

# DEAN & DELUCA

## Invitational

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

### Chris Kirk

#### Press Conference

ROYCE THOMPSON: We'd like to welcome in our defending champion Chris Kirk. Last year you made a crucial par putt on the last hole to earn your fourth PGA TOUR victory. If you could share some memories of that, especially after you played today.

CHRIS KIRK: Yeah, today was my first time playing the full 18 since last year, so a lot of great memories, obviously, and especially from that Sunday, from the very beginning, making eagle on the first hole and then just played a lot of solid golf all day, and then that putt on 18 is certainly something I'll never forget.

ROYCE THOMPSON: And you're playing very well lately, T5 at Zurich a few weeks ago. If you could just talk about your form coming into this week.

CHRIS KIRK: It's been better. You know, the last year hasn't been incredible for me I wouldn't say, but the last few months have been pretty solid. I've had some good results with a fifth at the Match Play and a fifth at Zurich like you said. But then I've had some weeks where I felt like I was going to play really well and didn't, so I guess that's just the way golf goes unfortunately. But yeah, I feel good about my swing and about my game, so hoping the good memories here can spur me on to another solid week.

#### **Q. Was the hand injury more difficult to overcome last fall than maybe you anticipated?**

CHRIS KIRK: A little bit. You know, to be honest with you, when I came back, my ball-striking and my swing felt fine. I just didn't putt well. I don't really have any good explanation for that other than that putting is really hard, I guess.

But yeah, that was kind of main thing that held me back last fall. I think the only thing that people noticed about my golf last fall was one 15-footer I made in South Korea at the Presidents Cup. But that was about the only putt I made the entire fall, I think. So that was what I struggled with. But that's come back. My ball-striking has continued to improve as I've gone, and I've rolled the ball a lot better lately.

#### **Q. Chris, today is your first time back out here. How does it look? How is it playing?**



CHRIS KIRK: It's in incredible shape, that's for sure. The greens are perfect, just like they always are here every year. The rough is a little bit more lush than usual, I guess, with all the rain that they've gotten. It's always difficult here with all the fliers that you get and the wind and kind of difficult angles that you end up with out of the rough, but it's a little bit thicker and deeper than normal. And it couldn't be in any better shape.

#### **Q. Considering it's a shot-maker's course, is it your style of game, or is it something you just handled well last year to win it?**

CHRIS KIRK: I don't know. I've played well here over the years, but I don't think people would consider me an elite ball striker or shot maker necessarily. It's been a course that's suited guys who hit the ball right to left over the years, Zach Johnson, Kenny Perry, Stricker, some other guys like that, and I definitely fit in that category. But it also -- I think that I've always been a very good iron player. I may not have driven the ball as well as some guys over the years, but I've always been a very good, solid iron player and control my distance really well and usually play well in the wind, and if you pair that with making a putt here or there, that usually does well around here.

#### **Q. Do you feel like this course rewards a player that plays more on feel or maybe more of a technical type player?**

CHRIS KIRK: Definitely more of a feel player. There's a lot of -- if you can kind of flight your shots and work the ball with the wind here and there, you're going to have a big advantage out here because there's no -- there's a ton of cross-winds that you play in on this course. You'll get a lot of off the left and a little in or maybe a little help. It's just a lot of sort of calculating exactly what that wind is doing on those iron shots, and you have to be very precise with how small the greens are here. So yeah, I would think that a feel player and being able to judge those distances and judge that wind just right is crucial here.

#### **Q. How many courses on TOUR do you think are like that?**

CHRIS KIRK: Fewer and fewer all the time. This has been my favorite tournament on the TOUR for a long time because of that. I love the way this golf course is and love the way it plays. I would say the Sony Open

in Hawai'i is one of the other courses that plays really similar to this, ball generally bouncing a lot on the ground and tough to hit fairways and kind of small little greens. I love that style of golf. You see here, you would think -- people say it's a short golf course. It's still 7,200 something yards. It's not short, it just can play that way sometimes when the ball is going a long ways. And the Sony Open is the long way. You see guys that are short hitters win there, you see Jimmy Walker and Ryan Palmer, guys that hit it really far have a lot of success there. A lot of courses like that that don't really play to one particular style. You could also say out here with Adam Scott winning, one of the longest hitters on the TOUR. So I think that's awesome. There are a lot of courses that we play where if you don't fly it 300 you're kind of fighting an uphill battle, and this is one of the classics that it doesn't matter what style of game you've got, it's just all about hitting great shots and making putts.

**Q. You talked about liking to play in the wind, but I know there's a limit to all that. Looking forward, 20- to 30-mile-an-hour gusts and rain during some of the tournament rounds, how much do you think that changes how this unfolds from your normal firm and fast what you guys would prefer?**

CHRIS KIRK: Yeah, it'll be interesting to see with the forecast. I know we're forecast to get a decent amount of rain. Hopefully not as much as last year. I don't think that's possible. But yeah, and with the winds, the winds may come with those storms, so we may be playing in it, we may not be. We may be watching the wind blow from inside the clubhouse, you never know. That's just kind of the way that it goes. If you play professional golf for long enough, you're going to have a lot of rain delays, and you're going to play in some really bad weather. You're going to play in mostly great weather, but it's just kind of the way it is, so you just have to deal with it just like everybody else.

But yeah, it will be interesting to see if we are out there playing in 30 mile-an-hour winds, it's going to be really difficult, even with it not really, really firm and fast like it can be sometimes. These greens in high winds, these greens are really difficult to hit no matter how firm or soft they are.

ROYCE THOMPSON: Your standard bearer, Wally Diehl, he is part of the PGA TOUR Volunteer Challenge, which fans can go and vote for their favorite volunteer. Could you talk about the importance of volunteers and their role in a PGA TOUR tournament?

CHRIS KIRK: Volunteers play as critical of a role as anybody in PGA TOUR events. All these people sacrificing their time and giving that up to come out here and help us out with the tournament, couldn't

happen without all the volunteers, standard bearers, marshals, everybody out there. I'm probably going to need a ride back to my hotel in a little while, so there's another instance right there.

But yeah, and it's always just such great people, too. I've really enjoyed getting to talk to our scorers and standard bearers over the years. It's always people with interesting stories, and they all just have a passion for golf, which is -- that's what makes my job possible and what makes all this happen is people like that that have a passion for the game and want to come out here and be a part of it.

Wally is definitely a great example of that.

ROYCE THOMPSON: Thank you. Play well this week.