

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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BEN GRIFFIN

MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome Ben Griffin to the Butterfield Bermuda Championship interview room.

Ben, thanks for joining us. This is a year since you featured on television and in contention and people got to know your story a little bit. Just what's it like coming back to Bermuda after the year you've had?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, this place is great. I had this kind of marked on my schedule after I didn't get it done last year that I wanted some redemption to come back and give it another chance.

Obviously a very beautiful place. I like the golf course, I like the course type with the bermudagrass and the green types, and I feel like it's a course that sets up well for my game. It was a no-brainer for me to be here this week regardless of my positioning in the 51-to-60 category for the Fall Series. Yeah, just excited to give it another run and try to get this thing done.

Q. Since last year at this tournament you've gone -- how would you assess your year or your season since then and has it sort of lived up to what your expectations were?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, certainly a lot of highs and lows throughout the year. I feel like that's how golf is, it's very cyclical. You go through stretches where you play really well and you go through stretches where you kind of grind to get back to where you were or trying to improve and get better at certain areas.

So I feel like I struggled a little bit in kind of the May, June stretch. Historically, I think throughout my entire life I haven't played as good of golf in May and June for some reason. I don't know if it's related to seasonality or whatever, but I always played well in the fall, college, junior golf, everything. There's something about it, I feel very comfortable with my game almost every year around this time.

And yeah, I mean, the season's been good, though. As a rookie you're just trying to get into as many events as possible at first. I got into just about everything. I missed out on two majors, but I felt like I got a ton of experience against the best players in the world. And on top of that I played some pretty solid golf, so able to obviously lock up my card for next year and potentially get into some of those signature events.

Everything's just a bonus at this point. Eric Cole's pretty much solidified a little bit Rookie of the Year unless I were to kind of win and make a little late charge here. That would be a goal



of mine, to nip him a little bit and try to get ahead of him in the race. You know, just finding little goals like that, keep yourself motivated. Still a lot to play for this fall and still a lot of money and a lot of FedExCup points this week to try to receive.

MARK WILLIAMS: Performance at Sanderson Farms leading down the stretch and losing in the playoff, a five-way playoff. I know you were pretty emotional at the time after that. Now since some time's gone by and you've had a chance to process it, what did you learn from that about yourself and what can you take from that going forward?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I've been fortunate to talk to a lot of guys way above me in the game of golf and learn from them a little bit.

I talked to Jack Nicklaus a couple days ago and he said he had three second-place finishes on Tour before he won. Rickie didn't win until his third season. I've kind of -- it's kind of reassured me that I'm still doing the right things even though I haven't gotten it done. Sunday at Sanderson I didn't have my best golf. I did at times during the round, but I had some goals holes where I just wasn't as sharp as I needed to be if you're trying to win on the PGA TOUR.

Felt Like last year here at Bermuda I actually was sharp, I just kind of let it go at the end, maybe some of the pressure, whatnot. I felt really good about my game. Felt way more comfortable about my game here last year than I did at Sanderson, the final round. Just Sanderson I just felt I was almost blackout first three rounds and I just tried keep it rolling, whereas here I felt like I was really solid, I just didn't get it done at the end.

To win here I need to be again solid all four rounds and build off those past two experiences when I was in contention last year here and also at Sanderson.

Yeah, just the reassurance from other guys. I felt like I handled myself well after that week, kind of letting it go behind me and trying to make sure I focus each and every week at the task at hand. It's a new opportunity, new tournament every week and what I did last week means nothing in relation to what I'm doing the current week. So I just have to stay focused on the course I'm playing that week, try not to have any regrets in the past. You know, I can't change anything now. Just try to do my best and try to get one of these things, get one of these things sooner than later, and then hopefully winning breeds more winning, that's what Jack told me a couple days ago.

MARK WILLIAMS: I was just going to go back to the Jack Nicklaus mention. I suspected it was last week in Mexico because I knew he was there. How did that come about? Did you go and approach him? Did he come to you? How did that, you know --

BEN GRIFFIN: I have a great sponsor, World Wide Technology. We did a celebrity par-3 contest and Jack was a part of it. A lot of people may be intimidated but I just kind of went up and just tried to learn. He's one of the best players of all time. I was proud of myself for approaching him and just talking to him. I felt like I talked to him for a good while and learned



a lot.

He came in and subbed in and putted on a few of the holes where we had the par-3 challenge. His stroke still looks so money, it's crazy after all this time. It's just cool to learn from him. He's won however many times on Tour and it's always good to learn from guys that have gotten it done. That's pretty much all I can do, try to learn from others and try to be as good as I can on the course and eventually it's going to happen.

MARK WILLIAMS: What else did you talk about with him?

BEN GRIFFIN: We talked about Ohio State a little bit. My girlfriend's from Cleveland, Ohio, so had that connection.

Yeah, talked about a little bit of everything, sports. There were other athletes there, J.R. Smith and everything. It was just kind of a cool vibe all around. It's just cool to have a legend like that in attendance. Talked about a few other things, but I really just tried to learn from him about the golf stuff.

MARK WILLIAMS: Going back to the 51-to-60 category, your 56 number coming into this week with two events left, big bonuses there getting into signature events if you manage to finish in that category. How important is that for you and how much focus is there on that?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, it's important. It's kind of weird, you know. It's like there's a huge focus on the 51-to-60 number, but it's really just two golf tournaments that we're getting into. If I play in those two events, then I'm going to take off an event that I planned on playing anyway. It's just shuffling events.

You always want to play against the best players in the world, and on top of that Pebble Beach is an awesome event in terms of meeting really cool people in the world. I felt like last year at Pebble Beach I met a lot of celebrities, CEOs, people that I would have never met had I not been playing golf, especially had I been working like I was a few years ago.

Yeah, events like that, and then Genesis hosted by Tiger Woods, those are events you want to play in. You want to play against the best players. And they have elevated FedExCup points what not.

It will be interesting to see how the signature events play out next year. At first I wasn't necessarily the biggest fan of the changes, but all I can do is just try to play as good of golf as possible and everything else is going to take care of itself.

Yeah, it would be a bonus to get into those events. I feel like I'm doing the right things. I have this event, next week at the RSM, two events that I'm very familiar with, RSM is home for me.

So I'm very confident I'm going to get into the top 60, there's not a doubt in my mind. It's



really just focusing on winning and trying to get in the Masters, get in some of those other events. Everything else is just bonuses, I guess. I could say trying to finish in that top 60, but my mind's not really on it. I'm pretty confident I'm going to be in that top 60 and I've just got to go try to win.

MARK WILLIAMS: When you came back to Port Royal, I guess you were out there yesterday --

BEN GRIFFIN: Nope. I just got here today.

MARK WILLIAMS: You're going to play nine holes in the pro-am?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah.

MARK WILLIAMS: Let me ask you this: Do you recall, like do you have a hole that really fits your eye here, just one particular hole on the course, and do you have one that you stand on the tee and hmm, a little uncomfortable, not sure about that?

BEN GRIFFIN: There's definitely the stretch of 13 through 16 is what catches most people's eyes around this golf course. Those are some of the hardest holes, maybe the pivotal holes coming down the stretch, the ones that you need to make pars or give yourself birdie chances on.

The front nine's very gettable, there's not a whole lot -- I don't have any worries really about any of the holes, but I know there's more birdie chances on the front nine.

Back nine, you can still make birdies, though. Looks like it's going to be lighter winds the next couple days, so certainly these first couple rounds there's going to be birdies all over the entire golf course. It's going to be low scores.

I was able to make birdies on a lot of those holes last year. Really isn't a hole that doesn't suit my eye. I think under pressure last year I hit a couple shots, the 14th hole I missed left, you can't miss left there, that's the one place. Or was it 13? Yeah, it was 14, you can't miss left there. I just made that mistake.

The first three rounds I played the hole fine. 15 I made a bogey, 16 I made a bogey, but it was playing really hard with the wind the final round last year. This year it's going to be different conditions. Don't know how they're going to play, but every shot -- I don't really think about like holes not fitting my eye or anything, I just visualize a shot and just try to hit it.

The layout of the golf course, the holes, I mean, certainly this golf course fits my game and fits my areas that I'm good at. This course kind of tailors towards those, a lot of wedges. Off the tee it's not necessarily as tight as certain courses. So I know the course from statistics that my game fits perfectly. My eyes, I mean, just seeing shots and feeling shots with the wind.



MARK WILLIAMS: Being rested and ready to play, you can never underestimate that when you've played a lot of golf, but some people would probably be surprised to hear you say, oh, I just turned up and I'm going to play nine holes in the pro-am before playing the tournament. How do you gauge that as preparation for you? How do you explain that to --

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, rest is so important, and this fall we've played on so many different time zones and it's been kind of a whirlwind. My body's still confused about a lot of things.

Japan being 13 hours, Cabo was four hours from here, then Daylight Savings Time turned to three, and next week will be another time change. I'm just trying to get adjusted to sleep, rest, make sure my body feels good.

This golf course, it's very wind dependent. The conditions are what they are. I talked to my caddie, they're pretty similar to last year. I'm going to play nine holes and get a feel for how much they're releasing or whatnot or get a feel for the green speed. I'm not going to play the back nine going into the week, but I remember it very vividly and it's going to be fine.

Feel like some guys get caught up in playing too many practice rounds and don't realize that by Sunday you're going to be pretty tired, especially if you're trying to win.

So I didn't do anything yesterday coming off of a long flight and then this morning I went in the gym and stretched and got loose. Feel like my body's where it needs to be and I'm just going to have a few swings.

Like there's no benefit to being on the range or putting too much. You're practicing in high winds right now and there's so many guys that are doing it, which maybe they need to, but for me, I know what my game's going to be like when I step on the first tee and it's just picturing shots with the wind.

Q. Going off that, was there any time yesterday -- what were you up to yesterday? Recovering, or any time to explore around Bermuda?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I explored around Bermuda a little bit, walked around downtown, got some lunch. And basically we watched I think two of the Hunger Games movies, 3 and 4, me and my girlfriend, Dana. It was really relaxing.

Then getting in the gym a little bit this morning, hopping on the bike, making sure I still feel good and still, you know, I have some endurance. I like to do some cardio to make sure I'm still feeling good and keep moving.

Yeah, yesterday was very relaxing. Slept in a little bit. I really didn't fall asleep until like 1:00 a.m. I felt like getting off the flight Monday late and all the players were eating dinner until 11:00. With the time change, 1:00 a.m. felt like 9:00 p.m. where we just were.



I feel that's one of the hardest things as a professional golfer is adjusting to time changes, and this fall's kind of proven that, especially Japan because that's a different level of travel. Yeah, just resting. Only so much I can do going into a tournament week from a practice and preparation standpoint. You really just want to get a feel for the course and then trust your game out there, so that's all I can do.

Q. Going off that, rookie season, you're seeing courses oftentimes for the first time. How comforting is it this fall kind of having a second go 'round here, a place where you played well and especially next week. A place where you kind of consider home?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, it's awesome. And that's another thing about a rookie season, you're seeing courses for the first time, your first go 'round with this fall being really, it's a longer season this year because we've had two falls. So I've seen all these courses this fall with the exception of Japan, so it's made my practice and preparation easier. I know what the course is like, I know how they've played the previous year, which generally speaking, PGA TOUR events play similarly from year to year so it makes everything a lot easier when you know courses, have that familiarity. It just makes things easier. You feel like you don't need to spend as much time on the course expending energy, getting a feel for different areas, where pins might be. You kind of know where the pins are going to be, you know how certain winds are affecting balls, whatever. Certain holes, maybe it's a little firmer on certain greens than others.

So I feel like this week, I haven't seen the back nine, I'll see the front nine here in a little bit, but I feel confident this course, it's island golf, I like island golf. Can't really make it too tough and you can't make the greens too fast because 30-mile an hour winds come, it's going to be unplayable.

So I know exactly how the course is going to play. Being a rookie, you've got to get through that first year and then after that it makes your preparation so much easier Monday through Wednesday leading into events.

Q. With that, you wrapped up your rookie season, what advice would you have for the upcoming class in 2024, the rookies?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I mean, you're constantly maintaining -- monitoring your rest versus your preparation. You kind of learn a lot about yourself. The Korn Ferry Tour, you play a lot of events in a row, the courses are a little bit easier, not quite as firm of greens. On the Tour you have to be a little more disciplined in your practice rounds, but also you've got to be disciplined about your rest.

There's not really much time to be social from week to week. You can't really -- it's fun to explore places, but you're constantly managing rest and preparation.

You learn a lot about yourself and every guy's different. For me, I played a lot of Monday pro-ams this year because I wasn't in Wednesday pro-ams. So I needed to see the course



early, but a lot of Wednesdays I didn't go out to the golf course early in the season because I knew I needed at least kind of one rest day a week and I feel like that helped me a lot.

I feel like rest is very undervalued in this game. A lot of guys think you need to grind all the time and if you took a day off, you might lose your swing. You're not going to lose your swing. Everything's going to be fine, at least for me. So I'm just constantly managing that and just trying to make sure I feel my best by the start of the week and also make sure I have enough energy by Sunday to try to get it done.

Q. Will there be a TikTok at all in Bermuda?

BEN GRIFFIN: Maybe. I don't know. I kind of go day to day. Dana helps me a lot with that. I did one last week, I'll probably do something, maybe a turnaround.

MARK WILLIAMS: Did you talk to Mr. Nicklaus about Muirfield Village?

BEN GRIFFIN: I did not talk to him about Muirfield Village.

MARK WILLIAMS: Did you tell him you'd see him there next year?

BEN GRIFFIN: You know, I didn't tell him that, but I'm sure I will. I look forward to it. That's his home, so it would be awesome to play in his tournament again.

