

MICHAEL BLOCK PRESS CONFERENCE

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We're now joined by Michael Block, who's making his Sanford International debut.

How great is it to be here?

It's been kind of coming back to my roots in a way really. From age 2 to 12, I grew up in Iowa, so when I looked on the map exactly where Sioux Falls was, it's not too far away from my old home state, which is really cool, and it actually reminds me a lot of where I did grow up and the people, how nice they are here is amazing.

I've played two pro-ams and a practice round so far and volunteers and everyone's been great. It's a really good golf course because you've got to work the golf ball both ways – you've got to control your golf ball, you've got to control the ball flight to spin. The greens can get dirty, I don't think they've been firm, they've been a little soft due to the rain initially in the beginning of the week and they're going to dry out very quickly – that's what I've seen. Even just between the front nine today in the pro-am and the back nine, the fairways were already drying out quite a bit and rolling out. So, we're going to be changing up the club selections off the tees quite a bit starting tomorrow.

To your point – is it kind of a full circle moment coming back?

It is, it's really cool. This is my 6th event on the PGA Tour Champions. Honestly, just to kind of travel around the country and even into Canada and Calgary, has been a really cool experience. But, to be honest, everywhere we've gone so far has been really special and it's amazing how many people even today, the volunteers were thanking me for being here. And I'm going 'why are you thanking me?' I'm like 'it's my honor to be here, thank you for being out here and putting your time in and taking time out of your life to come here and volunteer for an event.'

How much fun are you having being on the Champions Tour?

It's the best tour in the world, hands down. In a weird way, for me, it was built for me to be honest. I've been a club professional my entire life and my job as a club professional is to walk around and thank everybody and make sure they're having a good time at the club, and that's what I've done. You've seen it and I even take it to when I'm playing in the tournament, and that's just what I do. It's kind of funny where I've gotten hate for doing that, and it's kind of an interesting thing, but it is what it is. But that's just what I do and that's just me. And the biggest thing that I just keep on getting texts from friends and family, and people don't even know, is just 'keep being you.' And so, I'm going to do as much as I can to just keep being me.

Your goal earlier in the year was to get to St. Louis (Stifel Charity Classic – Charles Schwab Cup playoff event). Now that you’ve done that, does the goal shift a little bit with the two playoff events after?

Yeah, that was a really special moment, right? To know that I’m pretty much kind of guaranteed with the points that I’m at right now to be in St. Louis and go to Norwood Hills for the Stifel is really, really cool. And I had on my outlook in my office, like I’ve talked about prior, that I had a big, in parentheses, goal. And that was my big goal, and when I just got back to my office this last week after The Ally Challenge, I went back in and spent literally three straight days in my office trying to catch up. It was really cool to get back on that calendar and then I left the goal on there on the Stifel and then I went a week later, the Simmons (Charles Schwab Cup playoff event), which is in Arkansas. And now that’s on my calendar as well, it wasn’t even on my calendar. And, a little secret between us, is I also put the Charles Schwab Cup, the championship in Phoenix on my calendar as well as the final goal of the year.

We talked yesterday about everything else you do besides play golf. Now that you’re here, how’s the golf game?

Yesterday was shaky. I wasn’t striking it very well with my irons yesterday, a little abnormal. Today was way, way better, much more comfortable. Every single week I go play, I change up my clubs a little bit, I’ll tweak my clubs, my driver especially, just to kind of fit how I’m swinging that week. It’s a week-to-week thing and the swing changes, I don’t care who you are, it changes. And I always just try to find the right feel, the right thought for that week off that certain type of grass, with that certain wind or whatever it might be, so that’s what I thought about. I literally went to sleep last night thinking about how to hit certain shots here, where I could actually take 3 woods off the tees like here on 18 instead of trying to hit a driver because there are about three or four good dogleg left holes off here off the tee. And I’m a cutter of the golf ball with my driver, that’s where I’m comfortable. I can hit it, I call it ‘toe’ it because I honestly, I’ll purposely hit a toe to draw my driver. But it actually might be what I’m seeing now, especially with the firming up where it’s going to be more of that draw 3-wood, which I just shut down the club face a little bit, throw it about a ball back in my stance and just rip at it. So, I think you might be seeing that a little more often.

Does this course fit you right?

There’s those Jack Nicklaus courses where every ball’s left or right, that’s not normal, but that’d be my dream course. But, at the same time, I love working the golf ball. I don’t want it to be easy, I want it to be firm, I want it to be fast, I want it to be fun, I look forward to the wind tomorrow. It is what it is.

One of the really cool things about here on this tour is that everyone tees off within a two-hour window. So, everyone's pretty much playing the same conditions and the same golf course, which is really, really cool – unlike when I played in the PGA Championship back at Aronimink earlier this year, I had to tee off at 6:45 in the morning in a 40 mile an hour wind and it was 55 degrees. Guys were teeing off at 2 p.m. in 72 degrees with no wind. So, that's a big difference. Out here, you don't have that and like I said, this is the best tour in the world.

What are some impressions that you've had so far of Sioux Falls and the support for the tournament here?

The support, obviously, is insane. I know the tournament's been here a long time, I know that it's been extended. The membership here obviously supports the event. Sanford has been huge – I played with a couple of gentlemen that have worked for Sanford over the last couple of days. Everyone here just reminds me of being in the Midwest again, which is where I was raised and it's really, really cool.

Like I said, the volunteers thanking me, it's crazy. We're so blessed to have these people all come out and spend their day out here on the golf course. I mean, it's not a ton of fun sitting in one spot for eight hours or whatever it is, the amount of time they spend. For them to come out and do what they do is crazy. And like I always do, and I will, during the event or during the practice rounds or during the pro-am, I'm going to go up to every single one of them and I'm going to shake their hand and I'm going to thank them for being here.

And Sioux Falls, by the way, I still haven't hit up downtown. I got here at midnight the other day, our plane got in late and I've yet to hit up downtown, I look forward to it. I've gotten a couple of restaurant recommendations – I went to Morrie's last night, fantastic. I need to go downtown though and check it out. I've got a couple others, I'm going to go down there and see it. But the cool thing was we rented a house and I had no idea where it was, but Davis (Trosin), the tournament director told me pretty much everything's within about 15 minutes, so I wasn't too worried about it. So, I just rented this house, I finally got the address the day before – I plug in the address and then I plug in Minnehaha Country Club and it's 1.2 miles away. And so, I was like 'this is pretty cool,' so yeah, it's been great.

Can you tell us more about your Iowa upbringing and your start in golf?

Both my parents graduated from the University of Iowa. So, I grew up an Iowa Hawkeye, I'm sorry to say to certain people, but I went to Kinnick Stadium in Iowa City every Saturday during football season my entire life between the ages of 2 and 12. And then, my father got a job – he worked for Ralston Purina – got a job down at their headquarters in St. Louis when I turned 13, so I spent the years after that down in St. Louis.

But Iowa was a very special place to this day. I learned how to play golf at the Rock Island Arsenal Golf Club, which is actually an island in the Mississippi River. I tell people that, I'm like 'I learned how to play golf on an island in the Mississippi River.' Think about that, which is a true story, a really cool thing. But back in the day, it was a really cool country club that I belonged to, all the general's quarters around there and stuff. But yeah, it was a special place to grow up in Iowa and Hank Stukart was a PGA pro there that kind of taught me the game. I haven't been back in a long, long time, so you know, we'll see. I know there's an event in Des Moines, so hopefully, I am able to play in that next year.