

GARY NICKLAUS

CHRIS RICHARDS: Welcome, Gary Nicklaus, to the media center for the Oasis Championship. You played the pro-am yesterday, played this morning. How's it feel to be out here getting ready to play in your first PGA TOUR Champions event?

GARY NICKLAUS: It feels great. It's been a long time since I've played professionally. I still work on my game and played a few amateur events here and there, but to be back out here, play against -- this week's been great, the welcome has been great from the guys. They're all guys that were on tour when I was on tour. They're like, "Welcome, man, you're going to love it, this is a great spot." So far the reception's been fantastic, just looking forward to getting at it.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Has your father given you any tips as you jump back into the big-time competitions?

GARY NICKLAUS: We've talked a little bit about it, not a lot. He's been busy with his stuff and I've been kind of busy with what I'm doing. We've talked a little bit here and there, but not a lot. He said just go have fun, that's the biggest thing.

Q. Gary, what are your plans here? I know you got a sponsor's exemption. Are you going to try to play your way into a full schedule or any kind of a schedule? What are you looking at?

GARY NICKLAUS: I have a sponsor's invite this week. Oasis has been great and Hollis and Maddie I are fantastic. Hopefully what I'm going to try and do is play well enough in the couple events I might get invitations to and play my way on. I will probably try and do some qualifiers as well, but if I come out this week and do what I think I can, then -- I'm not making promises that I will, but I'm saying if I come out and do what I'm capable of, then yeah, might do it this week, so we'll see what happens.

Q. Where is your game right now and what are your expectations?

GARY NICKLAUS: My game's pretty good. I wouldn't say it's perfect, but I'm ready to play in a tournament, I'm ready to come here and compete. It's been a long time since I've played at this level and played against these guys, so I hope I can keep it together mentally, but the physical part of my game is good. So come out and hit good shots, make some putts and hopefully I'll be there on Sunday.

Q. I know you played in a couple of those minor league events. What other competitive golf have you played in the last several months?

GARY NICKLAUS: Not a lot. I played the U.S. Amateur over the summer, I played a couple local events, I played a couple state events. I play a lot with my son, I play quite a bit with my dad. A lot of the competition was my dad and I playing against Gary Player and Bob Charles over in the fall. You want to talk about two guys that can play, my dad and I were out there and we're playing pretty good and these guys are shooting, I think they shot 60 best-ball over at Trump Jupiter. But had a lot of fun with that. Just excited to be here, get at it.

Q. More nervous or anxious?

GARY NICKLAUS: I'm not nervous. I'm very anxious to get out there. I've been coming here since Sunday, pro-am Sunday and came back down for the party, the Champions Club party on Monday night and then pairings party, the media challenge that we had here on Tuesday. So just kind of event after event leading up to it and it's like, all right, come on, I'm ready to start, let's get out there. So really looking forward to it.

Yesterday after I got done with the pro-am, I walked in and I saw Brad Faxon and he's like, "Hey, we're paired together." That was a welcome surprise. I mean, I remember back on the regular tour you had to earn your way to get good tee times. I guess here, you know, the pairings are out there and you just go. I mean, this is -- to be paired with Rocco and Brad, two guys that I know well. Rocco and I spent a lot of time together when I was on tour because we worked with the same teacher. To have that kind of pairing to be ready to go out tomorrow, I'm ready to go, let's go.

Q. Who was that teacher?

GARY NICKLAUS: Rick Smith.

Q. A lot of different emotions than when you look back to when you were playing your first PGA TOUR event, how you were feeling then compared to now?

GARY NICKLAUS: It was a long time ago.

Q. Long time ago.

GARY NICKLAUS: But I think the biggest difference is I'm probably a lot more confident in myself. I was spending a lot more time at my game back then, but even so I still am probably more confident in my game now than I was then. I think that I'm looking forward to having fun and enjoying myself much more than back then. I think it was a job and that's -- I was out here to make a living and to provide for myself and my family. So now I'm here and I'm excited about playing and competing and it's not a -- you know, as far as job security and stuff, it's not a life-or-death thing. Let's go have fun, let's enjoy playing golf.

Q. Do you work with a specific teacher, your dad maybe? How much is your dad

involved with your golf game?

GARY NICKLAUS: Not a lot. I mean, if I need some help, I'll ask him. I haven't really worked with anybody. Over the summer I worked with David Leadbetter, I went over and saw him for a day, and when Rick's in town I'll ask him some questions. When I'm on the range at the Bear's Club, I'll ask Eric or Paul a few questions here or there.

Most of the stuff is I've got a stick that holds my phone and I stick it behind me and take some videos. I mean, it's not rocket science, the golf swing hasn't changed since I was playing. What I try and do now is the same stuff I tried to do back then, just swing the club on plane, keep the clubface square through impact and the ball goes straight. It's not rocket science.

The short answer to your question is, I'm not seeing a teacher on a regular basis working on my game; more individual, more working on my own.

Q. I read that you were considering this option for a while. Was there a time that you said, okay, I'm going to do it?

GARY NICKLAUS: Yeah. I mean, in my own mind, probably two or three years ago, but I didn't let that out of the bag until recently.

CHRIS RICHARDS: So does that mean for the last two or three years you've been preparing with tomorrow's first round in mind?

GARY NICKLAUS: Yeah. Been thinking being 48 years old, 47 years old, whatever, and looking forward to getting out there and playing at this level. Even playing in the U.S. Amateur and stuff like that, it's great competition, the kids are amazing, but when I go home when I play and I'm playing at 7,000 yards or 6,900 yards, it's a lot more enjoyable than going out and playing Pebble Beach at 7,400 or 7,500 yards that it is now, especially when you play with these 19-, 20-year-old kids that hit it 60, 70 yards by you every time. These kids are so good, they hit it so far now, just no fear.

Q. Do you expect your dad to be here tomorrow?

GARY NICKLAUS: I think so. I haven't talked to him. I don't know if he's coming all three days or just on the weekend, but he'll be out here. I think he's probably more excited about this than I am. Not really, I'm pretty excited.

CHRIS RICHARDS: All right. Thank you very much, Gary. Good luck this week.

GARY NICKLAUS: Thank you.