

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
June 10, 2021



ALEX CEJKA

Q. Alex, making your first start here at the American Family Insurance Championship. You had a chance to play the course the last couple days. Just your thoughts.

ALEX CEJKA: It's beautiful. I've never been here before. I played a great practice round on Tuesday. Reminds me a little bit of home, Germany. We have very similar golf courses like this. The heat is a little bit throwing me off, or everybody off, it's so hot here, but the course is in great shape. I really think it suits my game, so I'm really excited to play.

Q. Two major wins here in the last two months or so. Can you just talk about has that processed at all for you yet? Are you still taking it all in?

ALEX CEJKA: It's crazy. It's tough to believe it. Although my game is great, you know, I'm great in the head, but still coming out here as a rookie starting on Monday qualifiers and then played two big tournaments and win them, it was an incredible feeling. It kind of sunk in a little bit, you know, but it's a great feeling. Takes a lot of pressure off of the next, whatever, one and a half years I can play kind of wherever I want so I can make a little bit better schedule. That's really positive because I really didn't want to go to a lot of Monday qualifiers, you know, and work it that way. It's been really incredibly great. Unexpected, but I'm happy.

Q. What's the reception been from your fellow players out here about what you accomplished?

ALEX CEJKA: Yeah, this tour is incredible. Everybody is just so nice. I think I have a new nickname, they call me Major now, so it's a great problem to have. Everybody's so nice here on this tour. When I won at Southern Hills, it's just a lot of guys are waiting upstairs, by the putting green and just giving me high-fives and hugging me. That shows that every player has respect for the other one and is happy for the other one when he wins. I think that makes the tour special as well.

Q. Alex, how has this changed how you look at yourself as a golfer now?

ALEX CEJKA: Well, I think I'm the same golfer like I was maybe last year when I kind of finished my PGA TOUR career. Obviously you're playing against totally different -- playing against kids basically these days out there on the PGA TOUR, so the competition is so much tougher. Obviously you have full fields, 156 guys; here it's 80. Great players, though. So if I play great, I have a lot of chances to play up there. Maybe not necessarily every one, it's difficult, but I have great chances to compete. That's what we practice for. We practice all our lives to be up there on that Sunday on that back nine and win occasionally. You know,

it's been a great feeling to do it the last couple weeks, and not everybody can win every tournament because there's so many great players, but it's a nice feeling when you're up there. I'll tell you it's a great feeling actually when you're up there and fighting for the trophy no matter what tournament it is.

Q. Alex, when you were working, doing some events on the Outlaw Tour and getting ready for this, did you have a map of what it would look like in terms of where you were headed knowing that you would have to win something here to get on this tour, and what was your outlook for the after-50 portion of your career?

ALEX CEJKA: You know, the outlook, it was the start of COVID, everything shut down. The tournaments, nobody was running events. Everywhere we went, you know, I was in Florida, Florida shut down; then we went to Nevada, then in Nevada shut down. I heard Arizona's open and the TPC in Scottsdale is open. I was like, instead of laying on the couch and doing nothing, and nobody knew if it was going to be one week, 10 weeks, four months, you know. So we took the RV, drove it to Scottsdale. I practiced a little bit at the TPC in Scottsdale.

Somebody told me there is a couple local tournaments here in town, the Outlaw Tour. So I Googled it and I entered just for fun, just I wanted to see what my game is. You know, you're playing against great young players who literally have no status anywhere on any big tour, and it was incredible. We played great courses. I played I think three of them, three Outlaw tournaments. I played against great players and I literally just signed up to see where my game is so eventually when I started on the PGA TOUR, the Senior Tour, maybe I wanted to see if I'm prepared or not. I think it was a great thing I've done and I think it helped me to get over this tough period where nobody played tournaments anywhere.

Q. Alex, you mentioned this course kind of matches your game. What about it makes you feel comfortable, or where do you feel the most comfortable on the golf course here?

ALEX CEJKA: Well, I like the grass. This is a very similar grass what we have in Europe. I'm not a big fan of Bermuda, you know. A couple grass courses, especially like in the summer where everybody's changing their grasses, it's a little bit tricky for me.

But this is very, very similar what we have in Germany, even the holes kind of style on a golf course where I grew up in the neighborhood that I played a lot. You know, it's in great shape, the greens are fast. It suits me good for the eyes, you see a lot of the holes. I was struggling a little bit last week where there were a lot of blind shots because the point where you want to hit. So that was a little bit tricky for me, but this week I like it and I'm really excited to play.

Q. Alex, I think maybe it was like three or four months ago you had to write a letter to Nate, the tournament director, to try to get into this event. Can you explain like maybe the process of that and to think like obviously now you don't have to write those letters anymore?

ALEX CEJKA: Yeah, of course. When I turned 50 and I kind of knew what my status will be and I looked it up online and see how close or what tournaments I can get in and how close it's going to be. I saw a lot of tournaments, I was always out with the category I had at that time. Like one in, three out, four out, so I was always just on the bubble, but mostly out. And I had no idea how many people withdraw, nobody knew with COVID, people get tested positive.

So I knew there was a chance I was going to play a few tournaments. Obviously I wanted to play as many as possible and I didn't really care if I was going to have to do a Monday qualifier, maybe a top-10 into the next tournament. So you start writing letters in the beginning and hoping, you know. Every tournament has a couple spots open. You know, the first two weeks didn't really look like I was going to get in. They already gave the spots out, but they honored the spots they gave out for last year because it was a wash. So can't be mad, can't be nothing. It was a little bit disappointing, so I had to do the Mondays, but I'm glad I don't have to write the letters and I kind of, let's say, earned my stride to play at least this year, two years.

Q. How much did you follow Bernhard before you came out here, and now that you're in, now that you have an opportunity to lengthen this journey, you know, what kind of motivation, inspiration and, you know, does he give you to do what he's done into his 60s?

ALEX CEJKA: Well, he gave me a lot of inspiration even on the end of his PGA TOUR career. We played a lot of practice rounds, we played a lot of World Cups together, Dunhill Cups, so we've been around. I've known him for so many years.

Obviously the last 10 years while I was still on the PGA and he was competing here, I almost texted him every second week and congratulated him on a great performance or on the win. You know, it's nice to finally see him here. I think for him it's also nice to talk German for a change.

He's been an idol since I was a kid. In the '80s where I kind of started, I was a teenager, that was where he was in his prime, where he started to win big tournaments and that's where German coverage with the golf tournaments, where it started. He is the guy who made that possible. I've known him for so many years. He's been such a great not only player, but a great human being and he supported me for so many years and even he text me when I play well. But I send him a lot of text messages on congratulations on the trophies in the last 10 years.