

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
March 5, 2024



NICO ECHAVARRIA

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome the defending champion of the Puerto Rico Open, Nico, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. Let's start by looking back, just a couple of the highlights of some of the most special moments you remember from last year.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, overall it was a week full of highlights, a lot of moments, a lot of things that work for when you're struggling with your game, come back to those memories and drive from there.

Golf's not easy, but weeks like the one last year have been life changing.

DOUG MILNE: You're off to a good start this season, top-25 finishes in the last two starts. What are you feeling most good about, most confident with your game right now?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Overall **getting more comfortable out here. It's not easy in the big stage, your game grows, you evolve and you adapt. That's what it's been.**

The game hasn't changed much, I'm just a little more mature.

DOUG MILNE: And coming back here this week, what's been the reception like? I know obviously everyone's excited to see their defending champion back. How does that make you feel?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: It feels great. This event, how I said, was life changing and being back with all the changes the Tour has made, first time the defending champion has played in the next year has been awesome. A lot of people, a lot of staff have been super friendly and just overall very excited to tee it up this week.

DOUG MILNE: And just last couple questions, what particularly are you feeling most comfortable with, confident about your game right now as you're heading into the week?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Overall the ball-striking has been really good, the short game has gotten a lot better. Last week I told my caddie that I hit a lot of good shots in uncomfortable moments. PGA National can test you in every part of your game, but a lot of irons that are on par 3s that are uncomfortable, I was able to hit them the proper way and it was a good week. Obviously made bogey on the last hole to get out of the top-10 or top-15, but overall a lot of good things are coming my way and it feels good to come back to a place where I played so good last year.

DOUG MILNE: Have you had a chance to get out and see the course yet this year,

bring back some good memories?

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Yeah, I was supposed to fly yesterday morning and maybe play nine holes Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. I had to change my flight because we finished the Cognizant Classic yesterday, but I did play nine holes and I'll play nine holes tomorrow.

The course is playing a little different, it's a little softer, slower, some different clubs off the tee, but that's what we do, we have to adapt and adjust to playing the same course under different conditions.

DOUG MILNE: Well, that's perfect. We appreciate your time very much and wish you the best of luck this week.

NICO ECHAVARRIA: Thank you so much.