitchell into the interview room here at the RSM Classic. He is making his tenth straight start at this event, he's a resident here.

A tournament that I know means an awful lot to you, Keith. If we can get some comments on being back at Sea Island.

KEITH MITCHELL: It's great. Looking forward to playing. Seaside was just redone so looking forward to competing on the new track, seeing how it's going to play. Hopefully the weather holds off. It's always fun playing against your friends in your hometown and seeing family and walking around the course and all your local pals.

MODERATOR: What differences are you expecting with the golf course, or have you already seen it?

KEITH MITCHELL: No. 15's going to play a lot different this year. I think there's going to be a lot more variance in score because of the water bringing in on the left. I think you'll still see some eagles and birdies, but I think you'll start to see some higher scores as well.

And then 16, that tee shot's definitely more difficult, especially depending where the wind's going to come from. It looks like it might be from the north.

Those two holes right there will just add -- I think the winning score's probably going to stay similar, but I think there's going to be some more variance in the middle between those two holes.

MODERATOR: Let's talk about your season, five top-10s this year, including two in your last two starts, playing really well. If we can get some comments on the state of your game.

KEITH MITCHELL: Yeah, I've had an unexpectedly nice fall. I got to spend some time at home earlier with my family and my new son and I think it was just nice to get a reset. So I was excited to go play golf in Japan and Mexico, two great places. I think it led to some good play. Like the latter end of the season, you're playing a lot, it's a grind, and then it kind of just refreshes your mind a little bit and your excitement to go play.

MODERATOR: And a little weight off of your shoulders as well, you're No. 52 in the FedExCup Fall standings, so that's super important with just one tournament left to get into Pebble and Genesis next year.

KEITH MITCHELL: It's definitely been a big lift after finishing well in Japan, I knew that was

kind of a mathematical lockup. It sets up the schedule for next year a little bit easier, takes a little bit of weight off the tournaments, and hopefully -- I still want to play well this week, but it's a little bit easier without the extra added pressure.

Q. (No microphone.)

KEITH MITCHELL: I think I took seven or eight weeks off between Memphis and Japan. It's a totally different practice session, the intensity level isn't there and your preparation just because leading into the offseason, had a long summer and showed up and played well.

So a little bit unexpected in terms of just relative to my maybe physical preparation, but my mental preparation was probably better just because I was a lot calmer and a lot -- I wasn't as stressed or anxious about where I was finishing, how my game was. I just got to show up and play golf. Sometimes accidentally that can happen.

Being able to combine both would obviously be the dream and hopefully I can work on that, but mentally I was much better than I was physically.

Q. (Question about the PGA Tour's Future Competition Committee announcement.)

KEITH MITCHELL: They got it right because they had the right people doing it with Kirty. I don't know if you saw the article this morning, but Kirty's the one running the show and she basically gets it right every time. We trust her and we trust what she does, and she's got a great team with her. When Kirty presents something, it's hard to argue with because she already has the answer to the question you're about to ask.

I think that even SSG and the investors in every meeting, they're very serious about the developmental system because that's how other sports that they're involved in, that's the pipeline is so important to their teams, so they see that in the PGA Tour as well. So they were very adamant about getting the developmental series right and having the ability for players to grow and work their way up the system and get better.

Q. Was there one part of that system that interested you, the unified points system?

KEITH MITCHELL: Yes, that, that. Well said. The unified points system where again Kirty was leading this and found a way to rank everyone when they're not necessarily playing against each other. It's similar to a world ranking but in the PGA Tour system and that's how they determined the eligibility system.

It's way better than an arbitrary system of two people in different tiers that aren't playing against each other. It's a way to do it. We're going to implement it and see how it works out, but on paper right now it looks very promising.

Q. Have you played Seaside since it reopened?

KEITH MITCHELL: Not yet.

Q. That's fine, I wanted to ask you a question about it if you did. What's the biggest challenge of playing here this week with the wind? You live here, you deal with the wind all the time. What's the biggest challenge these guys face this week?

KEITH MITCHELL: Putting. If the greens are fast at Seaside and the wind is up, they're all elevated so there's nothing blocking. Reading putts, you have to add break or take break off depending on which direction the wind's going, and then you have to adjust your speed on longer putts into the wind or downwind. We don't have to do that very often on the PGA Tour. This week especially, it's almost like a British Open sometimes where the putts start to move with the wind. If the wind gets up here and the greens are fast, that absolutely can happen.

Q. Why do you think it is that Sea Island guys haven't won here say in the last decade or so? Is it just too much going on socially at night? Hosting too many people? Just what you said there about the putting, it seems like you would have an edge but it hasn't worked out that way.

KEITH MITCHELL: Honestly, it's a great question. If I knew the answer, hopefully somebody would have done it and won by now.

We're so happy to be here, it would be an honor to win. We want to win probably equally as bad as anybody in the field. I mean, look, hopefully it's just a coin flip reason, a fluke, an anomaly and we can change that this week.

Q. Like most of you Georgia guys, you're all playing in this. Saturday night's plans for the Georgia-South Carolina game, do you have one and what's your score prediction for Georgia-South Carolina?

KEITH MITCHELL: That's a great question. We need to make a plan, I don't have one currently, but I do know the score will be probably a typically Kirby 42-14, 42-17, I'll give them an extra field goal.

Q. Do you have any idea yet, how do you think the public and TV viewers will react to the Challenger Series where they know you're not going to have any of the top 120 players in the world competing or is that not that important?

KEITH MITCHELL: I think we based everything, every decision we made off of the public and the fans and off the TV partners, so we'll start there. That was why we did what we did.

Of course the Challenger Series isn't going to be the Championship Series, right? It's just, it's not going to be with the same players. I think the consequences are going to be equally as high in terms of players trying to get their cards, I think they're going to be on PGA Tour golf courses that we've all seen, and some of the fields might be better than some of the

fields you currently see that's considered the PGA Tour based off just eligibility, how they fill the field.

So if you look at it on paper, it's a similar if not the same PGA Tour course with a potentially better field and more consequence.

Q. You're right. The only question is your TV viewers are like, I don't recognize any of these names, and Rory said this was going to be the Korn Ferry Tour. I think the public's going to need to be educated on this maybe and we'll see how soon they catch on.

KEITH MITCHELL: I think Rory has already walked back those statements because he knows it was wrong and he's already said it was incorrect. So that, number one.

Number two is, like I said, some of the fields will potentially be better than they currently are. So if that's the case, then the fans would know who the players are more so than they currently do.

Q. Do you think in general it's going to be easier for a guy coming out of college to crack the whole PGA Tour empire and play his way onto the Tour? It's never been easy obviously, but does this make it easier, harder, keep it about the same?

KEITH MITCHELL: With the PGA Tour U, it's definitely going to provide the best player in college a more direct path. I think when you look at people like Jackson Koivun and Michael Brennan and Michael Thorbjornsen, all these kids, that is important. We need to capture those players. The PGA Tour U system has been able to do that.

I think we're only on the infancy of the PGA Tour. I think it's only going to continue to grow, continue to get better, and it's going to give the best players in college a more direct path to the PGA Tour while still -- if they don't -- like, for example, I would not have been a PGA Tour U player, I worked my way up through Q-School and to the developmental tours. We will still have that path open.

So I think it's going to be easier in terms of access. I think it will be harder in terms of talent just because guys are getting so good.

MODERATOR: Keith, thank you for your time.