

Viking Classic
Annandale Country Club
Madison, MS

July 17, 2011

Tournament quotes:

INTERVIEW OF CHRIS KIRK

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Chris Kirk, the 2011 Viking Classic champion, to the interview room. To start it off, Chris, could you just tell us a little bit about what it's like to get your first win out here on the PGA Tour.

CHRIS KIRK: It's amazing. It's something I've been working for for a long, long time, and to get it here was a little bit extra special. After Randy being nice enough to give me a sponsor exemption for me to make my pro debut in 2007 a week after I turned professional, I haven't been back since then. So to be back here now and get my first win here in the same place where I had my pro debut is pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Chris, if you could also talk about your -- you're a University of Georgia guy, and you moved into the top 30 in the FedEx Cup. As you know, the top 30 get into the Tour Championship in Atlanta. If you could just talk a little bit about that.

CHRIS KIRK: Yeah, that's definitely been a little bit of a goal of mine. As I've played well throughout the year, to try to just keep moving up that FedEx Cup list and get as many -- rack up as many points as I can going into the playoffs. Obviously, this is huge. As far as being a Georgia Bulldog, I'm a very proud Georgia Bulldog. I know Randy is too, our tournament director here. We're getting more and more players out on tour lately, and it's a tribute to Chris Haack, the coach there, and he's doing an amazing job of recruiting and really just giving the players there everything that they need to play as well as they can.

THE MODERATOR: I'll open it up for questions.

Q. Chris, talk a little bit about the first time you played here, how you did, and just how it all unfolded. How you got the sponsor's exemption, a little bit.

CHRIS KIRK: Well, I was the player of the year, Ben Hogan Award winner my senior year of college at the University of Georgia. Graduated in 2007, and I waited to turn pro until

after the Walker Cup that year, which is in September. So I tried to get as many sponsor's exemptions as I could.

There weren't very many PGA Tour events left at the end of that year. I was able to get one here, and I think I missed the cut by one, either one or two. I played okay, but it was -- it's pretty amazing to think back to then, how far I've come from then. You know, I don't think my -- it wasn't necessarily my game is that much better than it was then, but just the comfort level that I have now to be able to go down 18 today and feel 100% comfortable in my own skin out there.

You know, sure, I was a little bit nervous, but a lot more confident than I was nervous.

Q. I was about to say that was one of the most understated celebrations in probably the history of golf when you tapped in. Are you always like that, or just what was going on inside, I guess.

CHRIS KIRK: I definitely don't show much emotion on the golf course, that's for sure.

When I was younger, I did a little bit more, and I found that every time I would make a birdie and fist pump or something like that, it would -- my heart rate would get going a little bit too much, and I would tend to hit a bad shot or make a bogey on the next hole.

So it's one thing that I'm actually very, very conscious of, especially in situations when I am in contention, controlling my heart rate. I have a naturally very slow heart rate, and so if it gets up a little bit too much, it makes it tough for me. So I don't show much emotion, and I do a lot of breathing exercises and that type of thing just to maintain a consistent heart rate so that I can perform on 18 Sunday just as well as I do any other time.

Q. After 18, though, you didn't have any more holes. You couldn't have bogeyed. Did you think about doing anything?

CHRIS KIRK: I gave a little bit of a fist pump, I think, didn't I? I don't know. I made a three-inch putt to win. That's not exactly an accomplishment. All the other shots I hit were pretty good.

I've always thought it was kind of silly, to be honest with you, when a guy taps in from three or four inches away and let's out a huge fist pump. I know it's more -- it's about a lot more than just that putt, but I just kind of figure -- I mean, I could have called in somebody from the crowd, and one of you guys could have made that putt for me.

Q. And you mentioned your heart rate. Have you been diagnosed with something with your heart or just slow --

CHRIS KIRK: No, nothing irregular or abnormal. My dad is the same way. He has a very slow heart rate. He had a bunch of tests done two or three years ago because they thought there was something wrong with him, but there's not. His heart just goes a little bit slower than normal, and mine does too. I think it's good. It helps me stay a little bit more on an even keel. I don't get too amped up or too excited.

I don't have to worry about changing my yardages. I know a lot of guys, when they get in contention, they get a little too much adrenaline going, and they have to change their club selection a little bit based on how pumped up they are. So thankfully, I'm able to play just the same coming down the stretch as I do normally except for I tend to have a little bit more focus.

I feel like the more nervous I get, the more heightened the situation is, I feel like I can play better in those situations.

Q. Was the second shot on 17 the best shot you've hit this year on tour? I mean, can you think of a better shot, a pressure shot that you've hit that is better than that?

CHRIS KIRK: No, definitely not. I didn't -- I for some reason didn't even really think about it. It was people -- I think people sometimes make more of it than what it is. It was 140

yards, and it was a 9 iron. I was sitting right at the pin and nowhere else. That was my only thoughts. You know, so I knew I needed to keep making birdies and stay aggressive. It was a good club for me, 140 straight into the wind. So I hit a 9 iron around 150. So the wind was hurting just enough to make it a perfect club, and I knew it was a perfect club. So obviously that made me a little more comfortable being aggressive. I was trying to make it.

Q. I don't know where you have to get to the Masters, maybe the top 50 money list for the Masters next year. Are you thinking about that at all? This gets you inside, I think.

CHRIS KIRK: I'm not sure exactly how that works. No, I don't think about that kind of stuff. I'm a very, very just process oriented type of person, and I just try to play as well as I can every day and let the chips fall where they may.

Q. Chris, the big story locally is the future of this tournament, and if you would, just talk about this venue, this tournament, and what you think of it.

CHRIS KIRK: This is definitely one of my favorite courses of the year, and I think you'd hear a lot of other players say the same thing. This is a great classic golf course, and it's in incredible shape. Despite all the rain that we got this week, the greens were absolutely perfect and great speed to them, just were fantastic.

As far as the future of the tournament, I don't really know. My idea was to play it opposite the Masters, but I don't think the people at the Tour would necessarily agree with that. If you play the opposite week of the Masters, that's early on in the year. A lot of rookies such as myself and other players that may not necessarily have the best status that are really kind of itching to play that time of year. There's a lot of invitationals around that time, such as the Masters, obviously, a very short field, not a lot of guys get into there. Then you have Bay Hill and some of those other tournaments that even guys who finish top 125 on the money list the year before don't get in.

If you played it the week of the Masters, I know the Tour has somewhat of a policy against that, I guess. You would get a really strong field. You would get some really good weather here in Jackson. I mean, I personally think that it makes a whole lot of sense, but I'm not the one making any decisions.

Q. Chris, talk about your shot on -- I think tee shot on 15, within seven feet of the flag on the par 3. What did you use? Take me through it a little bit.

CHRIS KIRK: I hit a 9 iron on that shot. Yeah, the same -- my 9 iron pretty much won this for me, I guess. That was a very different situation. I believe it was 100 and -- I want to say 158 yards, something like that, which is a long ways for me to hit a 9 iron, and the wind was mostly off the right. I thought maybe just a tiny bit of help there.

So I just basically swung as hard as I could and ripped it, and it came off right at the flag, and I ended up in a really good spot.

Q. Anybody in town, family, friends, you know, anybody?

CHRIS KIRK: My aunt and uncle were here today. They were in Biloxi for the weekend just having fun, hanging out, and decided they would make the drive up to watch me today. Unfortunately, my wife is at home. We're in the process of moving. We're moving out of our condo next week and been doing a lot of renovations to a new house that we bought. So she's been at home for the last month or so kind of organizing that, working with our general contractor just to try to make sure everything goes well.

Q. When did you get married, and where do you live now?

CHRIS KIRK: I live on St. Simon's Island in Georgia, about an hour and a half north of Jacksonville. It's about -- I live about a mile from the golf course where the McGladrey Classic will be played this fall, Sea Island Golf Club.

I was married August 29th, two years ago this coming August. So almost for two years. And my wife travels with me pretty much everywhere, but like I said, it's just been a little different with all the stuff that she's having to deal with at home lately.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks a lot, Chris. Best of luck the rest of the year.

CHRIS KIRK: Thank you.

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