

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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ERIC COLE

ZACH DIRLAM: We'll get rolling with Eric Cole.

Eric, first, known for playing pretty much every week out here, I think you've had maybe two or three weeks off. How did you spend some time away?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, no, it was great. I was at home a little bit. Had a little bachelor party, getting married in December, so that was fun. Just kind of relaxed. You know, excited for this week. Happy to be here in Sea Island.

ZACH DIRLAM: And you were able to take a couple weeks off. You had three top-4s in your last four starts, moving into contention for PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year. I mean, have you been thinking about that? Is it on your mind at all? Something that you had your mindset on at the beginning of the season?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, no, it was definitely something that's kind of in the back of your mind. You know, it's something that comes with a lot -- doing a lot of little things right, so I'm more focused on those. It's something that if I keep doing those little things right, then hopefully that will be the result.

Q. A couple questions. First of all, what's the best swing advice, swing tip your mom ever gave you?

ERIC COLE: She's given me a lot, so it's hard, but I'd say probably like tempo. So not to get out of rhythm when you're on the course in different situations, just to kind of stick to your rhythm and don't try and do too much, just stay in sequence, I guess.

Q. Is there anything about her swing that you've always admired?

ERIC COLE: Her tempo is very good. Yeah, no, she's pretty consistent day to day, so her swing hasn't changed a lot in a long time. So that's something that I definitely admired, that she hasn't also made any drastic changes. If your swing is in a good spot, then you just try and keep it there for as long as possible.

Q. And what's the best advice she gave for you dealing with the life, the travel, the commitments, everything that goes with being a Tour player? What is the best thing she's ever told you?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, that's an easier question. She's big on like resting. So when you're at the course, work hard, and at the gym make sure that you're working hard, but as soon as



you leave the course, kind of prioritize being rested and ready to go for whether it's the next day or the next week and get away from golf as much as possible. So although I like to play a lot, as soon as I leave the course I try and focus on leaving my thinking about golf at the course. That's probably the best advice.

Q. What do you think having two rookies of the year in the family would be like?

ERIC COLE: I think it would be very cool. I don't know if that's ever happened before, so it's something that would be really special and something that it would be a cool thing to share with her.

Q. Eric, I think you're 48th in the world and top-50 makes the Masters. How much is that on your mind this week?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, no, I think I definitely have noticed where my ranking is, but it's almost like the Rookie of the Year thing, like it comes with doing a bunch of other little stuff right. So I'm more focused on that stuff, but in the back of my mind I'm definitely checking it.

And playing the Masters would be a huge accomplishment and something that I would love to be doing in April. Yeah, I mean, I'm thinking about it, but not when I'm focused on the little stuff that gets me there.

Q. (No microphone.)

ERIC COLE: Yeah, no, I've been testing them for a little bit now. I was out in Scottsdale last week testing them and they're really good. I got one in my bag right now that I'm seriously considering playing. They're very -- they're very forgiving and you're getting a little bit more speed in my case. It's kind of an easy thing if you're getting more speed and they're just as forgiving that I'm using now, which is an older PXX driver, it kind of makes a lot of sense to play it.

The one that I'm using it probably 2 or 3 miles an hour faster ball speed, which is enough to make a difference. There's actually some of the other ones that aren't quite as forgiving that are even faster than that. A lot of the new models, the new stuff they have is great.

Q. (No microphone.)

ERIC COLE: That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that. I'd say -- well, went to European Q-School once, too. I probably I went I'd say in the neighborhood of seven, seven or eight would be my guess. I don't know the answer, though.

Q. (No microphone.)

ERIC COLE: Yeah, it's nice. Q-School is a really tough thing for anyone, but it was especially tough for me kind of getting over that hurdle. Throughout the years playing



mini-tour golf in the past, I would have a decent amount of success and I would just get to Q-School and it was just one tournament, and it meant so much that it was kind of a little bit of a performance barrier that was tough for me. Not having to do that is definitely a nice benefit.

Q. You're not in the shoes this year, but what is the stress like this week for guys that are on the wrong side of the bubble right now?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, it's almost like a little mini Q-School this week for sure for those guys. Depending on where you are, being right around that 125 bubble is tough. You know, being just out of it is really difficult, too.

There's a lot of great storylines here this week and there's a lot of stress for those guys, but it's kind of like the Rookie of the Year thing or the top-50 in the world, if they just focus on doing the, you know, whatever they have to do to succeed this week, then that stuff kind of comes on the back end of a good week.

Q. What's the biggest improvement of your game from when you had no status?

ERIC COLE: I would say probably consistency. So like I talked about with Q-School, like if you happen to be a little bit off on that one week, then it's really stressful and it's like, wow, I just have to wait a whole 'nother year. So I'm a little more consistent tee to green so I don't have as many bad days. I think that helps with low scores and also just like mentally not having to deal with, oh, man, I don't know where it's going this week or this one day or whatever it is.

Q. At any point in your journey did you think about hanging it up and how close did you come to doing that?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, for sure. I was teaching for a little while and was OK with that. It was actually kind of a cool thing for me because while I was teaching I always thought that I really wanted to play. That was the one thing that not defined me, but that was my main goal and I worked really hard for it for a long time.

Then when I was teaching I realized like if I don't ever make it to the PGA TOUR and have success, then my life is still going to be OK, it's no big deal. So it almost took a little pressure off me taking a step away and being like if I make it, great, but if I don't, my life will still be OK.

Yeah, there's definitely been a lot of times where I've thought about quitting or giving it up.

Q. Ever been to Augusta, played it or just --

ERIC COLE: No, I haven't. My mom actually lived in Augusta for a short time. She was teaching at a course up there.



I've driven past the front entrance, but that's it. My dad played in the Masters a few times, so I've heard a lot of stories from him, but I've never been on property.

Q. Last one from me, was Rookie of the Year, was that a goal of yours coming in the season?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'd say it was -- you know, it wasn't maybe highlighted or anything like that, but you only get one chance to win Rookie of the Year, which is a little unique in golf. Most other awards, whether it's a tournament or major or some big accomplishment, like you reset and get another chance at it the following year.

So I think it's definitely a cool thing that you only really get one shot, one season to win it. It's a cool accomplishment that doesn't really come around in golf that often.

Q. I thought of one more. How old were you when you beat your mom and how old were you when you beat your dad?

ERIC COLE: I've gotten that question before and I don't know the answer. I'd say I beat my mom before I beat my dad. One, like we hit it closer, like our distances were more similar earlier and I played more with my mom. But I don't know what the age would be. I probably beat her one time when I was maybe 13 or something like that. I hope she remembers it more than I do.

Q. I think this is your 37th start, including the fall. With the success you've had this year, are you planning on playing a similar load going into next year or are you going to kind of push back a little bit, maybe have a few open weeks?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, I haven't looked at it too closely, but I do like to play and I'm just, you know, really excited to play any week on the PGA TOUR because I had a lot of years where I didn't have access. So like I'm thankful to get any starts that I do.

I haven't looked at it all that closely, but I'll probably play a decent amount next year. I'm not sure -- well, this year we also had two falls, so I'm not sure I could do 37 events if I tried, but I'll probably play what other people would think is a lot next year.

Q. Brian Harman was in here earlier and he was talking about how impressed he was with what you've done, and in a sense you're kind of saying that Brian's been grinding out here, he's 36 years old, won his first major. Does Brian's example of sticking to it and having that kind of success at that age, does that -- do you think that gives you and everyone out here grinding the hope that if they stay with it long enough, it will happen?

ERIC COLE: Yeah. I think it just shows how thin the margins are no matter where you look at it in professional golf. So my example, it was getting here. In his example, it was being out



here for a while but maybe not winning a major like he did this year, whatever it is.

Just the margins are so thin and everyone in golf is so good and there's so much depth that the way that it separates or shakes down, it's almost like it's kind of a cool time because you don't really know what's going to happen, some guy has a good week and he has success. I think it's a really cool time in golf and it just shows how many good players there are and how thin the margin is at every level.

Q. Have you gotten a chance to play with Brian a lot?

ERIC COLE: Yeah, we played maybe two or three times this year. We played the last round of the Scottish together.

Q. What aspects of his game do you like or what do you think serves him well?

ERIC COLE: Well, there's not much to not like. He hits it straight and putts great and flights the ball really well. In the Scottish, the last round was really windy and he hit a bunch of great low shots and just has a really good overall game.

