

US Open Championship 2017

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Sergio Garcia

Press Conference



BETH MAJOR: Good morning. We'd like to welcome Sergio Garcia into the interview room at the 117th Seoul here at Erin Hills, Wisconsin. We are very pleased to welcome this morning Masters champion, Sergio Garcia. He earned his first major victory two months ago in a thrilling victory at Augusta National. Currently ranked No. 7 in the world. He's playing in his 18th U.S. Open this week. His five top-10 finishes, tie for 5th last year at Oakmont.

Can you take us through the last two months since your victory at Augusta.

SERGIO GARCIA: It's been fun. Obviously it's been very overwhelming and very busy. But it's been a great experience to be able to call myself Masters Champion, it's something, it's a dream come true and something that I'm extremely proud of.

But like I said after that, after Augusta, you know, it's a different week, and that is not going to give me any advantage when we get on the first tee. You still have to focus hard and trust yourself, believe in your ability, commit to your shots and your thoughts and then hopefully have another good week here.

BETH MAJOR: I know you said you just arrived yesterday and have not actually seen the golf course yet. Can you talk a little bit about your preparations for the next few days.

SERGIO GARCIA: Hopefully I'll be able to play 18 today and 18 tomorrow, get a couple nice looks at the course, weather permitted, obviously. It looks like it's a big golf course and it's -- I'm excited to see it. It's going to be playing a lot softer, a lot longer and not as fast as it was probably maybe yesterday or a couple days ago. But we can't control Mother Nature and we'll deal with it the best way possible.

Q. Talk about the differences to coming into a major championship, knowing that you've done it. Is there a difference coming in knowing that you've done it before?

SERGIO GARCIA: To be totally honest, I don't think so. I think that the pressure of trying to do well and give yourself a chance is still the same. I guess inside of you there is a little spot where you've accomplished it already. But it doesn't mean that if I play well and I have a chance on Sunday it's going to be easier.

Every tournament is tough, is tough to win and majors is even tougher. And U.S. Open we all know how difficult they are. I'm sure it's going to be a great challenge again, like it is every year.

Q. Congratulations. First time we speak since you won your first major, well done, congratulations. The last six majors have produced first-time winners, you're one of those six, why do you think we're seeing this trend continue and continue?

SERGIO GARCIA: I don't know. It's difficult to say. I think it's just one of those things that happen, one of the those rolls that just -- it just happened in the last six majors. But I'm sure it's going to finish at some point. My goal, obviously, is to make it stop this week and hopefully get a second one. But it is also nice to see some of those first-time major winners that maybe deserved it for a while and are getting their own.

Q. Just as a quick follow-up, if you could pick two words that will be key to going into this week's U.S. Open, Henrik Stenson yesterday used par and patience, what would be your two words that are key here?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, one, for sure, is patience, so I'm going to take that one from Henrik. The other one for me would be commitment.

Q. You are wearing different shades of green most of the time these days?

SERGIO GARCIA: No reason. It's some of the clothes I have, so I have to wear them.

Q. This course has a very linksy feel, and with your Open record, do you think it's going to suit you more than most?

SERGIO GARCIA: I don't know. Hopefully. That would be nice. Like I said, just a minute ago it's going to be playing much softer than maybe we expected it after the big storms we had yesterday and this morning. But it is kind of linksy. I'm excited to go out there later on and take a good look at it, get a feel for it and see how the course plays. So we'll see. Hopefully we'll be able to get some good vibes and have a great week.

Q. You're the only guy that can win the Grand Slam this year. Thoughts?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, I mean, I guess the guy that wins the Masters every year has the potential of doing

that. It is something nice to have the possibility of doing, but we all know how difficult it is. I just want to go one little tournament at a time and give my best this week and hopefully by Sunday night we can keep having that talk.

Q. Now you've won a major. Do you think Hideki Matsuyama has a chance to win a major this week or in the future?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, for sure, Hideki is a wonderful player. He's young. He's got a lot of game, he's shown that. I don't have a doubt that he's going to win at least one major. And it would be nice to see a Japanese player doing it. So hopefully Hideki can do that sometime soon.

Q. As a high school golfer sometimes when the weather is bad I just wish that the meet would get canceled. On a day like today do you sometimes feel like not golfing?

SERGIO GARCIA: I guess we're used to it after so many years but I do have to say that at least here in the U.S. when you get storms it's just like usually thunderstorms and most of the times you can play. But in the UK it's a little bit tougher because you get wind and rain and cold and those days are tough to go through. They're very, very difficult, and you can't even feel your hands sometimes. So those ones are a little tougher to deal with.

Here, fortunately for us, most of the time it's just thunderstorms, so we can play. It's just a matter of waiting and getting ready for it.

Q. How did you find the American fans treated you on the Sunday of the Masters? How about since then? How do you find that they're receiving you?

SERGIO GARCIA: I felt and I've always said that I felt like everywhere in the world and here in the U.S. the fans have always treated me amazingly well, even more for being a foreigner, from being from Spain. So definitely throughout the whole Masters and on Sunday I felt even more supported than in the past, if that's possible. And from the Masters onwards it's been fun. It's been fun to be out there and see the people cheering even harder for you than they did before, which, like I said, it wasn't easy because I've always been very fortunate with the way they've treated me. But a lot of people, you can see that a lot of people are happy about us getting finally a major victory and congratulating us and all those things. So it's been a great experience.

Q. What's the coolest thing you've done with the Green Jacket in the last few months?

SERGIO GARCIA: Coolest? Just pretty much wearing the jacket (laughter).

Q. You wore it at the Real Madrid, didn't you?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, I think I was wearing the jacket then. There's been a lot of great little things that we've done with and without the jacket. The honorary kickoff at the Clasico was an amazing experience. So that's probably the coolest thing. But fortunately we've done a lot of great things.

Q. Just interested to know with Cristiano Ronaldo, how does he react to your achievements and winning the Masters?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, I mean I've met him a couple of times, but very briefly. I'm friendlier with some of the other players on the Real Madrid squad. He was, you know, polite, he was obviously clapped for me and stuff. It was nice to see. But they had a big game to play so it was difficult to get a lot more emotional than that. But it's been great.

Q. You mentioned your two key words, patience and commitment, could you elaborate on the commitment part? And on the patience side of things, do you feel more qualified, more able to fulfill that side of the bargain than ever before?

SERGIO GARCIA: Hopefully. Every week is different, so some weeks you feel a bit calmer than others and your patience is better. Hopefully this week will be one of those weeks where I feel calm and collected and my patience level is way, way high. When it comes down to commitment it's just a matter of believing. I think that at the Masters I did that very, very well with all aspects of my game. The last three weeks players, Byron Nelson and Colonial, I struggled a little bit with that. My commitment wasn't as sharp as it was at the Masters. I don't know if it was because everything that's been going on after the win there and stuff. But we have to kind of collect ourselves again and make sure that when we get there on the first tee on Thursday that we're fully committed, no matter what happens and have as much patience as possible.

Q. Two questions, what are you most looking for when you see a course for the first time? And, two, is there anything you're looking forward to this week that's very Wisconsin-like when you experienced before when you were at the straits?

SERGIO GARCIA: I don't know. Obviously we played at Whistling a couple of times. I think there's a lot of high grass out around there that I'm not looking forward to seeing, so hopefully we'll stay away from that. But it is different, it's a bit linksier, it's a bit more, not the kind of golf course that you maybe see here in the U.S. as much. So I'm excited to see how it plays. I'm excited to see the different options that it gives you, not only off the tee but around the greens, things like that.

At the end of the day the only thing we try to do when we are out there practicing is to get as good a feel as possible for the golf course, the way it plays, and see what game plan feels most comfortable for you. So those are the goals for the next couple of days.

Q. When you look back on the Masters and particularly the last few holes on the Sunday afternoon can you think of anything -- how would you describe Justin over those holes? Did anything about his bearing strike you? Obviously he was playing very well. Did he talk less than before? How did things change?

SERGIO GARCIA: No, not really. I thought the whole round was pretty level on the way we treated each other and the way we talked to each other, even when I was up, even when he was up. We are good friends. We've gone through many, many things together when it comes down to Ryder Cups and things around the golf course and stuff like that. I personally don't think it changed much at all and you could see that even on 14, 15, 16, 17, the holes coming in, as tense as it was we were still congratulating each other for great shots and good putts and things like that. So nothing changed at all.

Q. I think only two players have won more than one major, having won their first one at age 37 or older. But do you feel quite -- you're 37 in terms of you haven't had any major injuries, do you feel that you've got a lot of majors in you?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, I mean that's the goal and that's where we want to go. I think that like I've been saying for my career I've been fortunate with injuries. I haven't -- I've had some minor injuries but nothing major which hasn't taken me away from the game for too long. So I still feel in good shape and my game feels nice. I'm still working hard on it.

I definitely hope that I can keep playing well and win many, many more, now that we have our first one. But time will tell us. Like I said, before the Masters, the only thing I can do is keep putting myself in that situation as many times as possible and now I can maybe relay -- is that right, relay -- on what I felt on Sunday at Augusta and hopefully it gives me a little bit of an edge when it comes down to that situation.

Q. Yesterday Jon Rahm said that you were someone that he's looked up to and he said that your win at the Masters was pretty inspiring. Just curious, what's your relationship like with him and what do you think of the season he's had so far and what it means for Spanish golf?

SERGIO GARCIA: It's great. We have a good relationship. Obviously he's a wonderful player and I've said it even before he became a pro. To see a good,

young player from Spain, it's great. I'm thrilled about it. It's nice to see Spanish sports doing well everywhere. And obviously golf it's nice to see another good young player coming out from Spain. He's been having a great year. He's been up there in so many tournaments. It's nice to see that happening and hopefully for many more years.

Q. I'm a native of Wisconsin, and from what I understand you played a final round with Jordan Niebrugge at 2015 at the Old Course. And I was wondering if you could provide a little enlightenment of what you thought of Jordan?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, obviously it's been a couple of years. But, no, we had a good time. We enjoyed each other playing there. I don't know, is he playing this year, here?

Q. Yes.

SERGIO GARCIA: All right. So that's awesome. Hopefully he has another good week here. But, yeah, wonderful player and hopefully he can keep playing well and have a good week here and keep rising up and play the best he can do. So it's nice to see that he's still doing well.

Q. Andy North told me when he was at his first U.S. Open in 1978 for a couple of years after that he had a lull as far as motivation goes. We've seen that with other major champions. What do you do to deal with that low and keep your spark and passion?

SERGIO GARCIA: At the end of the day I think that obviously we've achieved something that we've been trying for for so long. And it's easy to kind of take a deep breath and relax and -- but I'm still working out hard. I'm still working on my game as much as I can and as hard as possible. To make sure that -- I've always said it, wins are important but to me consistency is the most important thing. And I've been fortunate to be consistent throughout my whole career. I want to keep being consistent, keep playing well, keep giving myself chances at winning majors and being in Ryder Cups and all those things.

So to me that's the best motivation possible, to keep that consistency going. And if I want to do that I have to keep working hard. And then if I do that then hopefully those lulls -- I'm sure that some lows will come, but hopefully they'll be short ones and we can get over them as quickly as possible.

Q. Just following what you said about injuries, Rory is obviously coming in here having had a very disrupted season and preparation, do you think that significantly limits his chances here?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, we know the qualities that

Rory possess and how good a player he is. But I'd be lying to you if I didn't tell you that I think it probably -- it does hurt him a little bit because he hasn't had much continuance on his playing. Obviously practicing and all that is great, but you need competition golf. And you need to feel those juices that you feel when you're with a chance of winning a tournament or you have to make a putt to get a round going or make a cut or something like that.

So that probably doesn't help him. But at the same time, like I said, he's a wonderful player. We all know how much quality he has and he'll probably try to overcome all those things and feel as ready as he can feel for this week. At the end of the day, like I said before, it all comes down to commitment. And when you're playing a little bit more it's easier to commitment because you're in a situation. But I'm sure he's had some good practices, and he'll be as ready as he can be on Thursday.

BETH MAJOR: Sergio, thank you so much for joining us today. It was a pleasure. We wish you well throughout the week.