

ROUND 4 PRESS CONFERENCE
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STEPHAN JAEGER (-12)

JOHN BUSH: OK, we would like to welcome Stephan Jaeger into the interview room, our 2024 champion of the Texas Children's Houston Open.

Stephan, a PGA TOUR winner. How does it feel?

STEPHAN JAEGER: It feels amazing. I couldn't have thought -- dreamed up a better week to do it. Obviously playing Scottie last couple days, he's been on a tear, so to kind of slay the dragon a little bit this week was amazing. He's such a good dude, such a good player, I was just happy to play with him a couple days.

JOHN BUSH: Move up to No. 11 in the FedExCup and so many avenues now open up to you the rest of this season. If we can get some comments on how this changes your goals going forward.

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, the goals remain the same in the sense my goal has been playing as well as I can the entire year. It changes a couple tournaments that I get in easier. I'm excited for that, I'm excited to kind of get on the next level and compete in majors and do all that kind of stuff. That's been my goal for a few years now. Like I said, super excited obviously this week to get it done. Yeah, have a great rest of the year.

JOHN BUSH: And you mentioned beating Scottie today, but there was a whole host of players that could have won. Just talk about the atmosphere out there with so many players with a chance to win.

STEPHAN JAEGER: You know, I didn't really leaderboard watch a lot today. I knew that Tosti was playing good in front of us. He must have bogeyed or something in the end.

I knew that Scottie hit it close on 18. I think then I looked at the leaderboard on 18 and figured, hey, I make this, it's game over. Hit a great putt, just kind of left it a little right. Ended up winning the tournament, which is awesome.

Q. What was going through your mind when Scottie was lining up his last putt. Were you just assuming you were going into a playoff?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, 100 percent. I expected him to make it, and I'm not mad at him for missing it.

Q. The five of you were tied through 54 holes, he's the only one that had won on the Tour, but I guess this is proof that's why you've actually got to pick up the clubs and



go play.

STEPHAN JAEGER: It's such a great feeling obviously. I'm super excited to get it done. I couldn't have dreamt a better way to finishing and beating No. 1 player in the world. The guy's really good and I'm super happy to get it done this week.

Q. Just if you look at your scorecard, it would look like you were playing defense on the back nine, no pars, no birdies, no bogeys, but was that actually the case or was that just the way it happened?

STEPHAN JAEGER: This golf course, it kind of gets a little bit in your head on the back nine there's a lot of trouble on 15, 16, 17. I really didn't hit many bad shots, I left one in the heart on 12, great par on 13. I felt like I kind of got stuck behind a tree on 14 and then I felt like I was hitting good shots, hitting good putts, they just weren't dropping. If you don't hit the fairway on 16, you're going to lay up anyways. It's a pretty easy hole if you hit the fairway. I didn't feel like I was playing defense at all, it just -- this game's very hard. It's hard to win on the PGA TOUR and I'm super glad that I made it.

Q. Some guys maybe might have taken some chances to try to ensure the win. I think you get points for having been very patient out there.

STEPHAN JAEGER: That's the name of the game.

Q. Coming in, you had a nice run this year, you had a couple T-3s, and if I'm not mistaken, didn't you lead a tournament with your eagle on your final hole? So good stuff has been happening, it just hasn't coalesced, right?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Was that a question? Sorry, I didn't hear the question in there.

Q. You played pretty well this year.

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, I mean, I had a chance at Torrey. Obviously in Mexico it didn't feel like a chance, those two guys were pretty ahead of me. Still had a great round in Mexico to finish T3. Felt like my game's really been trending. I've been again consistent. I had a couple of weeks that it wasn't great in Florida, but I felt like if I could just get putter a little warmer, I could have a chance. The putter was nice this week and I got the job done.

Q. When you think of the week as a whole, is there any moment or anything that comes to mind that put you in a good frame of mind or was a good sign or a good vibe that helped push you forward to help get to this spot where you are now?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah. Honestly, the week off last week helped a lot. I felt like I was very mentally fatigued at THE PLAYERS. You play Arnold Palmer, it kicks you in the head nonstop for 18 holes. I was obviously super happy to get in, but it's just such a hard golf course.



THE PLAYERS, I didn't have my best stuff and missed the cut, so to be able to have a week off and kind of recharge and actually, you know, honestly, I didn't touch my clubs until Sunday. Kind of reset a little bit and came out with a way better mindset this week. That's sometimes all I need.

Q. How does a week off look different for you now than it did earlier in your career before having a family?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, we moved in a new house last week, so literally my bag was in the travel cover until Sunday. I hit a couple putts, hit a couple shots on Sunday.

Yes, with a family I try to make sure that if I've had a long run, to give some time off golf just not only for my family, also for me. This is a very demanding sport mentally, so you've got to be fresh to be able to compete out here.

Q. Hole 17 off the tee, does extra distance and speed you have now, did that help you on the way you approach that tee shot?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Not if you hit a really spinny heeler like I did today, but yes, I think there was a few times that I had some speed on some drives and it helped me either get to a par-5 or hit shorter clubs in. On 17 I think the cover was only 270, so unless you totally whiff one, you'll cover. But maybe a couple years ago when I was carrying it 285 you actually have to hit a good one.

Yes, I agree, I could go at the green straight up knowing I'm going to cover there, for sure.

Q. Was there a moment today in the round that you feel was a pivotal moment? And then did you feel like you were playing -- were you keeping track of where Scottie was at particularly or not really at all?

STEPHAN JAEGER: No. I mean, I try to stay within myself, play my own game in a sense. Yeah, if you play with a guy you know what he's doing, right? We've played enough golf.

But I wanted to just do my best and, like I said, didn't make any birdies but also didn't make any bogeys on the back nine, which sometimes is enough, especially on a hard golf course. I mean, 12 under winning, you consider that a hard golf course on the PGA TOUR, for sure.

So to be able to do that was very rewarding. You know, I don't think there's one moment. You can't think ahead too much. Your mind's going to want to do that, it did it, but kind of to pull it back a little bit and be like, hey, OK, you've still got a job to do is big.

Q. So you moved into a new house just last week. That will take your mind off golf.

STEPHAN JAEGER: Everywhere.



Q. What are you thinking on 18 when Scottie's lining up for that putt? What's your mental process going through there?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Where to hit it in the playoff on the green. I've always kind of been taught -- that was a match play situation at that point, right? So I missed my putt and you expect your opponent to make a chip or putt, whatever it is. That was my mindset. He's the best player in the world, I think he was expecting to make it, too. I got lucky that he didn't. But he'll be back, I'm not worried about him at all.

Q. And playing with pressure, the pressure being in that final group and coming out with a win, can that be another springboard for you?

STEPHAN JAEGER: It just kind of validates the work I've been doing on and off the golf course, it validates all the hours that I spend on perfecting the craft in a sense. Yeah, I found that the best way to kind of reset after that is have some days off and then make sure like, hey, you're still just me. You won the golf tournament, but you've still got to go back to work, your got to do the right things and do the things that got you there, for sure.

Q. That moment getting to celebrate with your wife and your young son, you put him in the trophy and everything, what's that mean to you, what's that moment?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Those two, they've been by my side -- obviously my son's 16 months old, so that was a life changer, but my wife's been on my side for a long time. She's seen the worst and she's seen me win on the Korn Ferry Tour. She's been by my side, she's been my biggest supporter. Biggest critic, too. She will set me straight if something's going on. To be able to celebrate with them, the two most important people in my life, I'm super happy they're here. To hopefully I'll do that again when my son remembers it. I think one of my goals in my life is to have him remember that dad was actually good at something before he's 14, 15 years old, I'm retired and he's like, what did you do with your life? That's kind of long term goal.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, we started dating 2015, end of 2015. I had just finished a year on the Latin tour, made about \$12,000 that year. It was a great year. Like I said, she's seen everything. She's seen missed cuts after missed cuts, she's seen some wins and seen great stuff. I owe a lot of that stuff to her.

JOHN BUSH: You mentioned the Korn Ferry Tour. How important was that tour, the experiences out there to what happened today?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, absolutely. It's been a while since I won a tournament. I think my last win out there was 2019, I think Knoxville?



Q. 2021.

STEPHAN JAEGER: 2021, that's what it was, yeah. It prepares you in a sense of knowing what feelings are going to come up, there is going to be some challenges and things are going to go a little bit haywire. There's not a perfect round that you play to win on the PGA TOUR or any tour. So I felt like it prepared me definitely to get it done today.

Q. What was going through your mind at the end just hugging your wife and son? What kind of emotions and thoughts come through your mind in that moment?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, I always say winning golf tournaments is not going to make us happy, but it sure as hell feels really good. That feeling we chase for a lot of times over our careers. To be able to share that with the most important people in your world is amazing.

Q. And for -- you talked about it before, but could you give a quick kind of synopsis of how you got in the game and what brought you to golf as a kid in Germany?

STEPHAN JAEGER: My family, we lived pretty close to a golf course in Germany, a mile or so. I played all kinds of sports growing up, soccer, the typical German sports, soccer, hockey in the winter and all that kind of stuff.

Golf kind of got in -- I got in I would say decently late, I was probably 9 or 10. My parents always played golf on vacation, they would bring -- my sister was a good golfer and she was a lot older than me, so I would just ride in a golf cart when I was 6, 7, 8 years old, that was my favorite thing to do. Eventually I was like, hey, I want to try it. Obviously went to a local club, they had a great junior program there and yeah, kind of got better fast and people were like, hey, this kid's got some talent. And I loved being out there. Back then we didn't practice much, it was more spending time and playing golf. Yeah, that kind of started the love for golf and ended up coming over when I was 16 to the States and played obviously in a great high school team.

Q. Shelby's alluded to you in the past, you would take kind of your bad rounds home with you more and let that seep into a little bit in your life off the course. Why was it important to you to kind of change that?

STEPHAN JAEGER: It's hard, still happens sometimes. That's a work in progress. Golf's our life, that's how we make our living, so to kind of put that in perspective you've got to realize, hey, if we don't have golf, we're still going to be a happy family. That was the biggest game changer in my life I felt like with my son being born. It didn't matter if I was a professional golfer or if I was, you know, a carpenter, he was still going to love me, I'm still going to love him and to have that perspective really helped.

Q. And what from how your dad raised you do you hope to kind of channel as a dad yourself?



STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, absolutely. I want him to be able to do whatever he wants to do. I think the option of not playing sports is not an option. I think sports teaches you so many things, camaraderie, obviously golf you play by yourself but there's so many sports that you learn so many social skills and competitiveness and all that kind of stuff. I hope to instill that in him at some point when he's older. If he wants to play a professional sport, I'm going to try to guide him the right way, not be too involved but also give him a helping hand sometimes when he needs to, and if he doesn't want to, that's great. But I think sports are definitely a must for kids. I think they teach them so many things.

Q. And what would you like to say to your dad if you were able to say something to him?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Yeah, you know, it's funny because I have three ball markers in my bag that my wife made me. One, my son, Fritz's name with a four leaf clover. One is my dog, Phil, and when I pulled it out, I always pull it out not knowing which one I pull out, I pulled my dad's one out. It's Papa Klaus.

He obviously passed away a couple years ago the week of THE PLAYERS and that was the low part of my life, I was playing terrible golf. The silver lining in that story is my son was conceived that week. That was kind of you lose a life and you gain a life, right? He would be rolling over right now happy. Yeah, we miss him. And my mom's coming over next week, so we'll celebrate with her a little bit. Yeah, it will be great.

Q. Was your dad's passing part of kind of the desire to change your kind of mental attitude overall?

STEPHAN JAEGER: Absolutely, yeah. I think that and the birth of my son, two things where I felt like hey, you know what, this is just golf. It's so hard sometimes. We want to make it way more than it is you, but at the end of the day, like I said, you still have a family to come back to, they still love you and there's worse things in golf than knots winning a golf tournament or missing the cut.

JOHN BUSH: All right, anything else?

Q. Just one. The ball marker, when did you pull out your dad's ball marker?

STEPHAN JAEGER: This morning. I always pull them out before the round. That's whoever I pull out, that's the one I use for the day. It was my son the first three days and it was my dad today. I just kind of smiled. When you kind of said earlier what was a good omen for the day, that was my good omen for the day, for sure.

Q. And the Masters, what's it going to mean to you to tee it up at Augusta National?

STEPHAN JAEGER: I can't wait. It's been obviously a dream of mine for a long time. I've had plenty of opportunities to go play it obviously pre-Masters or during the year, but I've



said I'm not going until I'm in the Masters. So we'll see if I can make a trip beforehand and kind of see it before the craziness starts. Yeah, I'm super excited obviously.

JOHN BUSH: All right. That concludes the English portion of the press conference. Going to take a few that have been submitted from Germany.

