

RBC Canadian Open

Sunday, July 30, 2017

Jhonattan Vegas

Press Conference



MARK WILLIAMS: Congratulations. I don't know about you, but this feels like déjà vu. Welcome back to the Champions Room at the RBC Canadian Open. You move from 87th to 28th in the FedExCup standings. Last year you finished 29th in the FedExCup overall and made it to THE TOUR Championship obviously. This is your third PGA TOUR title and your second consecutive Canadian Open victory, and you're the first since obviously Ambassador Jim Furyk to achieve that feat since 2006, 2007.

You've also moved from 17th to 10th in the International standings for The Presidents Cup, and I know that's been very important to you.

But let's get underway and just what an amazing finish, a little bit different from last year. Just talk about that playoff and particularly that shot out of the bunker on 18.

JHONATTAN VEGA: Yeah, obviously it's been a special day. I knew that I had to shoot a good round today to have a chance to win again. I just came out with an aggressive mentality, just feeling really good about my game.

When I started making a few birdies, especially the putt for birdie on 7, I started feeling the same chills that I felt last year when I won, and I just knew that something good could happen if I kept that going.

So obviously I stayed aggressive, stayed on that same mind frame, and I was able obviously to make some really good putts today and hit some good shots with the bonus on 18 during the playoff.

Obviously I know the type of calibre of player Charley Hoffman is. With wedge in his hands, he's going to make birdie most of the time. I knew that I had stay aggressive, and I'm always better when I'm aggressive. I knew that I could pull the shot off, and no doubt ever crossed my mind.

I was able to hit a good shot, get a little bit lucky to be honest that it clipped the lip and it went through the green. But if it didn't clip the lip, it would have been an even better shot because I hit it solid. I hit it really solid. Obviously a little bit of luck, but sometimes you need that to win.

MARK WILLIAMS: If you looked at the form book before this week coming in here off five missed cuts, I know you're the defending champion; that must have given you a lot of confidence coming back in here to have this result.

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know what, it did. Just being the defending champion was something really positive. Having the fans really support me through the whole week, seeing the enthusiasm when I got here, everyone was like: "You know what, you're going to repeat again and you're going to win for us." The positive energy really helped me to play good golf.

I had a great pairing the first two days, which is even better because I had to play good to keep up with those guys. It was just a special week, a fun week to kind of turn things around. You know, it was a special week, too.

Q. Can you tell me what your thought was when the ball hit the lip?

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know what, when the club hit the ball, I knew that I hit it really solid, as solid as I could hit it. Obviously when I heard the clip, because obviously I didn't see it, I knew that it was probably going to go in the water, because I didn't know exactly how hard it hit it.

But then when I saw the ball in the air, it was still going really hard and forward. So obviously when I saw that it was going forward, I knew that it had a chance to go in but I knew it was going to be close.

Obviously a little bit of luck. The ball could have gone anywhere from there. But you know, like I said, sometimes you have to be aggressive and when you're that aggressive, sometimes things go your way.

Q. Can you talk about Glen Abbey this year compared to last year, what the differences were in your mind?

JHONATTAN VEGA: It was hard to get used to, because even the past previous years, the past two times, 2015 and 2016 that I played here, conditions were really firm. So I was used to hitting, you know, all kind of different shots from the tee, and this year I had to hit more drivers.

It was a whole different mentality that I had to come in and approach on different lines. It was a course that was more gettable. So I knew that from the beginning, I had to stay aggressive because with conditions soft and not much wind, a lot of birdies were going to be there. Obviously a whole different golf course, and you had to stay aggressive, which I was lucky enough to do.

Q. You mentioned the wind. Obviously picked up today. Did that affect you at all?

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know what, I love the wind. I love playing in the wind and when the wind -- when I saw that it was windy this morning, when I came out of my hotel, I knew that it was going to be -- that it didn't take that low of a round to win the golf tournament. Because if conditions were soft like it was on Saturday and no wind, most likely I would have had to shoot 9-, 10-under to win.

It was still a little bit soft, but with the wind, it probably played a shot or two difference, which makes a big difference at the end of the day.

Q. You're wearing the Arnold Palmer button, 55, up on your hat today. How aware were you of the history of Arnold Palmer with this event, especially playing with Sam Saunders today?

JHONATTAN VEGA: Yeah, obviously I knew, because there had been a lot of talk this week about Arnie's first win here at the Canadian Open. And especially yesterday when Sam started playing well; how cool it would have been for him to win his first tournament here, too.

I was starting to get more into the history of it. It was kind of neat, especially playing with him, obviously he's a very talented player. It was fun. It was just fun getting that vibe of playing with him and Arnie winning here for the first time, too. It was good, positive energy.

Q. This time last year, you were on FaceTime during the conference with your wife and daughter. They are here today. How special is it for you to get to celebrate in person this time with your family?

JHONATTAN VEGA: Well, I mean, I would say it has to be the sweetest victory out of the three. Just having my family here, even my mom and dad, which they were with me my first time I won. But having my wife and daughter, and especially my daughter, being with my daughter for the first win. It's hard to compare that. It's hard to put it in words. But it's just really fun, watching them really enjoy it in person and seeing how nervous they are when I'm on the course playing. Every time you get a chance to share these moments with your family, it's just really grateful.

Q. What was it like waiting in the clubhouse to see how Charley did as he finished the 18 holes?

JHONATTAN VEGA: Well, I mean, I did it last year. I had to sit down pretty much in the same chair, same TV and just wait to see what was going to happen. But obviously, I knew I was feeling a little bit angry with myself that I didn't birdie 18 in regulation, because I knew that would have given me a better chance to win.

But I knew obviously that it's not an easy hole and I still had a chance to win. I never thought anything negative. The fate wasn't in my hands anymore. Obviously I was fortunate that Charley didn't eagle 18 and went to a playoff.

Q. How does winning a National Open differ from winning a PGA TOUR event?

JHONATTAN VEGA: It's just the history of it. This is the third-oldest tournament on TOUR if I'm not mistaken, so every time you can put your name down with that type of history, obviously it's always rarifying.

Everything that this tournament involves, all the past, from Lee Trevino winning the first (Triple Crown at the) Canadian Open to everything else in between, it's just fun putting your name down with some of those great names in history.

Q. Just four bogeys this week. What was the key to eliminating the blemishes on the scorecard?

JHONATTAN VEGA: My ball-striking was great this week, which is something that I've been struggling with the past few weeks. I feel like I hit a lot of greens and gave myself a lot of opportunities. Even the previous three days, I felt like I didn't really make as many putts as I should have. Ball-striking, I hit my irons really well, which you have to do that here.

Q. You've now defended a PGA TOUR event successfully. You shot a 67 today and you won in a playoff. Do you feel you're in career-best form?

JHONATTAN VEGA: I feel like I'm in great form. Pretty much since the win here last year, I feel like I've been playing some really good golf. Obviously this is a really frustrating games where things don't go your way all the time. But I would say my confidence level and the trust in my abilities obviously have gone up since the win here last year.

You know, obviously repeating is a big thing for the confidence. Obviously I want to win more and bigger tournaments, and this is a great step forward.

Q. Just to ask sort of the white elephant in the room: Do you think you can step up and take the next level and win a major championship, and if so,

deny Jordan Spieth a Grand Slam at the PGA Championship?

JHONATTAN VEGA: Obviously you have to play better golf. The courses are definitely more demanding and the players, there are definitely more great players. So you have to play better golf throughout the whole week.

I feel like I can. You know, obviously I've never put myself on a major stage to win, but obviously winning -- I mean, these guys are good. Every single week, they are so good; that if you win once, you can win multiple times out here. I feel like my game is good enough. Obviously I have to improve, especially around the greens, to have a chance to win majors.

Q. What is it about this course that you feel suits your game so well?

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know, this is the type of course that if you're really aggressive, you can really play well. I mean, you've got four par 5s that are gettable, some short par 4s; that if you stay aggressive and hit some good shots, you can make a lot of birdies out here.

Obviously it gives you a little bit of room off the tee, as well. You can miss some shots right or left and still manage to make some pars. Obviously I'm somehow one of the longest guys on TOUR; now I'm getting old I guess. And so, I mean, sometimes I don't hit that many fairways, so still being able to get the ball on the green and still have a chance for birdie and not make that many mistakes, definitely gives you more options around here.

Q. The course has a bit of an uncertain future. I'm guessing you would probably like to see it stay around?

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know, what I'm going to be one of the biggest voices to keep this course open (laughter) especially if I keep winning here.

So I'll definitely make a statement on trying to keep Glen Abbey going.

Q. We touched on it a little bit off the talk there, but can you expand on what it would mean to you to make The Presidents Cup team this year?

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know what, it's always a lifetime dream to be part of some of those great teams. I mean, not that many guys can experience what being on a Presidents Cup, and competing against, in my case, the American Team, which is a super strong team. They have dominated The Presidents Cup team.

Being part of that team and maybe having a chance to beat them for the first time in a long time would be

awesome.

Q. As great as the day has been for you, it's been a very bad day in Venezuela, and I'm just wondering, do you just block that out? Do you pay attention and keep that in your mind? How does that play on you today?

JHONATTAN VEGA: You know, it's been on my mind. It's always on my mind. I have family that live there. It's my country of birth. You know, I mean, it hurts. Like I said yesterday, it hurts a lot, seeing the country the way it is; seeing a government that treats people that way when they don't deserve it just to remain in power, and all the suffering that even my family and friends that are having right now, it's just not fair.

So obviously I got up early this morning, even got on Twitter to see what's happening, and it's a little bit of -- makes me a little bit angry obviously. But it's something that obviously I use as motivation to raise a voice against the government that we're having right now.

Obviously by me winning and the exposure of me getting here can inspire other people in my country to revolt against the government. Obviously we need a change, and you know, hopefully by making this a little more public, we can get something positive going for the country.

Q. Mark touched on this, but when you go through a stretch, a little bit of a stretch of missed cuts and that sort of thing, and you see a golf course coming up where you've won and you're the defending champion on, do you kind of look ahead a little bit and you kind of circle that in your mind and say: Okay, maybe that's where I can turn it around?

JHONATTAN VEGA: Definitely. You know, like I said, my caddie, Ruben Yorio, he wasn't my caddie last year because of visa issues. So when we came in this week, I really started living like all the shots last year: I hit it here; I hit it here; I hit this great 8-iron here and made birdie; hit that shot here; hit that shot there. I think a lot of those good thoughts started creeping into your head again and started seeing good shots again. A lot of positives start happening.

Obviously after coming after five missed cuts is never positive. But I've been playing good golf the whole year; that I just had to stay cool and hopefully things will turn around, and I'm glad they did.

MARK WILLIAMS: We have a wonderful champion in Jhonattan Vegas, and let's give him a round of applause.