

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 18, 2023



JUSTIN LEONARD

Q. Justin, thanks for joining us, one of the first-timers here at Hualalai this week. Can you just give us your thoughts on being here?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Well, to be a part of this field and to get a spot, an exemption to the field is amazing. And then you show up here and, you know, you're at this beautiful resort, great golf course, it's in mint condition, all the social functions have been a lot of fun. The folks from Mitsubishi Electric have been great, met all kinds of people, all kinds of businesses that they are involved in. It's a special week.

Q. Last year you made four starts on the Champions Tour. What did you learn about your game and yourself during that time?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I learned that my game need a bit more work, but also I see enough good things to -- that I think I can be successful out here.

I'm excited about the work I put in over the last three months to kind of get ready for this week and this season. It's been nice just kind of focusing in on my own game and not trying to do -- trying to play and get ready and do television at the same time, because both require a lot of time and a lot of focus. It's been nice just putting my energy into my own game. I certainly feel like I'm more ready now than I was at the events that I played in last year.

Q. On a similar note, was there anything that surprised you about being on the Champions Tour that beforehand you didn't think about that maybe stood out?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Well, look, it's definitely a bit more relaxed, but it doesn't mean the guys stop working. Their games are great. Just playing on golf courses that are more appropriate for the length that we hit it out here. I would say the golf courses aren't quite as challenging, but when you're playing at this level of competition, we still play great golf courses but you have to go low and you have to put your -- you know, keep the accelerator down from the get-go.

I would say that three days versus four days, I'm still kind of getting the feel for that. I wouldn't say it's a sprint, but it is more so than playing 72 holes. As good as the guys are out here, you don't really have one of those -- you can't have one of those rounds where you just don't make anything happen and you've got three days to make up. Now all of a sudden you're a third of the way through the tournament after that one round. Important to get off to good starts.

Those are things that typically take some time. Hopefully I've got enough under my belt

where I'll get comfortable in this particular format here soon.

Q. How many times do you plan on playing this year and do you have any goals for this season?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I plan on playing 18 to 20 times and my goals are to get to where I'm winning tournaments. I think that I can see enough things in my game to think that's certainly attainable. I know it's going to require a lot of work and good timing and all those things, and learning new golf courses and all that.

Because I took so much time off, basically five years from playing, my energy level's pretty high and I'm certainly excited to put the work in and to be out here and just find the ways to be ready to play each and every week.

Q. You said that you're excited. Was that because of playing last year four times, like hey, this is pretty good out here?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yes, absolutely. And it's -- you know, being around friends that I've been around for a long time but that I've missed here these last six or seven years doing television. I'm still able to see some guys here and there, but not on a consistent basis like I will playing out here.

Getting back together with some friends, getting into routines and those things, I've always -- it's always for me been more about putting in the work and finding ways to get better and improve than the results. I was able to do that a bit with television, but now it's nice to kind of get back in on, you know, my original career if you will and apply some of the things that I learned doing television and watching the best players in the world and how they practice and how they play and watching the rounds and applying some of those things to my own game, I'm excited about that as well.