

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
NOVEMBER 9, 2021**



ROGER SLOAN

DOUG MILNE: We will go ahead and get started We would like to welcome Roger Sloan to the virtual press conference here at the Hewlett Packard Enterprise Houston Open.

Roger, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. Canadian by birth I understand, but this is kind of a home game for you this week. So if we could just get a few opening thoughts on being here, where you're getting to sleep in your own bed at night as well.

ROGER SLOAN: Yeah, I think it's really underrated sleeping in your own bed. Professional golf is life on the road. It's nice to sleep in your own bed, cook some home-cooked meals, hang out with family and the neighbors and let the kids run around.

Honestly, it brings out a new set of challenges because you're sitting there at home and it kind of resembles an off week, but at the same time you have to stay disciplined to do your preparations to be ready on Thursday.

DOUG MILNE: Your third start in the event, but first time here at Memorial Park. What do you know about it? Have you played much here prior to this week?

ROGER SLOAN: Yeah, I've only played here one time, it was in preparation for last year's tournament. I didn't quite get in on my number last year. I don't come into the city much to play golf, so other than that one time, I haven't been able to play out here.

I'm excited to play out here. I think this is a really good switch for the tournament to be a little bit more centrally located in Houston. You know, you obviously have more of the cultural scene down here in this area, so it highlights Houston for the players, the caddies, and I think you're going to get a lot more hype and fan interaction throughout the week with the location here.

Obviously the golf course, it's different. I think we're -- the players are going to get used to it. It's going to take a couple years to get used to it, but it presents a really good challenge. Look at the field this week, it's another tremendous, tremendous field here to kind of finish off the season.

DOUG MILNE: Roger, one more question for me if I can work in reverse and take you back. You come off a sixth place finish in Reno, takes you to Wyndham, narrowly missed with the playoff loss there, but enough to get inside the Top-125 and get into the Playoffs. If you could just kind of take us back to that, what was going right for you those couple weeks in your game and how does that translate to how you're feeling this week?

ROGER SLOAN: I think, one, I'm very comfortable on those golf courses. You've got Greenwood in Truckee where we finished sixth. You're talking about just the terrain and the landscape there is very similar to where I grew up in British Columbia in the mountains. It's a Nicklaus golf course, just very familiar. It felt like I was at home really. You're very comfortable that week. I played well that week, and obviously you ride that momentum going into the next week.

Wyndham, that was a really huge week for us, to be honest with you, because we had so much on the line. I think if you actually bounce back a few weeks earlier, I was at Minnesota. I think I had the first-round lead in Minnesota and I was always within one or two shots of the lead the entire tournament until 16 on Sunday. I think I finished 13th or 15th.

And in that moment I spent -- I spent, you know, the better part of three and a half rounds in contention with a chance to win, and I left that week a little disappointed that I didn't have a better showing, but I knew from that moment that it wasn't a matter of if, it was a matter of when.

I was able to kind of ride that confidence going to Truckee, like I said, finished sixth. Now I'm in a position in the Wyndham Championship where I was just really relaxed all week because we were fine with wherever we stood. We were either going to go to Boise for the Korn Ferry Finals or we were going to go to New York for the FedExCup Playoffs.

It was really interesting actually, I was sitting on the 14th hole on Sunday. I've told this story many times. I'm sitting on the 14th hole on Sunday and there's a leaderboard in front of me, and I'm not really looking at the leaderboard, I've got my own stuff going on, I'm trying to keep my card.

I see a friend of mine, Nick Taylor, he posted a round, I think at the time he posted at 12 and I was like at the time T-13. So I knew at that moment -- so he's at minus 12, I'm at minus 13 at the time. So I know with five holes to go, if I make two bogeys I'm going to Boise and if I make two birdies I have a chance to win the golf tournament.

There's just -- the weight of all of that was so great that all of a sudden it just forced me to just think I can only control the next shot, and I was able to hit some really good quality shots coming in. Because of that, we made two birdies and next thing you know I'm in a playoff, and it was a good way to finish the year, go to the Playoffs.

I think right now how that -- to answer your question, a long-winded response to your question, how that sets up for this week, you know, kind of very similar. We don't have a whole lot to lose here going into the offseason. I've got this one and I've got Sea Island coming up. We're playing again on Bermuda greens, very familiar that. You just kind of have that same relaxed approach where it doesn't really matter what happens the next couple weeks, we've got an offseason coming up and we can gear up for Hawaii.

Q. Roger, first I want to ask you about, just talk about for yourself and all Tour

players but mainly yourself, but just the importance of playing the fall schedule and getting a jump start on those FedExCup points.

ROGER SLOAN: Yeah, I think it's a great opportunity, especially a great opportunity for the guys in the reshuffle category to get some solid starts under the belt, go up in the reshuffle category.

I don't put a whole lot of importance on where you are in the FedExCup. It's a long, long season. Obviously a great opportunity to have some great finishes and kind of get a little bit of a jump start. But again, the season is so long and you've just got to take it one tournament at a time. You don't really worry too much about where you are on the FedExCup at this point in the season.

Q. Also, how long have you lived in Houston and what part of the Houston area do you live in?

ROGER SLOAN: So, I've lived in Houston since I graduated university in 2009. My wife's originally from Houston, so when we both graduated university from El Paso, she moved back home and I followed. So I've pretty much been here for the better part of 12 years. It's home for me. Her family lives here, we've got two kids here, we're starting our own family. So Houston's home and we love it.

Q. Is there a certain club you play out of?

ROGER SLOAN: I'm a member at two clubs. I live up in Cypress, so I've joined the clubs of Houston Oaks and I've been a longstanding member at Royal Oaks, but I predominantly do a lot of my practice out at Houston Oaks. It's a great new club out there.

Q. Roger, you got me?

ROGER SLOAN: Look at this Canadian.

Q. I've got my winter jacket on here. You already talked about the clutch run to end last season, but what did you learn about yourself or about your game through that stretch that maybe you didn't already know?

ROGER SLOAN: You know, I think to be honest with you, if you want a really good answer, it's probably that you don't need to play perfect to win out here. I think you kind of put it on a pedestal a little bit that you've got to be super perfect.

At Wyndham, I left a lot of shots out there that week, but if you just step up and just play your game, give yourself the best chance to get out of your own way and show up as frequently as you can, you're going to compete more often than you're not. That was really neat to learn, that you don't have to be as perfect as you think.

Q. And the Canadian -- sort of almost a non-golf question, the Canadian-U.S. land borders have just opened so there's going to be a lot of Canadians heading south. What's it been like the past year and a half as a Canadian living in Houston, and are the neighbors still talking about your backyard skating rink from last winter?

ROGER SLOAN: Yeah, I guess everyone needs a Canadian in their neighborhood when the freeze comes. Yeah, that's still talked about.

Honestly, it's been really tough. It's been very tough. I haven't been back to Canada since the pandemic started. I've got a soon-to-be 2-year-old son, he's never been to Canada. It's really tough. I've had two grandparents pass away in the last eight months and not being able to go home right away and go see my family in those moments is really difficult.

I'm thankful that I've got my wife's family down here, a great support group, but there's a lot of people that this pandemic has affected cross border, and the ability to just frequently come and go, it's not like it used to be.

There's a lot of people negatively affected by it, a lot of people still negatively affected by it and it's tough, it is. It's very difficult. It's something that we just have to make an adjustment for. I really look forward to the time where our whole entire family can take some time and go enjoy everything that Canada has to offer.

Q. Roger, Adam said a couple weeks ago, he said that during the course of the year, one swing, one shot, one stroke, one FedExCup point can mean a lot when you get to the end of the year. Do you think about that at this stage of the schedule or are you just kind of saying I'm just going to go out and play?

ROGER SLOAN: I mean, the only thing I'm thinking about right now is what's that thing on your upper lip? I mean, that thing is dirty. It's nasty.

Q. It's Movember, baby. Movember.

ROGER SLOAN: It's good to see you growing it out.

Yeah, I think at the end of the year you can look back at the FedExCup and you can see the implications of what one point, one shot means, but I don't think you can really focus on that when while you're out there. That's totally out of your control. I mean, you saw what happened with Chesson Hadley this year. He had a hole-in-one, he shoots a tremendous round on Sunday, but it wouldn't have got it done without Justin Rose missing that short putt on 18.

There's a lot of things in those scenarios that are way out of your control, so you really want to focus on what you can control and that's each and every week preparing and playing your best and learning from experiences, because no matter who you are, you're going to have an event where on the last hole or the last several holes you might let it slide, but you use

those experiences, you learn from them so the next time you're in that position, maybe you make a birdie and all of a sudden you make a few more points. It's just about learning and staying in the present.

Q. So when you're not in the hunt for a win, is it still important for you to turn those 50ths into 40ths and 40ths into 30ths?

ROGER SLOAN: Honestly, I kind of attribute that a little bit to my Canadian background, a little bit blue collar. I just never give up. I was a third-line grinder type of hockey player, so I never give up. Doesn't matter whether I'm teeing it up on Sunday in 65th or teeing it up in 5th, I'm going to put a solid effort in and I'm never going to give up, I'm always going to put my best foot forward.

Honestly, it's just kind of the Canadian or even just the Sloan way. I think that mentality is what helps you sneak out on the better side of those point differentials.

Q. Are you bringing any of the Canadian guys over to your house for dinner this week? Are you giving them restaurant recommendations?

ROGER SLOAN: We've got a few of the Canadian guys coming over tonight, throughout the week. We'll have some good steaks, we'll have some good wine, we'll hang out with the kids. Yeah, it's going to be a good week.

Q. Just curious if there's any good story of how you ended up at UTEP from Canada?

ROGER SLOAN: Sorry, I didn't catch the first part of that.

Q. Is there any good story of how you ended up at UTEP?

ROGER SLOAN: Yeah, there actually really is a really good story. Did you really want to hear it?

Q. Yes, now after that reaction.

ROGER SLOAN: Okay. Believe it or not, so as a Canadian you don't really know what's going on with the United States, like college programs and how many colleges and university athletic programs they have going on.

So as a Canadian, I'm growing up hearing like the Floridas, the Arizona States, the Oklahoma States. So here I am as a 17-year-old kid writing all these letters to these massive programs. I haven't really done much as a junior golfer and I'm sending these letters off and I'm getting all the generic responses: "Thanks for your interest, but we've already committed for your graduating class."

I go, I think as a 17-year-old, to the Canadian Junior Championship and I haven't had a

single look from a university, and I want to get a Division 1 scholarship. There had been a few players within my little area of British Columbia that actually committed and gone to play at the University of Texas El Paso, so it was always in the back of my head I would really like to go there because a few of these older guys that I always looked up to were going there, with you I never wanted to write a letter because I didn't want to get a rejection letter. I just didn't want to have that final no.

So I'm at the Canadian Junior Championship and I'm on the seventh hole, I still remember it, I was at Marine Drive in Vancouver, and out of nowhere the UTEP coach literally comes walking out of the hedges onto the tee box. He's got one of his mates with him and he's got a UTEP hat on and I knew right away that that was Rick Todd. He watches for a few holes and then takes off.

Come to find out what had actually happened was a member at his course that he was a member at knew a kid that was playing in my group and he convinced Rick to come watch this kid, and it was very apparent after a few holes that he was not interested in that kid. He saw a couple shots of mine and he reached out afterwards and that's kind of how it came to be.

So for me wanting to go to that university and follow in the footsteps of a couple of the older kids that I looked up to and to have him literally kind of come out of the bushes, it was just a very surreal moment. It was very cool.

Q. Had you been to Texas before that?

ROGER SLOAN: I had never been to Texas. I never really had seen or talked to a Mexican in my life. I go to El Paso and there's obviously a large Hispanic culture there, which I mean, which makes El Paso what it is. It's very family orientated.

I really enjoyed my four years in El Paso. Just the Hispanics there, they're incredible people. It's a small town community.

But just kind of joking, I'd never had Mexican food before, like I said, never spoken Spanish and I go to El Paso and it's pretty Spanish orientated around there.

Q. And then the stats would suggest that your big jump from 2020 into last season was the ball-striking stats really improved. Was there something different you did with your swing or a new instructor or anything behind that?

ROGER SLOAN: No, I've been working with the same instructor since I turned pro in 2009. I've always actually been a fairly good ball-striker, but I kind of get in my own way a little bit. So I would actually attribute a lot of it to a little bit more work from the mental side of things. Just kind of getting out of my own way is really the simple term of what we've been able to accomplish, having a little bit of freedom and ultimately giving myself access to my skills more frequently than I have in the past.

Q. So being less hard on yourself?

ROGER SLOAN: No, not necessarily. Just sometimes I get caught up in the magnitude of the situation. I can go down the storylines of what that shot represents or what a good finish that week represents, so I get caught up in the magnitude of it, how much money you could make or how many FedExCup points I could make and what that's going to do for -- maybe that will get me into the invitational tournaments. Meanwhile, I'm just sitting in the middle of the 16th fairways with a 6-iron in my hand and I've gone down this pipeline of all these thoughts and it just builds the shot up too much to where it's not a 6-iron anymore, now it's the most crucial shot I've ever hit in my career. Just being able to separate myself from the storylines and just really turning a 6-iron into a 6-iron.

Q. That obviously helped last season down the stretch?

ROGER SLOAN: Oh, big time, yeah. You look at my finish there at the Wyndham trying to qualify for the FedExCup Playoffs, trying to win a golf tournament all on the back nine, the magnitude of all that situation and to be able to separate that and just focus in on each individual shot just kind of shows you that the work we're putting in, we're starting to get a little bit of fruit on the vines now.

DOUG MILNE: Roger, we will let you go. We appreciate your time as always and wish you the best of luck this week. Thank you.

ROGER SLOAN: Thanks, appreciate it guys.