

CAMERON CHAMP (-17)

MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome our 2019 Safeway Open champion, Cameron Champ. It's your second victory on the PGA TOUR, Cameron; 33rd start as a professional, I believe. Obviously a very emotional week for you, very emotional victory. Just talk about how meaningful this is to get your second victory under your belt with the circumstances with you this week.

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, with everything going on with my family, with my grandpa, I wasn't even sure if I was going to play. It was going to be a last-minute deal, we weren't sure how we were going to hold up. He does good, enjoys the days, but sometimes he'll mention he's kind of done, he's feels like he doesn't want to fight anymore.

So I showed up, like I said, Thursday and teed it up with no practice round, nothing. I think the whole week it was just -- there was nothing else on my mind. With everything going on, it just kind of blurred everything else. Obviously golf, it's my career, I love doing it, but it made me realize it's not the most important thing, that there's a lot more to life than just golf.

I think that's what I really struggled with second half of last year, just hearing everything, what people say, expectations I have for myself, other people having expectations for me. So this week it was just nice to have a clear mind and really not worry about anything.

MARK WILLIAMS: With the victory you move up to second in the FedExCup, No. 2. You finished last season No. 62, so you've got a great head start, which is important. Do you feel like there was some divine intervention this week, something working that was a little bit unusual given the circumstances?

CAMERON CHAMP: I don't know. I mean, I think it was just kind of meant to be. I think I played decently at Sanderson, felt like my game really wasn't fully there. I didn't feel like it was -- I knew it was trending, I knew me and Sean have been working hard on short game and putting. I know I'm a good driver of the ball, so we try just to leave that alone now.

But everything fell into place. You know, I was hitting it well off the tee, which for me I feel like I really feed off that. When I'm hitting it well off the tee, it just flows into every other aspect of my game, my misses are better. I didn't miss short-side pretty much all week, I kept it in places where I can get it up and down, so I think it was just the flow.

MARK WILLIAMS: Let's take some questions.

Q. Congratulations, Cameron.

CAMERON CHAMP: Thank you.

Q. Can you please tell us your thoughts over that putt on 18 when you wedged it up there to I think three feet? You took your time over that putt, but were there some emotions within you looking at that putt and trying to finish this off?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah. I mean, it was -- we had a good read. I knew all week, today I decided, I told Kurt on Saturday I missed quite a few putts just over-reading them and today I left myself some testers quite a bit. I just stuck with reading them with a little less break.

So that putt, you know, we had a good read and at that point it's just you're either going to make it or you miss it, but I knew I wasn't going to miss that. The feeling I had, it was different. It wasn't nerves, it was just kind of excitement. I really wasn't too nervous. It was a different feeling I never had before versus kind of my first win where I really struggled with nerves, adrenaline.

The really only issue I had today was on 17, I was pumped up. I told myself, even told Kurt, I'm going to try to calm down because I knew it was just a delicate pitch. If I just get it on the green, it's going to trickle up, and I just overshot it.

Q. You saw your grandpa earlier this week?

CAMERON CHAMP: Um-hmm.

Q. Can you articulate sort of why you guys have such a deep bond? I know he kind of introduced you to the game. How much of your relationship with him is sort of built around golf? That's a lot of history there, right?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, from the age of 2, I mean, I spent more time at Grandpa's and Grandma's house than I did my house it felt like a lot of times. I remember when I was younger, my parents worked and Grandpa and Grandma would pick me up, I'd go hang out there all day, jack it around the backyard.

The way his backyard was, we could hit it over the house and it would fall directly into the backyard, so we just hit them back and forth, wiffle balls, to each other. I think it just started from that.

I mean, I think he's -- he's someone I want to be one day, someone I strive to be. I know my father does the same, he's kind of my father's my hero. But I think all together, if me and him sat down and talked, I think Grandpa's our hero. That's kind of how I look at it.

He's been a huge influence, everything he's gone through as a person. Like I said, to be so loving and passionate about others than himself and still loving the game of golf and then teaching his grandson, giving me the chance as a kid to love the game and grow the game with my family and to be able to be sitting here with y'all.

Q. Your father's first and last name and your caddie's first and last name?

CAMERON CHAMP: My father, Jeff Champ, and my caddie, Kurt Kowaluk.

Q. The other question I had, you had mentioned this is kind of a hometown event for you even though you're 70 miles from Sacramento, but it sure seemed like there were a lot of people in that gallery today from Sacramento. What did it mean to you to play in front of family and friends so close to your hometown?

CAMERON CHAMP: It meant everything. Going through what we're going through is just nice to have the support. There's a few people I didn't think were going to come, some close family friends, but just to see all the support, especially my personal -- my family's personal close friends come out was awesome. Like I said, it's something I'll always remember.

I'll say this now: I really feel like this will be, no matter what, even if I never win another tournament again or I win however many, this will definitely be the greatest moment of my golfing career.

Q. Last year's win at Sanderson Farms did not get you into Augusta?

CAMERON CHAMP: No.

Q. So this one does, I believe. Your thoughts on going there, and have you ever been there? I know we talked briefly last year and you talked about wanting to go to places like that so your grandpa could see you play. How significant is that just getting into the field at Augusta?

CAMERON CHAMP: I mean, it's amazing. I always felt like I never wanted to play there unless I made it into the field the proper way, so I feel like I can check that off the list.

If somehow he can hold on, I mean, it's very not highly but I think just knowing that I did it, that was my last gift to him. I told myself I'm going to make the Masters, I'm going to figure out a way, play my butt off. If he can hold until April, that would be awesome. Obviously the circumstances are a little different, but I think just him knowing that I made it and I did it will definitely satisfy him.

Q. Cameron, your dad handed you a phone. Was that your grandfather?

CAMERON CHAMP: It was.

Q. What did that mean to be able to not just win, but to be able to share that moment with him at that time?

CAMERON CHAMP: It meant everything. I mean, it's been a wild week, extremely wild.

Just like I said, with everything that's going on, for me to do something like this, for me to win and for him to be able to witness and watch it on TV. I know he was probably amped up the whole time watching it. He's probably going to sleep for about a day and a half. Just for him to be able to see me make that putt on 18 on the 72nd hole to win, like I said, that will go down as the greatest moment ever in my golfing career.

Q. Cameron, a lot of hugs behind the green there. Can you -- I know a few of the people that were back there, but can you take us through just for the cast of characters?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah. You know, trying to think here. Obviously my father, my boy KJ back there; Jeff Horn, my agent; Chris Armstrong; my family friend, Paul. I know I'm going to forget a ton of people. All my family. My older brother, Brent; my older sister, Melissa; her husband, Dan. Then my brother and sister -- my brother's wife, Danielle; my girlfriend, Jessica; my mom, Lisa; my niece, Ryan; my nephew, Everett, who's about 1. Who am I forgetting? Oh, Madison, my sister Madison.

MARK WILLIAMS: That's quite the crew.

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, it's a big crew. I don't think I'm forgetting anyone else.

Q. Cameron, can you please talk about your short game today, because you didn't miss much at all with wedges, with your putting, around the green. Was that the key to your win today was being able to get up and down and control your short game shots and make those critically important putts?

CAMERON CHAMP: No, it was. I hit some good quality chips. Obviously the one on 11 was just kind of -- it was a terrible lie, I didn't really know what to do. I know I didn't want to try to pitch it into the hill because it was sitting down and I basically do what I did anyways. So I figured if I can just knock it under it and just kind of hit a soft kind of a dead hand shot, come out a little soft, went under it and I chipped it in. On 15, for me 15 was the one, I knew if I could get that up and down, that would make things a lot easier. And I hit a great chip, just trickled down the hill and I was able to convert it.

Q. Cameron, you led at one point by five shots and then you're standing on the 18th hole and it's very much a ballgame. Can you shed light on your thought processes, how you backed off on that tee shot on 18, and was there any point in the last few holes where maybe you relied on some of the lessons your grandfather instilled in you?

CAMERON CHAMP: On 18 someone took a picture of my backswing when I was standing over it, so I had to back off that.

Yeah, I mean, I knew I was playing well. And I told Kurt on 10, I was like, I want to play aggressive still, I don't want to just play safe and try to hold the lead. But naturally, like I

said, I've only been in this position maybe -- I think Mayakoba I was kind of close to the position and then RSM, so I've only been in it three or four times, but I think I handled it well for the most part.

There are still a few shots I wish -- they were kind of just a little nerve-wracking, just kind of hold-offs, didn't finish my swing, but I think the main one was just to persevere. I knew what I had in front of me. I knew if I played my game, I can pull this off.

You know, coming down the stretch, like I said, 17, it was just an adrenaline shot. I couldn't even get mad at it. I told Kurt the same thing, I'm going to try to ease up on it, I know I'm pumped, I'm juiced. It went over the green. And then obviously I knew I was juiced on 18 where I hit that drive.

Yeah, I think the main thing is just to persevere no matter what's in front of you and to really focus on, you know, the task at hand.

Q. You said it was a difficult -- you had to make a decision whether you were even going to play. What was the process involved in that? Was there anything that Mack said that took you over the top to come here?

CAMERON CHAMP: Well, I knew he wanted me to play. My grandma was the same way when she passed at Hospice, so I knew that's what he wanted. Obviously we have family members there watching to make sure if something happened, I would have left. But he's sticking through. I know he's watched it on TV all day. I know Pops is fine, but he'll always fight as hard as he can.

Q. Your dad mentioned that he caddied for you, your grandfather caddied for you at The First Tee Open several years back. Is there a special memory from that occasion?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, I think just the whole week. He had never been there before. Like I said, back in his days -- it was emotional for him because, like I said, he couldn't play just because of the color of his skin.

For him at that time, God, Pops was 72 I think, 71, 72 and he caddied five days straight 18 holes, which is pretty impressive for a 70-year-old. At the end of the week he was completely exhausted, but I think it was just the adrenaline. He wanted to do it. It was probably one of the last times he actually walked that many holes and carried my bag. I remember sometimes, what is that hole, No. 6 at Pebble, I had to help carry the bag up the hill just to help him out a little bit. I think just the whole experience of him being there with me.

Q. You referenced some of the difficulties your grandpa had playing the game. There's obviously been a lot of talk in the last 20 years about Tiger and diversifying the game. That never really happened as much as a lot of people expected, but now

yourself, Joseph Bramlett's back on Tour, Varner's had some success. Do you see it changing? Do you see some progress in that regard in sort of the larger scope, picture of golf?

CAMERON CHAMP: I do. I think it's slowly working its way, it's making progress. That's why my foundation, we're really focusing on that. We're obviously just getting started, it's only my second year on Tour, but our priority is to target the minorities and just get them introduced to the game. It's not saying we want them to play, but it's just having mentorship and having someone they can look to for things, meet other kids but then also going to play golf. Like I said, I think it's definitely trending in the right direction as we're seeing more and more young guys. We'll see what happens.

Q. Why do you think change is slow with minorities?

CAMERON CHAMP: I mean, probably -- I'll go "no comment" on that one. I'll wait on that one.

MARK WILLIAMS: Cameron, there's many benefits in winning. You're exempt for the next couple of seasons, there's a lot of invitational events that you'll get into, and one of the specifics is you'll get to start the new year at the Sentry Tournament of Champions at Kapalua. You've experienced that event before after winning Sanderson Farms. What did you experience when you went there and what can you look forward to that might be different going this year, going in 2020?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, it was an awesome experience. It was my first time -- well, second time going to Hawaii. But it's just a fun event, just the atmosphere. All the players, it's really relaxed, no one's really grinding. It's kind of the first event of the year, get the cobwebs off. I'll definitely have a fun one again. And last year my whole family went, so I'm sure that'll be the same this year and go down a few days early and explore and do some things.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right. Well, continue the rest of the fall with some good performances just like this week and all the best. You're a good champion.

CAMERON CHAMP: Thank you.