



CAMERON CHAMP

HALEY PETERSON: Afternoon, everyone. We would like to welcome the 3M Open defending champion, Cameron Champ, to the media center here. Welcome back.

CAMERON CHAMP: Thank you, thank you.

HALEY PETERSON: What's it like for you back where you grabbed your third career victory?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, there's definitely a comfortable factor. I like it here, the course set-up, just the way the whole layouts are, the grass conditions, how right now it's starting to get that firmness to it, and with the weather conditions with how windy it's going to be, it's probably going to firm out a lot. Like I said, it's just a very comfortable place for me to play.

HALEY PETERSON: Any specific moments from last year from the bogey-free come-from-behind victory?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, that last round I kind of made it look easy, but it wasn't. I had a few crucial shots that I made and I made them when I needed, basically whenever I needed to. I made some good putts.

Then obviously 18, again, everybody's saying why did I hit driver; I'm going to hit driver there every single day. It's a hole that for me, I never double cross it and I double crossed it and it is what it is. I'd rather hit driver up there at worst kind of how I did the first day, I barely missed the fairway, went in the water, but then I hit 9-iron on the green, almost had a chance to birdie and made par. That's about it.

HALEY PETERSON: Last time out you led the field in Strokes Gained: Putting. How's the putter feeling entering the week?

CAMERON CHAMP: It's good. Like I said, I've figured out some equipment problems I've had for quite a while, so this is probably the most excited I've been in a very, very long time. I'm putting it good. Again, these greens is kind of what I'm used to, it's kind of what I grew up on. I'm just able to see the reads a lot better and they're always in perfect condition.

Q. (No microphone.)

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, no, I'm pretty sure, I know two of them are twins, I forget if they're triplets. Last year my bag was getting pretty worn out and old and really I probably should have threw it away, it probably did not smell too good. But I saw them standing there

and they watched me pretty much the whole day.

Yeah, it was cute, they were even smaller back then, which is only a year ago. Yeah, just to see them again, and obviously their father was there as well. They just love being out here. It doesn't matter if it's me or whoever they're watching, they're just happy to be out there and happy to watch golf. They're obviously avid golfers, I would assume so.

Again, that's what I personally like to see because that's how I was when I was a kid. I was just ecstatic to be there just to see guys hitting balls. I can remember during -- I can't remember what the tournament was called back in the day, but the AT&T when I was a kid, I mean, I remember I sat there for five, six hours. I remember Hunter when he was in his prime, I was probably 11, 10 years old and I would sit on the range all day and my dad would go do stuff and he kind of knew where I was. I sat there and that's all I did for five, six hours was watch them hit balls. So for them, I can understand their excitement being out here and seeing all of us out here.

Q. Last year with the lead heading down the stretch, did any of your decisions on those final holes kind of hinge on how they were set up? With 16 playing short and how scorable 18 was and 17 with the 40-foot backstop and a guy like Jhonny Vegas right there, how he can drive, we saw a lot of balls getting to the green on 16. Just wondering what some of the decision making was with the obviously great position you were in.

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, we just stuck to our same game plan. I think, if I remember right, we knew 16 was up and like I said it was playing very firm, it was super hot that day. And that hole, no matter what I'm going to go for it on that up tee. Even if it's windy, it doesn't make sense to lay back, you have a lot better chance getting it up there even if the pin's tucked far right. That far left bunker, I'd rather be there than an 80-yard shot if it's howling like this today.

And 17 was just get it on the green. With that pin, there's no reason to hit it in the water. And I remember very vaguely it was an in-between club shot, it was either a hard 7-iron, which if I didn't catch it well it had a chance to go in the water, or it was a baby 6-iron. I knew I was pretty amped. I almost went with the 7, and luckily the 6, I felt like I babied it and I just hit it on the back edge. To me, that was the important shot was 17, just get it on the green.

And 18, I made it interesting. I didn't know I was going to do that, but having 18 kind of in my back pocket, I knew if I made a nice par there it made me feel like it was over.

Q. Two of the three winners, Matthew Wolff and you, can we conclude that this is a bomber's course or is it too small of a sample size?

CAMERON CHAMP: I just think it's all around. Here I hit my 2-iron on probably six or seven of the par 4s, even par 5s. No. 1 I usually hit 2-iron, No. 3, No. 5, No. 7, No. 9, 10 I don't even hit driver, 13, 14, 15 and 16 depending on where it is. It's really not that many drivers,

it's just a very positional golf course, which is like I would say the majority of courses we play. Here you just have to putt it well, I think. It depends on whoever putts well. The greens are too good. The pin locations, if you're hitting it decent you can kind of get them back in those areas and leave yourself a lot of good looks and I think that's kind of why I was able to win last year.

Q. Does that give you an advantage of being able to hit the long irons as far as you do?

CAMERON CHAMP: Well, definitely, yeah. It takes a lot of stress off. Even though still it's not an easy club to hit, I still have to make good swings, but definitely it takes a little sense of pressure off knowing I can just hit my punch 2-iron and just get it in the fairway and give myself a chance. I think that's why the majority of my wins so far on Tour have kind of been set up that way.

Q. You mentioned your comfort level here. How much are you hoping that works this week? And someone like yourself who's hoping to get one of those final spots into the Playoffs, the confidence factor and what that can do for you going forward?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, it's huge. This is I guess the best mind frame I've been in in quite a long time and to be back at a place where I have very good memories of and a place that fits me, I think a lot of guys would say the same. There's certain courses that you show up, you feel comfortable, you like it, you like everything about it just again from the grass to the way the course layout is to where the pins are. And this is just one of those places where it doesn't matter if I play good or bad, I'm just very comfortable with it. And again, I really like how the course is set up and laid out.

Q. Will one good week be enough or do you need to keep this rolling after this?

CAMERON CHAMP: No, yeah, that's the plan. That's what we're always trying to do. Like I said, this year's been a very odd year for me, I've had a lot going on personally and obviously injury-wise. So, like I said, this is probably the best I'd say personally for me I've been mentally, physically in quite a while.

Q. Last year you had to battle some of that hydration?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah.

Q. And physically you weren't feeling that great. What did that do for you to be able to win a tournament like that kind of battling through that?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, it was very interesting. It hit me on 14 out of nowhere, kind of hit me like a freight train. I drank a bunch of water, but I didn't have any like sugar or electrolytes, none of that. Yeah, once I kind of got some of that in me on 16, it kind of gave me a little extra boost. Obviously I was playing off a lot of adrenaline at that point, especially

the last few holes. That 2-iron I hit on 16 flew in that bunker if I recall correctly, so that had a little extra heat on it so I knew I was amped.

And when I got done, I was drained. I think with that mixed in with the adrenaline, once it wore off, I could tell I was definitely -- I basically used the rest that was left in my tank. Yeah, to be able to do that, to keep it going and be able to hit some of the shots I hit was obviously very nice to see.

Q. What's it like coming in as the defending champ? Is it something you even think about or is the past in the past or do you take pride in that?

CAMERON CHAMP: To me, I just try to use it as just positive momentum or positive thoughts really. Like I said, I figured out, I try to move on from the past no matter if it's good or bad, but I'll still use, like I said, the positivity of last year and knowing certain situations and certain shots I hit, I can use that out here depending on if I'm in the same spots and in the same -- if I'm in contention, I can look back on that and go, what did I do here? If there's something I could do differently that could be better for me, what is that and try to figure that out.

No, I don't really have any expectations really. It's nice obviously coming back and trying to defend, that obviously means you're doing something good, but in the end if you're thinking about that all day, you're probably not going to play too well.

Q. How does the top-10 Masters finish experience compare to the first two times there?

CAMERON CHAMP: Say that again?

Q. How does the top-10 Masters finish experience compare to your first couple times there?

CAMERON CHAMP: First couple times winning?

Q. First couple times at Augusta.

CAMERON CHAMP: Oh, yeah. I knew the position I was in. I didn't know where exactly I was or what the cut line was to get an invite back, all I knew is I had to birdie that hole. I played it perfectly. Nice drive down there. That wedge shot, I was going at it, trying to be aggressive with it and I landed it honestly in the only spot I could get it pin high like that unless I threw it all the way back, but if I did that with the shot and the number I had, it was impossible. I was in between clubs, I had to hit a little soft pitching wedge and that's where I had to land it and luckily I was able to do it.

And then to make that putt, which was a tricky putt, it looked straight but we played it left edge and it almost didn't break on me. I thought I missed it when I hit it. I thought there was

no way it was going to break and it broke in there. Obviously finding out later that I finished 10th, that was definitely some of those moments we play when you can do it when you need to and when you have to, it's definitely a good feeling to carry on.

Q. Cam, you talk about some of the challenges dealing with off the course and injuries and things.

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah.

Q. Does that make you a better golfer like when you have some of those things to work through?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, I think it's both. It makes me a better golfer, a better person. Like I said, this year's been an eventful year to say the least. I've had a lot of stuff going on in my personal life mixed in with me breaking my wrist in the fall. That was a whole just unknown for quite a while if it was going to be serious or if it was not serious. Luckily, it wasn't too serious, but it was very close to being possibly hurt my career for a long time.

This year I think I've taken more positives than negatives from it. Even where I stand or when people look at my stats or whatever they want to say, like I said, I'm in a way better head space. I understand myself better, I understand what my motives are and why I'm out here and why I'm doing what I'm doing. That's kind of where I am now.

Like I said, I've figured out some things as far as mechanical stuff or not mechanical stuff or kind of equipment-wise that's been really hurting me for a little bit. Like I said, I've been kind of rebirthed, and to be in my head space again with, if you want to look at my stats and how I've been playing, you would think I'm crazy, but that's just where I'm at.

HALEY PETERSON: Here on the left, you guys have a question for Cameron?

Q. Does your course management change from last year? Obviously you winning, does it change throughout the week with the wind?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, it definitely can depending on like pin locations. Last year we did not have 25-mile an hour consistent winds and gusting 30. I think tomorrow's going to be a pretty similar forecast. I think tomorrow we have a south wind and then Friday it switches to north. Definitely, like No. 1 if it's a south wind, I'm hitting a 2-iron off the tee. If it's a north wind, I'm hitting driver.

And definitely it's going to change some of my lines. Like No. 2 with that wind today, with that north wind, I've got to aim up the left side and try to cut it versus if it's south, I just go straight over those bunkers. It can change definitely drastically. You're going to have to kind of figure it out on the fly because again, it's all feel. Sometimes the wind gusts for quite a while and you can't sit there all day and wait to hit, but that's definitely something that will change on a daily basis at least this week, like I said, with the wind conditions.

Q. After winning last year obviously, how is your confidence level with all the other like fans, like loud fans out there?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, like I said, it's nice having fans. We played with no fans for quite a while and that was -- I don't know how to explain it, it was just a weird feeling because you kind of feed off that.

I remember 16 last year I made that putt, which was a big putt, and that just gave me even an extra jump, extra boost. Like I said, you use that to your advantage whenever you're playing well or you're in contention. And like I said, for me it's something I feed off, it's something I love. I may not be like a Tiger where I show it a lot, but definitely on the inside I definitely use that to my advantage.

Q. What's one example of an equipment thing you figured out? You mentioned kind of dialing in some equipment things?

CAMERON CHAMP: We'll go "next question." I'll just leave that one. We're just not going to throw anybody under the bus.

Q. Okay. A general one, kind of thinking back to 2018 and the year you got your PGA Tour card through the Korn Ferry Tour and that regular season finale and the emotion of the ceremony, can you kind of think back to that and kind of what that week's like and what that means getting your card at that ceremony?

CAMERON CHAMP: Yeah, that was a very -- that's a week I think all players coming up dream of. So I can remember pretty much everything, my whole family was there, to who I was talking to. Everybody was cracking drinks back behind the tent before the final group when Sungjae won. It was just an exciting time. It was a long year. It's a grind out there. I mean, how many events we have to play and you've got to play well consistently.

So again, yeah, for me that has a lot of fond memories and all the guys that I came up with that year and just the people I met out there. Like I said, it's definitely neat. Certain things that happen in your life you can remember almost everything, even if it's 20 years ago. Obviously that was 2019, so going on four years, but for me it's stuff like that I can remember almost to a T. I can't remember what I ate yesterday, so it's kind of one of those things.

Q. You hit on talking about your motivations and understanding what those were for yourself and I think that relates to a lot of people in the back end of what we've been dealing with the last couple years and probably even more specifically when we talk about the golf landscape now, but when you thought about all of that, what was more reaffirming for you? What motivation did you come up with and this is where you said, yeah, this is why I do what I do and I love it?

CAMERON CHAMP: For me, all of us, this is a business, this is how we provide for our families. It's also what I love doing and that's what I grew up -- I love being out here, I love seeing all the guys just B.S.'ing behind the scenes and practicing and playing practice rounds and traveling week to week and playing different events in different course conditions.

But then also for me this is how I provide for my family. For me, family is everything to me more than this game, and a lot of guys, that's where you have to find the balance. You have to balance that. Doesn't matter what work field you're in, you have to find the proper balance to make sure both can blend together perfectly and you're able to perform your best at home being a husband or boyfriend, whatever you are, or to being a professional golfer. To me, that's what drives me, making sure I'm able to do those things properly puts me in a better head space. Obviously when things are going good back home it just calms you down, it makes you not have to stress about things, you can just enjoy yourself and out here it just gives me that extra drive and force to just want to continue to get better. Like I said, right now it's probably the best it's been compared to the last nine, 10 months was pretty rough for me personally honestly. I had to get over a lot of things and get through some things, but like I said, now we're on the up and up and we're just going to get after it.

HALEY PETERSON: Cameron, thank you for taking the time to join us and we wish you the best of luck this week.