

RBC Heritage

Thursday, April 14, 2016

Branden Grace

Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Branden Grace into the interview room after a 5-under par, 66.

Branden, nice play here. Last year finished tied for 7th. You kept that going today. Talk about your round today and how much Harbour Town suits your game.

BRANDEN GRACE: It was good. Obviously it's tough conditions out there, blowing a gale. It's not easy around this pace. And I think with the greens being new and all, it's firming up and it's not easy to hit the positions and give yourself chances.

But it was good. I hit the ball great. I know my stats are not showing it that good. I managed to get around. A couple of lucky bounces. Made a couple of good up-and-downs to save par. And made a couple of good putts, which is nice.

JOHN BUSH: I know not the result you wanted last week at the Masters, but talk about your whole season so far.

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, I've played pretty decent. The putting has not been that great. And I felt like I've hit good putts, but just not going in. The same thing last week, I thought from tee to green that was probably the best I've Augusta played tee to green, but just the putting let me down.

But like you said, last year was my first time I actually had a pretty decent finish in the season. This is where it really kick started everything. And I always like to come back. I really like getting around this place.

Q. To follow up on that, two weeks, last year and this year, you have these two weeks. You haven't handled the Masters challenge, but you've come here. What are the differences of these two weeks?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, Augusta you can actually still hit it badly and get around, make a couple of putts. I don't think Augusta is always a ball-striker's golf course. If your short game is up to standard you can get it going. You make a couple of putts and you can make a couple of birdies and save a couple of pars. That's the thing with me, I'm mostly, I'm a pretty good ball-striker, but the putting gets me down every now and then. That's the thing about Augusta. I felt really steady when I get up there but then those greens just

don't like me, I can put it that way.

I like this place. It's completely different. It's short and fitly. Obviously the winds do defense. And there's a couple of shots that I've got up my sleeve, that I like hitting, that I grew up hitting and I think it suits -- goes well with this place.

Q. On 15 with the drop, you had to take a couple of drops there. That might have unnerved a lot of players, but you were able to get up and down and get birdie?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, obviously I had to go through the whole process of getting the drop. But it was one of those lucky breaks. It's either going to work or it's not going to work. The whole time I had on my mind to go with a high flop and get it inside 15 feet. And just before I addressed the ball, I told my caddie, Zach, I said, maybe I'll just bump it into the front and hopefully to get the right bump up there and get it to roll out and it managed to come out perfectly. It was definitely one of the game changers of the day.

Q. A lot of guys are so worn out from the Masters they don't play this week. What is it about this week that you like or fits your schedule?

BRANDEN GRACE: Obviously having a good finish here last year. I finished 7th. That was really my first decent finish on the PGA Tour. It's one of those golf courses that suits my eye. I grew up playing in the wind and I grew up playing fitly courses like this. I would think this is a bit more of a ball-striker's golf course. It doesn't matter if you miss a couple of fairways, a couple of greens, you can get your way around it. I just like coming back to this place. I don't know what it's about. I know there's a lot of guys that tell that all love it, but this is just the way it goes in my schedule around a couple of events and Augusta. I feel pretty much the same way about next week.

Q. It's the golf course not the marina or the shopping?

BRANDEN GRACE: I had a weekend off. I had some mates over and I had a relaxing week and didn't do anything. You're kind of excited when you come to a place like this. It's kind of exciting when a friend of yours wins out here and even such a big event. I think that motivated me a little bit more for this week knowing that if he can do it, then why can't we give it a push.

Hopefully come Sunday maybe in the same position.

Q. Congratulations on a great round today. As firm as the greens are and as much wind as we dealt with today didn't you find that you had to manage your trajectory a little bit more today than ordinarily you would?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, when I think about my ball flight I hit it pretty low, that's why a lot of people say Augusta is not really the place for me. I hit it a lot lower than a lot of guys. I probably hit it half the height as Jason hits his irons. I don't think the wind does too much to my ball there. I just try to keep it under the tree line the whole time. As soon as you get it a little bit above the wind does anything to the ball. So I think that's pretty much the key.

JOHN BUSH: The announcement about Captain Price coming back, do you want to comment on that?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, I think it's great. Hopefully third time lucky. We've been getting closer. What a great captain and what a great guy. I've gotten to know Pricey over the last couple of years, what he -- all the time that he puts into the Presidents Cup is phenomenal. Hopefully we can all get behind each other and give it one good last push for Pricey.

Q. What was the single most memorable shot today, memorable for any reason, good or bad?

BRANDEN GRACE: I would have said kind of that flop I had to hit on I think it was 14, the par-3. It was just brutal. I hit actually a great shot from the tee and I got there and the ball actually -- on the practice day, when we went there we threw a couple of balls down, and said this is not the place you want to go. We hit a couple of shots from just in the bunker and just out of the bunker where I was. I was fortunate that I got a great lie, a little bit up. It was pretty much one of those that I have to go full at it. It's either going to work or not going to work. Just topped it off with a good putt. And I think that was pretty much one of the best shots I hit today. Probably one of the best up-and-downs I've made in my life, to be honest.

Q. How long was it?

BRANDEN GRACE: I think about 13 feet, 12 feet.

JOHN BUSH: Branden, we appreciate it. Thank you, sir.