

RBC Heritage
Sunday, April 17, 2016

Branden Grace

Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome the 2016 RBC Heritage champion, Branden Grace, into the interview room.

Branden, your first PGA Tour victory. I know that means an awful lot to you. Can we get some comments?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, it's unbelievable. The last couple of weeks or last couple of months it's been pretty tough. I've been playing some good golf, but just not finishing golf. I had some good moments and good things that I can feel from last year coming into this week. Like I mentioned on Thursday, I like this golf course, I like the way it plays, and like the type of golf I have to play around it. It worked out and I'm super stoked. I'm really excited and just fortunate that I'm in this position.

JOHN BUSH: I know winning this events means a lot to you. They gave you a sponsor's exemption last year.

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, that was awesome. The guys, in 2015, I was fortunate enough for them to give me an invite, obviously. And it was phenomenal. And this is one tournament that I really wanted to come back to. When the guy said playing your schedule, this one was right up there. This is one event that I really wanted to come play. And I just want to thank them very much for giving me the opportunity when they did.

Q. Just curious, which birdie on the front side did you think, okay, I'm right here? You started 3 back?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, you know when I made the birdie on 9 I thought I've caught up and now it's just about making a couple. And then just kind of hoping that it goes your way. I was fortunate I got two on the back nine, I think it was 12 and 13, when I made those two, I really thought I'm in a good position now I need to hold hang on.

And I thought it was a tough backside, the stretch, the par-3, 14. That's just a beast of a hole. It's not the longest, but it's so tough. And that was one hole that I was pretty anxious getting to the whole day. And I managed to hit one great swing and managed to make a two-putt. After that I knew it was not done, just trying to eliminate the mistakes coming in.

Q. Did Ernie Els have any influence over convincing you to sign up for this tournament?

BRANDEN GRACE: You know, I have spoken to Ernie in the past about this event. And he thought it's one that's really going to suit my eye. It reminds me a little bit of Fancourt Links back home, because it's linky. You really have to see your thoughts. You have to hit a couple of different shots, not shots that you hit often.

But at the beginning of the week we actually spoke on Wednesday, we went to his house for coffee. And he told me this is one event that I'm going to win a couple of times in my career. It was nice to her from a legend like that. And obviously Ernie said, I told you you were going to win it a couple of times. So it's nice to hear those things.

Q. You obviously won a number of times overseas. You've had some big moments in golf already. How much pressure do you put on yourself to want to win on the PGA Tour? And do you feel this takes your career to another level, now that you are a winner?

BRANDEN GRACE: Definitely. Coming into this week, obviously, like I said, I was playing good golf, I just wasn't having the finishes. And obviously this week puts the cherry on top of the cake. And I'm rely excited for things to start. Last year this was really the turning point, I got my first to top 10, and I just rode the wave from there on in. Hopefully I can do the same.

Now getting this first victory, I can settle down a bit and forget about just keeping the card and that kind of stuff. And now I'm sorted for a couple of years. And now I can really just tick this one off the box and head into maybe the next couple of majors and trying to win it knowing that I have won out here before, now I can do it again.

Q. Harbour Town is one of the unique courses on Tour. Can you discuss your thoughts on Harbour Town?

BRANDEN GRACE: The thing about this place is you have to stick with the kind of golf you want to play. I played very aggressive. I hit a lot of drivers off the tees and things like that, specific little drive that I like to hit. And that suits my eye hitting those shots on this golf course. To make it a little shorter than the other guys were playing. And the greens are so small. You really

need to know -- when you've got those wedges in your hand you have to attack and give yourself some opportunities, I think that's when I did great today. I think my chipping and my wedge play was superb today. When I had to make a putt, I do just to keep yourself from making double.

Q. You do have membership now with the win, I guess. What are your plans for how you're going to balance playing here on the PGA Tour, playing overseas, what are your plans?

BRANDEN GRACE: I'm fortunate enough back home, I like playing, fortunately we go back home at the end of the season, and at the end of December and even January, and starting then and do the Middle East. That's what I've done this year.

So before I even came to the States this year I've played my tournaments, I've kept my status and all that. So it gives me the opportunity to head over here. Definitely there's a couple of weeks that I'm really fond of in Europe to play, and I'll go back for those weeks. And for the rest I'll be out here trying to compete and do my best.

I'm excited, we just bought a place over in Palm Beach. And this really kind of gets you in the mood to settle down a little bit and just step into gear whenever you can. But I'm not going to change my schedule. I'm still going to go play over there next week, and have a week off and then do a couple of runnings into The PLAYERS. And then we've actually decided before this week that I'll head home for about a month just to recharge the batteries before the U.S. Open.

Q. Talk about how you played 16 and your shot off the tee, and then making that putt on 16?

BRANDEN GRACE: Yeah, I changed my game plan a little bit on 16. I was hitting that little stinger on 16 the whole week. It's touch and go getting it past that tree on the fairway. I thought if the winds die down a bit and I don't get every bit of it, I'm going to be stuck behind the tree, and that's going to cause some unnecessary stuff coming in. I've been hitting a 3-iron and a little draw the whole day, a little stinger. I had the line that I wanted the ball to start. Just before I hit the shot Zach said straight on the camera man down the right hand side. Where I was aiming it was a little bit too far right from where the finish putt was. I turned it over a little bit more than what I had. And there's such a tough shot from there. I could have hit three different clubs, a lob wedge, gap wedge or sand wedge, depending on what type of shot you hit. There's trees hanging over, and you have to turn it right-to-left. And I told Zach before the bunker shot, if I can get it inside, making distance, inside ten feet or 12 feet, I've got a good chance of making it. I've been putting so nicely and

running the ball so good today. But that was really a big turning point in the game to make that putt.

Q. When you said next week, are you playing in Europe this upcoming week, like leaving tomorrow?

BRANDEN GRACE: In, I'm going down to the Valero Texas next week. That's another one that I was fortunate to be invited to a couple of years ago. And these are a couple of events that I really feel that I can plan my schedule around this week and next week. I feel also I had a pretty decent finish last year, and I really want to go back. It's a course that suits my eye. I've planned my schedule really well, and I'm going to try to stick to it.

Q. Who influenced you the most and who taught you golf growing up?

BRANDEN GRACE: You know, I was fortunate, the God up above gave me a talent to do anything with a ball. I played rugby. I played cricket. I played hockey. I played pretty much everything growing up and was pretty good at it. And obviously my family played a big role in it. My dad sat me down at 15 and said now you have to decide what you want to do, because you can't do everything. Growing up in South Africa, we grew up with team sports. It was hard to go from team sport to individual sport. And so I made the right decision and it's paid off.

For the second part of the question, golf runs a little bit in my family. My cousin's a professional, he's played on the Challenge Tour and the Sunshine Tour back home. So the talent is there and I'm just fortunate that I've got that little bit of a drive to get me to this level.

Q. After your disappointing finish at Chambers Bay last summer, you had a lot of time to think about it obviously. Is there anything from that event, from that finish, that helped you and you maybe used today to hang on and win this?

BRANDEN GRACE: Well, you know actually when I hit that bad shot on 16 I thought, here we go again. But it was one of those, I'm obviously smiling about it now, but it's a little bit of a tough one. I played some great golf. There's a lot of positives to take from it. I secured my card, my playing rights. It's one of those things that I look back and I think it's made me stronger. I was really patient out there today. And Zach played a really big part today. He said don't get ahead of yourself, thinking how many holes are left, just trying to get over the hurdle. And he was just right up front there.

JOHN BUSH: Branden, congratulations once again.

BRANDEN GRACE: Thank you.