

Charles Schwab Challenge

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

Sungjae Im

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone, for joining. I'd like to get started and welcome in our FedExCup leader and PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year leader Sungjae Im here at the Charles Schwab Challenge. Sungjae is making his 15th start of the season and coming off a win at the Honda Classic and a third-place finish at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard. If we could just get some opening comments about your return to golf here on the PGA TOUR.

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, it's been about three months since I haven't been in competitive mode because of the coronavirus, but even through all of the tough circumstances I'm so happy to be back competing, and I'm so thankful that we have the chance to compete here on the PGA TOUR, so I'm really looking forward to this week.

THE MODERATOR: You're entering the tournament as the FedExCup leader. Has that added any extra pressure during the last few months when you've been practicing?

SUNGJAE IM: I would say there is a little bit of added pressure being the FedExCup leader and coming back to competitive play, but I just want to keep how I've been playing for the first couple months. I have had really good results, and I want to keep that momentum going and see where it goes from there.

THE MODERATOR: You're making your second start here at the Charles Schwab Challenge. Do you have any specific court strategies or goals for the week?

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, I did have one start here last year, and I unfortunately missed the cut, so my goal this year is to just make it to the weekend, and I did notice the fairways are very narrow here, so I'm going to have to focus a lot on my tee shots and just keep my greens in regulation, and I think I'll have good results and see where it goes from there.

THE MODERATOR: You recently partnered back up with Albin Choi, who helped you win the Honda Classic. How did you decide to get back together for the season?

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, Albin was actually supposed to go to qualifying tournament for the Korn Ferry TOUR, so that's why he wasn't able to caddie for me after we won the Honda Classic, but due to coronavirus the qualifying tournaments didn't happen, and he actually approached me and said I would love to caddie for you again, so we partnered up again, and I think it'll be a great partnership, and I'm looking forward to this week.

THE MODERATOR: There are new regulations on the PGA TOUR due to the coronavirus. What are your thoughts, and have you adjusted to the new rules out on the golf course?

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, there are some new things out on the golf course. I noticed there are different hand sanitizing stations all over the golf course, and I know that I have to stay six feet from my caddie at all times. So it's different, but if I'm able to compete, I can definitely comply to all the rules and am happy to do so.

Q. I was just curious, you were playing so well before play was halted. How do you pick up that momentum, given the fact that you had so much time off? Was there something you focused on in the weeks before this event that is going to prepare you in the weeks ahead?

SUNGJAE IM: Luckily with the golf courses not closing where I stayed, I was able to practice about four to five hours every day during quarantine, and I felt like my short game needed a lot of work during the break, so I focused a lot on short game, but specifically I tried to practice all parts of my game, and I feel ready to return this week.

Q. Where did you stay during the quarantine?

SUNGJAE IM: I stayed in Florida, Tampa, for the last two months.

Q. I was wondering if you could talk about meeting Hyun-jin Ryu and how that came about and what the relationship with another successful athlete is like, and maybe what you've gotten from that, advice, et cetera? Talk about that relationship.

SUNGJAE IM: It was actually pure coincidence that we ran into each other. I was practicing at TPC Tampa Bay and he happened to be there, as well, and we kind of passed each other on the front nine, and he actually

came up to me and asked for a photo and recognized who I was, and I thought it was really cool that such an accomplished athlete and a mega star in South Korea and here, as well, recognized me and wanted to take a picture with me. He didn't really give me any advice, but we did talk and it was very cool getting to meet him.

Q. You're used to not being able to go home and living out of a suitcase. I'm curious how you spent your time with no tournaments going on, and then where exactly in Tampa did you end up staying?

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, specifically because I didn't have a home in the States, I stayed at Saddlebrook Resort in Tampa, Florida, and I just tried to practice every day, like I mentioned before, four to five hours out on the golf course, and I would rest, sleep, just stay in my hotel. There wasn't much to do. But it was nice having my mom there, and I had a homemade meal every day, so that definitely helped the time go by.

Q. Do you feel that your experience of playing a lot of weeks in a row could prove an advantage when we have this condensed schedule on the race to the FedExCup?

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, I am known to enter a lot of tournaments, but I think even for this season with the condensed schedule, I will probably rest about one to two tournaments and take those weeks off, and it will also depend on how I play. But my plan is to play as much as possible like I usually do and hopefully that comes in handy when I have to finish up the Playoffs the rest of the season.

Q. Just curious if you read any books, watched any good movies, anything on Netflix, things you did at night when you were quarantined in Tampa?

SUNGJAE IM: Yeah, I did spend a lot of time watching shows and movies on Netflix, and the one that specifically comes to mind that I enjoyed a lot, I don't remember the actor's name, but he was in "Thor." There's a movie that included him on Netflix, and I thought it was a really good movie, and I specifically remember that, but I don't remember what the actor's name is, but he was in "Thor."