

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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LARSON SEGERDAHL, Valero Texas Open Executive Director
MATT WERNECKE, USTA Men's Golf Coach
JOE SULLIVAN, 2023 Valero Texas Collegiate Champion

LARSON SEGERDAHL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Appreciate everybody coming out for this announcement, and certainly more importantly to hear from Joe Sullivan from Florida Gulf Coast University. I'm Larson Segerdahl, the executive director of the Valero Texas Open.

Before we kick it over to Joe and Coach Matt Wernecke from UTSA golf, wanted to give a brief commentary on both our inaugural Texas collegiate event which was hosted this past September, a field of 12 schools, and it was really an incredible way to kick off this new initiative. We have seen at the Valero Texas Open the incredible talent that has been rising through the collegiate ranks in recent years, so for us as an event to invest in the college game and give opportunities like the Valero Texas Collegiate to top schools, top athletes, student-athletes and ultimately create an opportunity like exists this week for Joe as the medalist of that event earning exemption to the Valero Texas Open really is something special.

So we're excited today to be with you talking with Joe, but also to reveal the schools that are going to be participating in the second annual Valero Texas Collegiate.

As you can see on the poster board, we have an elite field of schools including Auburn, Clemson, Georgia, Cal, East Tennessee, Mississippi, Oklahoma, SMU, University of North Florida, Ole Miss, TCU, UTSA, of course our host school, Virginia, Tennessee and Vanderbilt will be coming down this coming September the 19th to 23rd to compete in the second annual Valero Texas Collegiate. Once again, the winner of that event will earn an exemption just has Joe has into the 2025 Valero Texas Open.

So with that I'd like to give Coach Matt Wernecke just an opportunity to comment on behalf of our host school, University of Texas at San Antonio men's golf.

COACH MATT WERNECKE: So this event this past year, I think it was a huge success for year one. Almost all the coaches and players that we talked to, I mean, the golf course was a great test, it held up against some of the best players in college golf, plus all the amenities that the JW and this property and Valero offered to the players and coaches was a first-class event.

So we're looking forward to this next year's field. It's an elite field. It's probably going to be a top-5, top-10 strength of tournament across the college landscape. As a host school, we're thrilled to be associated with it and be a part of it and it's a great way to kind of show off San



Antonio, show off this great property and bring some of the best in the country to our backyard here.

LARSON SEGERDAHL: Very good. Thanks, Coach.

And of course we couldn't be more proud and excited to have Joe here with us, our medalist from our inaugural Valero Texas Collegiate playing this week on an exemption that was very well earned.

Joe, I'll allow you to make a few initial comments and then we can open it up for questions.

JOE SULLIVAN: Yeah, thanks to Larson and UTSA coach for hosting obviously a great tournament in September. The course is absolutely beautiful, top quality food, gives all players an opportunity to play in a PGA TOUR event, which is obviously a dream of everyone in college.

So yeah, big thanks to these guys and everyone hosting the event.

LARSON SEGERDAHL: All right. Open it up to questions for anyone that has them.

Q. Yeah, just quickly, I know you won this in a playoff; actually a couple Texas players, if I'm not mistaken, right? When you look back at that now, I mean, in the heat of the moment it's just a playoff. Now to look back and realize what that meant for your career moving forward, did you have a clear mind at that time? Did you kind of just let this go? If you were to relive it, is it almost now built up bigger now in your head looking back?

JOE SULLIVAN: I'd say it definitely has given me good experience. Obviously if you're in a playoff to play in a big PGA TOUR event and everyone's obviously dreaming of it, it's definitely nerve wracking, but it's definitely going to give me good experience for this week just trying to calm my nerves and everything.

But yeah, no, it was a great. It is a big moment, but then coming to play in this is a bigger moment. Yeah, it's great.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about the experience at FGCU. Obviously you've had a couple players who have made their way to the Korn Ferry Tour, Frankie Capan, Van Holmgren. I wanted to ask you about the program and how it's helped you develop in your time there.

JOE SULLIVAN: Yeah, Coach Danna, he's done a great job. He's obviously very good at recruiting good players, so having a great team around you, good players to compete against every single day is a massive help. Obviously having great facilities as well, good golf course, a difficult golf course which you can practice at which is similar style to what they play on the PGA TOUR. I think that's just great for you to learn and get better for the



future. I think he's done a great job of that and obviously we've had some great players such as Frankie and Van come through from it.

Q. And then I wanted to ask you, obviously a different time of year now than when you played here last, have you had a chance to see the course and how do you expect that it will play a little bit differently?

JOE SULLIVAN: Yeah, played a few holes yesterday and day before and it is very similar to how we played it in the college event. The rough is a little bit thicker, the greens are a little bit firmer, but overall very similar. Kind of going in with the mindset of just trying to keep everything the same as any other tournament and then move from there.

LARSON SEGERDAHL: One of the objectives of the Valero Texas Collegiate is to give these athletes a PGA TOUR-like experience, so that includes the course setup. Everything we did in September was to try to mimic in a lot of ways conditioning and setup that we experience here during the Valero Texas Open. That included pin placements, so the pin placements back in September were the same as our second, third and fourth rounds of last year's Valero Texas Open. Hopefully that experience will give Joe maybe a little leg up here this week as he competes.

Q. Coach, maybe just a couple thoughts about how hosting this event benefits the program, especially when you have teams that are that strong coming to San Antonio.

COACH MATT WERNECKE: Sure, yeah, for us it's huge. This is kind of the goal for any program is to play in elite fields like this. They're not easy to get into, and so for us and for Valero to let us be the host school, it allows us to get our kids to get the exposure that they need, so it's helpful in recruiting, it's helpful to let kids know that you get to have an event on your schedule that has a tour start, which I think most programs might get one or two of those a year, there aren't a ton. So it's been super helpful. It obviously brings some of the best guys in the country to our home golf course in San Antonio, so it's good exposure to our program, our university as a whole and for the city.

LARSON SEGERDAHL: Any other questions? All right. Well, thank you all very much. We're looking forward to a great Valero Texas Open week.

Joe, best of luck to you. Excited about this coming fall for the second annual Valero Texas collegiate. Thanks so much.

