

**ROUND 4 INTERVIEW**  
**October 13, 2019**



**LANTO GRIFFIN (-14)**

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**JACK RYAN:** We'll go ahead and get started here with the winner of the 2019 Houston Open, Lanto Griffin. Lanto earns his first career PGA TOUR victory and moves to No. 1 in the FedExCup.

Lanto, if you could, just describe for us the emotions of earning your first PGA TOUR victory.

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Well, it's my first top-10, too. Everybody says it hasn't sunk in yet, but out there I was just trying to get in my own zone, which I did a really good job of early in the round.

Man, you know, I guess I'm in THE PLAYERS now, Sentry Tournament of Champions, Masters, FedExCup Playoffs. It's incredible.

It was really strange out there today. I was actually battling my own mind how calm I was and how big of a moment it was for me, but I wasn't nervous and I was almost trying to tell myself, "You should be nervous." I think I talked myself into being nervous on a few putts on the back nine, but tee to green was pretty darn good for me under pressure.

This is going to be a week that I'll never, never forget regardless what happens the rest of my career. I feel very fortunate beyond words. So thank you to Houston.

**JACK RYAN:** And as I mentioned, you do move to No. 1 in the FedExCup, you're in great position now to accomplish a lot of your goals probably at the beginning of the season and you're set up well to advance to the TOUR Championship at East Lake at the end of the season. How important a goal is that for you at this point?

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Well, I can tell you I've already achieved all my goals today. What I do is I set realistic goals and then I like to achieve them and then set new ones. So we'll have to sit down this week and reevaluate the rest of the year.

For me, after I play well, it makes me more hungry to play better. The last two or my two wins on the Korn Ferry Tour, big for me is not having a letdown after a big win or what it may be. So I'll enjoy this for a couple weeks, but then I want to get back and set some new goals with my coaches and my team and try and build off this and not fall back, not take it -- not -- yeah.

**JACK RYAN:** We'll take some questions out here. If you have a question, raise your hand.

**Q. What were the goals that you wrote down at the beginning of the year?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I can pull them out.

**Q. Do you keep them?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Yeah. Let's see, I've got them on my phone.

Well, the first one is win, so second one's keep card, three's make 70 percent of my cuts, three Top-10s, playing two of the four majors. Final group on Sunday, knocked that out today. Top-50 strokes gained putting, top-50 off the tee, top-100 approach to the green, top-100 around the green, top-75 scoring, scoring average, top-70 FedExCup, qualify for PLAYERS and invitationals, lock up card before THE PLAYERS, Sunday scoring average within .5 of my normal scoring average just because Sundays play tougher. I've always had a hard time on Sundays to a certain extent. And I wanted to have 12 top-40s, eight top-25s. Two years ago I had a lot of those 50, 60, 70 place finishes that don't really reward you with FedExCup points. So I knew if I could just have a lot of the top-30, top-25s that they would stack on top of each other like they have the last four weeks. But those are it, so I'll check whatever I have off there and reevaluate after this week.

**Q. Two bad memories of hole 18 yesterday, so you're on the tee box looking down the fairway, what are you telling yourself right there?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I wanted to hit 3-wood and draw it off the bunker, but it was a different wind. Today obviously was calm and 18 was playing a lot easier. The pin back left today was, I could miss anywhere right of the green and have a chance. So I told my caddie I was going to aim left edge of the bunker and if it draws, great, and if it's in the bunker, then we'll be all right. And I ended up aiming about 10 yards further right than that, what I told him, and I hit it dead straight.

So it was actually a really good tee shot, but I just wasn't going to take any water left. I know Rory would have aimed down the left center and peeled a 5-yard cut. I don't have that shot yet under pressure.

So I just knew if I make bogey, I should be in a playoff at worst. It locks my card up and achieves a lot of my goals, too. The main goal was to win, obviously, but you can't shoot yourself in the foot and hit it in the water there. So I took my medicine and had a jumper lie with 9-iron from about 200 and it just barely caught the right edge of the green, but it was a pretty happy sight.

**Q. You've had such a long, interesting journey to get to that trophy. When you sink that putt at 18, you started breaking down. What was going through your mind?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Just childhood dream, that's what we all play for. To look back or to look at all the past champions that get to play five to 10 events a year, I mean, that's going to be me. And obviously the Masters and FedExCup Playoffs and Sentry Tournament of

Champions. I get to go to Hawaii for two weeks now.

It's mind boggling. Just didn't seem like it would ever happen, but at the same time, I believe in myself and I was extremely calm out there today. Just bizarre. When it went in, I felt -- I was pretty nervous on the back nine on almost every putt, and then on 18 it was like my only goal on the lag putt was just not to run it -- or leave it short. I didn't want to have a six-footer downhill down grain and have to be tentative.

So I told Chris I want to be aggressive. If it goes by four, five six feet, I'm going to make it. And I felt really good over it. It's actually very similar to the putt I made earlier this year in Alabama to win the Korn Ferry Tour event. I had to make a five-footer on 18 to get in a playoff and I made it dead center. That's kind of what I was thinking back to. I was thinking back to that same putt, same greens, and it was just dead center the whole way. That's a memory that's going to be ingrained in my head, seeing that putt go in.

**Q. Speaking of being nervous on putts, evidently you called it on 16 when --**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I did, yeah. I was pretty frustrated on 12, 13 and 15 not birdieing those holes. I really didn't know where I stood. I knew I had to beat Mark if I wanted to win, and it was really good for me to have Mark in the group because we're buddies and he was playing well, so we were feeding off each other. If he got off to a bad start and I had a four-shot lead on him, I bet my mindset would have been a little bit different of, you know, I'm beating him pretty good now.

But there's a ton of other players like Scott Harrington, so happy for him. Scotty's story and journey is similar to mine, a lot of heartbreak and a lot of family problems, and he's 38. So when I saw Scotty and we were walking up 17 and I asked my caddie, I said, "Do we have to worry about anybody other than Mark," and he said, "Harrington's on 18 green at 13 under." He didn't know what he had to do. I don't know if he had a putt to tie me or not. So I pretty much knew if I make par, I'm worst case scenario in a playoff.

So that was -- I was pretty happy to hear that because somebody could have been at 15, 16 under, I wouldn't have known. The way the crowd was talking, I knew I was right there, but I didn't look at a leaderboard all day until I asked my caddie on 17 or 18 tee.

**Q. When you got the membership to Blacksburg when you were a kid, I think I read somewhere you said it felt like Augusta National, you got a membership there?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Hundred percent.

**Q. Now you're going to be playing at Augusta National. What does that feel like?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I've always joked with people, pro-ams when people ask, "Have you ever played Augusta," people that don't know and I'm like, "No, I'm going to wait until I earn a spot." Well, really I had never been invited to play.

But, I mean, that week's going to be -- just thinking about it is an absolute joke to me, that I'm going to be there. There's so many different things that I can't even fathom that are going to happen after this week.

I'm just so grateful that I pulled it off and we can enjoy it. I need to make one amend. My girlfriend, I've got to thank her. I forgot to mention other on the 18th green. Luckily, I gave her a kiss. She flew in yesterday morning. She was out the last two weeks and she worked all week. She's an attorney in Charlotte and she wanted to fly in Saturday morning to watch my last two rounds. She did the same thing in Alabama when I won. So thanks, babe.

**Q. Who else is here this week?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Just me and her. It was supposed to be a week, kind of a solo week. Last week in Vegas, she had to get home to work. I told her, "Look, if I'm playing well going into the weekend, I'll fly you out Friday afternoon." But we had all the rain delays and I was early-late, so I didn't finish until Saturday morning, so it was kind of like should she come, should she not come.

So she flew Saturday morning after a long week of work and now we get to celebrate tonight. We both have 8:00 p.m. flights tonight. And Marty Caffey and I, he's a PR guy, on Wednesday I was like, "I can't wait to go home." He's like, "Once you win and miss your flight," and I'm like, "That's the only way I'm going to miss my flight. So we're missing the flight.

**Q. You kind of (inaudible) after the double (inaudible)?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I did.

**Q. At that point you were a little angry?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I was just frustrated because I didn't really hit those last four, five holes, I was playing so well the second round before it got dark. I was just frustrated because if it didn't get dark and I kept playing 14 through 18, I wasn't going to play them 4 over. So coming back the next morning, it was cold and windy and I played them 4 over and that just pissed me off because I was hitting it good and I was putting good. I used that as motivation.

My big goal was to get off to a good start in the third round and if I had bogeyed one of the first couple holes, I could have gotten down on myself and who knows what would have happened. But I did that and the rest is history.

**Q. Have you heard from your mom yet?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I'm sure she's texting me. She made Team Lanto t-shirts, so she's

probably freaking out right now.

I have 447 texts that I have to get back to. I did a good job last night. I had like 130 texts just from being in the final group and I didn't look at one of them other than my coaches and my mom.

When I have a lot of people texting me, I get in my own head, and when I look at leaderboards, I get in my own head. I'm very analytical upstairs, so we had a really great evening, me and Maya. We just -- we got Chipotle. I ate Chipotle four times this week and I haven't had a sit-down dinner this whole week. I just grabbed Chipotle and go to the hotel room and watched football. So she let me do that last night after flying all the way over here.

But I'll get back to everybody. I think we're at 451 now. Oh, 457, we're moving up. But big thanks to everybody that supports me back home. Man, it's going to be fun celebrating with everybody.

**Q. The day you got your membership was also probably the saddest day of your life. Can you talk about your dad's role in your golf career and what he would be saying right now?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** I bet he'd be pretty proud.

He got me started. He got me a set -- I don't know if I'll be able to tell this story, but for Christmas in 1996 he got me a 5-iron, 7-iron, 9-iron, putter, 3-wood and he got me into golf.

And then Steve Prater, he took it from there. He was the head pro at Blacksburg and I told Steve, I put Steve on payroll for the first time in 17 years to start this PGA TOUR season and he deserved every penny that I'm going to pay him. I can't wait to write that check for him.

**Q. Why does he deserve it?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Because I wouldn't be here without him. I mean, he opened every door in golf that I ever had, teaching me for free, giving me a membership. He's had my back the entire -- my entire journey. If Steve's watching, I know he's going crazy right now, but we did it. He deserves a lot more credit than he gets.

**Q. Could you describe -- how do you describe Steve, mentor, friend?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Everything. The most patient, happy, just everybody loves him. His following at Roanoke Country Club is incredible. He has so many juniors. He can sit out there for 10 hours straight with anybody from a 10 handicap to a beginner and he never, ever gets frustrated with them and he's always got a jolly laugh to him. He's just one of my best friends. Really excited about cutting him this check.

**Q. For those of us who don't know the whole back story, this is at Roanoke Country**

**Club?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** He's at Roanoke Country Club now.

**Q. At the time he was --**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Exactly. His son Jack is about four and a half, five years younger than me. I used to spend the night -- at that age, 12 to 7 and a half, you usually don't get along too well. But I just loved golf so much, I was like, if I can just stay around Jack and Steve and get to the course. I would stay at his house for three, four days at a time to get to the course at 7:00 a.m. and not leave until 7:00 p.m. That's what made me fall in love with the game at a young age. If Steve didn't bring me in at that real vulnerable part of my life, then there's no chance that I would be playing golf in college or obviously winning the Houston Open.

**Q. And your dad passed away when you were 12?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Exactly.

**Q. What's your dad's name?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Michael.

**Q. And was Steve the head pro?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** He was the head pro. My dad did bring me to Steve for one -- for one junior clinic, so Steve did meet him. Thanks for asking that question.

P-R-A-T-E-R. Everybody go work with him. His rates just went up.

**Q. How many times did you talk to him this week?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** We text a lot, but there for -- I mean, we're like, we have one of those relationships where we don't really have to talk to talk basically. So we'll talk every week, but he texted me -- he's having so much fun following it. Like he texted me last night, "Are we having fun yet?" He told me he didn't fly to Houston for nothing, right?

We've played four weeks in a row, I've had four straight cuts. So last week in Vegas I kind of ran out of gas on Sunday on the back nine. I didn't have a chance to win, but I had a chance to top-10. That was a huge goal of mine just to get a top-10. I was pretty frustrated that I ran out of gas because I didn't really feel like it was me that doubled 17 and I just kind of felt like my body just kind of shutting down.

So today, that was a big goal of mine was just to not let that happen again. I felt great the whole day, so I don't know what I did differently. Maybe it was Chipotle. Maybe we'll eat

there again tonight, who knows. It's pretty cool.

**Q. You've had such a unique story. What do you think is the most unique thing about yourself?**

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Our childhood. I mean, my parents loved us so much. We didn't really -- we didn't have a whole lot, but we had everything we needed, so just growing up in that mindset.

I feel like a lot of people look at golfers as being rich, spoiled kids that kind of live the good life. And they're not wrong, but there's a lot of really good people in golf that didn't grow up that way. And there's nothing wrong with growing up that way, either.

You don't blame anybody for being well off, but for me it wasn't -- I kind of had to earn everything. I had to meet the right people. Man, there's 20 or 30 people that if they didn't open their checkbooks to me in amateur golf, junior golf, mini tours two years ago, I couldn't have kept playing. So I could name them off, they all know who they are. I mean, there's a bunch of them.

So I was very fortunate to meet the right people and they liked me enough to give me a shot. It's a little different than some people, but I always felt like I owed them everything I had in practice. I never wanted to take their money and do something bad with it. Not that I would have, but I feel like if I wasn't working hard and doing the right things, that I didn't deserve to do that. I had to work my butt off.

Not everybody's going to be a Jordan Spieth or Rickie Fowler or the top in the world. Some of us it takes us until year 28, 29 to get on Tour. George McNeill, I talked to him last week and he was 30 and he's played 14 years. So hearing stories like that, that's more who I am. There's nothing wrong with that at all. Life's still great and I'm not going to change.

This win's not going to change me, I can promise you that. I'll be the same person.

**JACK RYAN:** Well, we'll end there. Thank you, Lanto, and congratulations.

**LANTO GRIFFIN:** Thank you.