

## MEXICO OPEN AT VIDANTA

### PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW

April 26, 2023



### HARRY HIGGS

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**HALEY PETERSON:** Good afternoon, everyone. We would like to welcome Harry Higgs to the Mexico Open at Vidanta.

Harry, making your tournament debut, just want to start off with some initial sights and sounds of what it's like to be here at the Mexico Open for the first time.

**HARRY HIGGS:** I don't know that this would technically count as my tournament debut, it would be the debut here. I played in the Mexico Open in Tijuana before it was a PGA TOUR event five, six years ago now, but Mexico Open debut on the PGA TOUR, for sure.

**HALEY PETERSON:** At Vidanta.

**HARRY HIGGS:** At Vidanta, which is a lovely, lovely resort.

Yeah, my thoughts on the early part of the week was that the hotel room, which I guess they didn't give me but they gave me a nice discounted rate at, is entirely too nice for me and the rest of us. The resort is spectacular, it's a massive, massive property with a ton of things to do. If I had a family, which I do not, it would be definitely a great family week. The water park and pools and restaurants everywhere, it really is awesome, very, very special.

And then the golf course is just beyond fantastic. I think it's the best turf conditions that I've seen in this is now my fourth year on Tour. You will not get a bad lie anywhere here, which is really, really cool. It's a big golf course, it's going to be quite difficult, you're going to have to hit a lot of long irons really well and hit some lag putts really well because long irons are hard to get close to the hole, but I'm looking forward to the challenge.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Going off what you just mentioned, just finished your pro-am, so coming off the course mentioned the length of it. Is there anything you're switching up in the bag or specific game plan in particular with being a longer setup?

**HARRY HIGGS:** No. I carry two hybrids, one of them is a little less loft so it spins a little less, that's more for off the tee. There's no hybrids off any tees here, it's just driver, hit it as far and as straight as you can. So I think I'll go with the more lofted, more spin option because there's a good chance that I'll hit it into some par 4s, certainly some par 5s hopefully and some par 5s and even some par 3s.

**HALEY PETERSON:** This will be your 16th start the season. What's kind of an overall



assessment of how this season's gone?

**HARRY HIGGS:** Now we get into the tough questions.

How to keep this answer short and sweet. It's been better than last year, which is not saying much because last year was quite poor. I have played some really, really great rounds, some what I would call brain-off rounds where you're just looking at a target and the ball, just swinging freely and the ball just kind of goes there.

But I've also played some really poor golf, but really poor golf well, so I've kept myself in it, gave myself the opportunity come the weekend and even more especially on Sunday to have some great finishes. But it's caught up to me almost every time where just the quality of shots that I was hitting throughout the week, I was able to stave off the bad and the ball's going into bunkers and behind trees and then water for what feel likes almost 63-plus holes. I just need to hang onto it for nine more holes.

I would say I'm proud of how I've done so far this year with how I've been swinging. I'm certainly, I feel like I'm really close to swinging it how I did when I played the Mexican Open in Tijuana where it was a lot of brain off, I'd just look at a target and hit it there. It's a little more complicated right now, I'm struggling with just a few things, but I'm certainly proud of the positions I've put myself in with what I would probably call my C, C-minus game. Just one of these weeks it's going to click and I can finally turn my darn brain off and go out and have a great result.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Back here in Latin America, what is it like to be back here with the crowds and people, what you're expecting with the week?

**HARRY HIGGS:** I love it. I have played a lot of great golf, I have made a lot of money in countries where we play golf and I hear more Spanish than English. It's a special -- anywhere in Mexico especially, playing the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, we played four, five times throughout a season in Mexico. It will always hold a special place in my heart when I get to visit some of these countries again.

I would even love -- obviously vacationing here would be lovely, but just some of the cities that we played in in South America were just so much fun, so much to do. It's a reminder that I really wish I had taken Spanish in high school and kept up with it. I guess I could -- I have plenty of downtime. We always say we don't as professional golfers, but I have plenty of downtime. I probably in my downtime should do a better job of maybe learning another language and that certainly would be Spanish.

I guess Latin countries, Spanish-speaking countries will always hold a special place in my heart because they've kind of molded the professional golfer I am today. Playing the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, you wake up and something's going to go wrong that day, you're not going to be able to communicate something to somebody that you should, just anything, the timing of shuttles and buses. And it happens in the States, too, but kind of not having those



perfect days and still finding a way to give it your best effort, shoot the best score you can on those days certainly made me into the golfer that I am today and I'm very appreciative of that opportunity. I view it very fondly.

**HALEY PETERSON:** From your time traveling around Latin America, how would you rate your Spanish?

**HARRY HIGGS:** My Spanish was a lot better then than it is now. I have great golf Spanish. Again, when I went home I never -- even nowadays they've got stuff on apps, it should be relatively easy to learn especially if you couple the learning at home with being indoctrinated with hearing people talk.

I had great golf Spanish when I was at my best two, three four weeks in a row in a Spanish-speaking country. I could do a pretty good job of getting from the airport or restaurant maybe in a cab or Uber back to the hotel. Then I could always figure out obviously a dinner order. Those were really the only things that were required. Decent golf Spanish, decent I'll say travel Spanish in terms of to and from airports, to and from hotels. And then you've got to eat something, so I was pretty decent at ordering some dinners. That's pretty easy and most everywhere has an English menu anyway, so it wasn't that difficult.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Any words or specific phrases stick with you?

**HARRY HIGGS:** More kind of the interactions that you would have with caddies. Obviously it means a lot to me, it meant a lot to me to have great finishes, a good result and it meant a lot to the caddies, too. This was back before we played for multimillion-dollar purses. We didn't even come close to million-dollar purses. But I always tried to do my best to tip them well, tip them according to kind of how we did, basically get -- have a wad of cash with me the week before. You laugh at a wad, it was a couple hundred dollars, have a great week and just hand it to them. So in that, the interactions we'd have on the golf course were always very funny. The caddies were almost more into the result than I was and sometimes you'd have to, hey, man, calm down, it's just Thursday, we're going to be OK, I got off to not a great start but trust me, I am good at this, I'll show you here hopefully in the next few days.

My last year, 2018, I had a caddie with me for almost every event, maybe a couple in Mexico that he was unable to travel to, so we had a great rapport. We couldn't even speak to each other, but we did some great, great, great work. He was very chill and for the most part I am, too. I can get hot under the collar just like anybody else; I'm trying to do it less. We just kind of relaxed and knew that the course is 72 holes, I'm going to hit enough good shots and hole enough putts that we're going to have a chance come late on Sunday. We were kind of the chilliest combo on Sunday just doing our job, doing our thing and seeing how it added up at the end. We were fortunate to win one and have quite a few top-3 finishes last year. Claudio, Claudio was my guy, he did an awesome, awesome job. We still stay in touch every now and again. He's still working down in Latin America and enjoying every bit of it.



Again, in a roundabout way, I view my time in really Spanish-speaking countries but anywhere in Latin America very fondly. It was very, very beneficial to go do what I did. I would tell anybody starting out in their professional career to go and do it, play Latin America, play in Canada. I know big news, they're going to combine, but I loved some of those Latin countries.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Going off what you just mentioned about the announcement you mentioned yesterday with PGA TOUR Americas, just thoughts about that and for the future.

**HARRY HIGGS:** First thought is it's great, it combines the two. Now everything kind of trickles down, right? Our January-to-August schedule and having to kind of sort out eligibility, and I guess in the end of November for us will affect them, so that's a way to combine the two tours, get everybody to play roughly January to August.

I've already -- I'm on record already that 10 cards on the Korn Ferry Tour's not enough, it should be 20. It should be 10 from each. I'll fight good and hard for those guys. I don't know if it will make any difference because it does -- you can't just add 10, they have to come from somewhere. And I'm not in those rooms anymore, I was for my first three years, so I don't know the specifics of it. I've already voiced that 10's not enough, we'll see if anybody listens to me, probably not.

But I think it's a great thing, I think it's great that they combine. I did a few events up in Canada, Canada's also a great country, but the golf courses didn't vary as much as they did in Latin America in terms of grass height, short, long, playing at elevation. I felt like playing two full seasons on the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica and the difference in golf courses and cities and towns whereas it was certainly frustrating at times, it allowed me to better prepare myself when I got to a higher level in terms of dealing with adversity. There were plenty of things to gripe about as there are plenty of things to gripe about any week in any profession, but those that are going to have the most success either look past it or find a way to deal with it, and in Latin America I would say it was more present versus Canada it was a little easier.

So it's in a way more challenging. I guess now they'll be challenged in two different ways, you've got to deal with playing golf in Canada, you've got to deal with playing golf in Mexico, Central, South America.

So very positive thing. We need more than 10 cards though if anybody's listening to that.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Do you have any one piece of advice for players that will be playing on the PGA TOUR Americas?

**HARRY HIGGS:** I just talked about it with my pro-am group and I was in that boat. You have to bet on yourself, you have to invest in yourself. If the difference -- you have to spend money on comfort and convenience. Playing at that level, which I've done, there is not a whole lot of disposable income to spend on comfort and convenience, but when you can, do



it.

Then I had the most success in year two out there when I almost found joy and pleasure in the adversity, just the random things that may happen that might throw other guys off but you find a way to deal with it. Oh, heck, just shrug it off, right? It's hard, it's very difficult. It happens everywhere again in every profession, but those that are going to be the most successful will find ways to deal and kind of work through that adversity.

And same thing, those that are the most successful invest and bet on themselves and the way to do that down there is to do your best to spend your money on comfort and convenience while you're playing because that's only going to -- only going to allow you to perform at your best.

**Q. This week PGA TOUR Latinoamerica is playing the Peru Open. Actually, you won that tournament. What kind of special memories do you have from there?**

**HARRY HIGGS:** I certainly obviously remember the win. It was nice to win that week. The week before Peru we played in Santiago and I think I was tied for the lead or one behind on Sunday and just did everything you're not supposed to do. I think I wound up finishing 10th. It was like you tee off on the first hole and I think I hit it into the left rough. One of the roughs, I don't know if I'm that specific on knowing right or left. Even my ball rolling into the rough, it felt like, oh, gosh I may not win today. You just can't do that. That Sunday you play, it's going to take four and a half, five hours, you've got to stay very patient.

So basically the week before in Santiago I did everything wrong and then I got myself in the position again and it was like, well, I'm just going to do everything the exact opposite and it worked great.

One of the things I also remember from Peru is all the lomo saltado that I ate. The food there, it was fantastic. It was one of the best meals I think I ever had and I think it was because we had won on Sunday and then went up to the hotel we were staying at and we had four, five hours to kill before flying the midnight flight back to Dallas. Fortunately for me, it was direct.

I think I might have had two orders of lomo saltado, probably a few too many beers and then wandered to the airport and got on the plane. I was so caught up in the win and everything, I didn't download any shows on my iPad and figured that the plane that we'd be on may be a newer plane and it might have the entertainment on the seatback. It didn't, so it was a pretty miserable flight. You're so jacked up, you can't really sleep and I had nothing to do, so basically spent the next seven hours thinking about my win and also staring at the chair in front of me. But my belly was full and I very much enjoyed the food in Peru.

**Q. Harry, tomorrow will be your 99th start on Tour, four years out here, but obviously a lot of golf before reaching the Tour.**



**Does it feel like that early part of your career went in a flash or was it a slow burn? And now that you're on the Tour, has that four years gone quickly or slowly? How would you compare the two?**

**HARRY HIGGS:** Yeah, spot on. It felt like it took forever to get out here and then it felt like I just started, but this is year four, it's just wild to think about.

You know, I guess I'll piggyback off that and kind of try in my own words to explain the differences.

It was almost in a way more enjoyable, more romantic, the chase, right? Oh, man, I've just got to get better and work my way. It's opportunities are hard to come by especially at that level, you've got to earn them, be given them and then when you have them, you have to take them. Out here you get real used to courtesy cars, the fancy hotels, player dining is just fantastic and you can find a way -- now I can find ways to make up complaints versus playing the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica, we hardly ever had player dining and if we did we had to pay for it. We didn't have courtesy cars, we were stuffing three or four guys and three or four golf bags into little tiny sedans and driving an hour from the airport out to the golf course, the hotel we were staying at, but there was kind of -- it was fun. It was miserable, but it was fun.

It's something that I think about quite often. Like I need to -- it's different now and it will forever be different, but I need to find a way to have that enjoyment that I had before in the chase and trying to get here and not get -- you know, you don't want to get -- gosh, the word's kind of eluding me, but you don't want to get complacent. You don't want to get out here and oh, wow, this is enjoyable.

I really enjoyed -- and I think I have about one or two of them a year. My little brother's my caddie so I should have more than just one or two a year, but there's just sometime we're walking, might be a Thursday, Friday and the day is indifferent where I just look and think holy cow, I'm on the PGA TOUR, this is really cool. And I'm making it a point to say it aloud to him and now his response is like, yeah, man, you've been out here for a while now, too, right?

Just to find that little bit of enjoyment versus I was just thrilled to have a 72-hole golf tournament that I was playing when we were playing the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica because in and amongst playing those more developmental tours, you're trying to Monday qualify and do all that stuff. And that's not really tournament golf, that's just organized gambling in a way.

Yeah, I'm trying to always continue to find the enjoyment in playing out here. It's not that I do not enjoy it because I certainly do, I take great pleasure in the opportunity to beat the best players in the world every week that I get into a tournament, but just those little things throughout a day I need to continue to find ways to enjoy them more.



**HALEY PETERSON:** Finish up with your brother on the bag and all the travel you do week to week. He shared he was questioning what is your biggest pet peeve at the airport?

**HARRY HIGGS:** I'm not a great traveler and it starts before I even get to the airport and it's partly to do with my time in Latin America because most weeks down there you could run into a gas station or a CVS or Band-Aid, allergy medicine or whatever it may be, but it's tougher for an American -- for a Gringo as everybody would call us -- to go in there and clearly communicate what it is that you may need. So in that I packed everything and somehow I got both a golf bag and my suitcase under 50 pounds and now it's laughable how heavy those darn things are.

So it starts -- I'm a poor traveler, it starts before. I panic pack, it takes me like three hours, no one can talk to me just so I can keep having this same kind of stream of consciousness, am I going to forget anything, what am I going to forget, I need to remember a hat, all this stuff.

Now you don't really need to remember anything because you get here, because if it's not already in your locker, somebody can run and get it for you.

Sometimes I get a little irritated at delays and just the other people that are also traveling. I mean, I'm no saint. I've done it enough where I feel that you can quickly lose faith in humanity when everybody travels because anybody and everybody gets thrown off about every little thing nowadays and I do not think I'm like that.

Now, my little brother may disagree, but we can all certainly care for one another a whole lot more in many different aspects but especially when people are traveling. You don't need to yell and scream about a baby that might be three rows up in front of you crying because we were all that way ourselves.

I'm going to do it one of these days when we're waiting at the baggage carousel, I'm going to stand up and just plead my case that, hey, let's everybody 10 feet back, when you see your bag you may step up. Because it's hard for me, I've got that big golf bag to wheel around. I take great, great pleasure in moving people and then just picking that thing up. I still am turning slowly, but if I turn fast, I might knock three or four people over when I do it just because how crowded they get. As much as I have to travel, I think I need to improve on it and certainly pack lighter.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Before we wrap it up, I want to make sure there are no questions.

Harry, thank you for taking the time to join us and hope you have an enjoyable week.

**HARRY HIGGS:** Thank you very much.

