**2023 PGA TOUR – The CUT #10 (THE PLAYERS)**

COLD OPEN

ANNC - He’s taking some deep breaths coming up.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - You know you probably practice the five to ten footers for the win.

ANNC - Can he lag from 47 feet to win his first tournament, that is a tall order.

KITAYAMA SOT - I was definitely nervous.

ANNC - On the cusp of completing this incredible story of Bay Hill

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - Just tried to focus on speed, and that was it, and try and blank everything out besides that.

ANNC - Oh wow!

THE CUT TITLES

**WELCOME TO PGA TOUR THE CUT**

API LEGACY SETUP

HARRIS ENGLISH SOT - Arnold Palmer is kind of the grandfather of this tour and us, as tour players are all indebted to what he started to make this tour better for us.

WILL ZALATORIS SOT - He's our inspiration in our game. He was the gentleman of our sport. Everyone out here at this tournament this week feels his presence.

SHANE LOWRY SOT - If you talk to anyone who was involved in the game over the last 50 years, you know, they'll say Arnold Palmer was a game changer, he was the king.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER SOT - Having Mr. Palmer's name on it and being able to go back to a place that he loves so much and compete is very special for us as players.

ANNC - Arnie wants this place to play tough, he wanted the greens as hard as a rock. Outside of the four majors last year, Bay Hill played the hardest.

RORY MCILROY SOT - Bay Hill, and Arnold Palmer just so obviously synonymous with each other. He created a place here where, you know, the best players in the world could come and playa really elite golf tournament.

ANNC - What a finish for McIlroy!

ANNC - It is Jason Day, wire to wire.

ANNC - Congratulations. Thank you so much sir.

ANNC - That hat just hit the turf with authority!

ANNC- Again! At Bay Hill!

JON RAHM SOT - I learned why Tiger has had such success here. It's a ball-striker's

golf course. It is a golf course where I could tell Tiger could manage his way around.

ANNC - Tiger Woods has got win number 8 at Bay Hill!

MAX HOMA SOT - There's danger lurking everywhere. It tests quality of strike, it tests patience. As much as it tests your physical skills it tests your mental skills as well.

CAMERON YOUNG SOT - it's a place that you get to play against the best. Just kind of how he would want it to be. And it's always a great test of golf, which I know he would appreciate.

OPENING ROUNDS ACTION START

ANNC - We’re back in the Kingdom, and it’s never felt better. 43 of the top 50 players in the world have gathered at Arnold Palmer’s Bay Hill Club and Lodge. Even more in the spotlight as a designated event.

ANNC - John Rahm working on a who knows what kind of number today as he continues on this historic heater.

SOT JON RAHM - I felt like I played a pretty good round of golf. It’s just not easy. Those fairways are getting firmer and they’re not easy to hit.

ANNC - Three birdies in a row to start for Rahm.

JON RAHM SOT - Go through the round and you’ll see plenty of mistakes. Ha, lets say I minimized the mistakes and converted a couple situations into really good scores.

ANNC - Man what a show Jon Rahm put on today, seven under 65. Number one player in the world. He showed us all why today.

JON RAHM FIRE START

REPORTER SOT - When you’re firing on all cylinders, can anyone beat you in your mind?

JON RAHM SOT – No.

ANNC - There’s Jon Rahm, the hottest player on the planet who is back on top of the world at the number one position.

KEEGAN BRADLEY SOT - Jon Rahm's been an unbelievable player forever. So, you know, no one's surprised to see him doing what he's doing. Hits the ball great, drives it well, chips and putts it very well. You know when Jon Rahm tees it up, he's probably going to be at the top of the leaderboard.

MAX HOMA SOT - He's probably Thanos, he has a lot of the stones in his toolbox.

He's a tremendous golfer, he has zero weaknesses. He's been this dude for a long time. I think he's got the highest win percentage in the last X amount of years, he's got the highest top-10s by a mile. The guy's incredible.

ANNC - Nothing about the game has been a struggle for Jon Rahm, who’s won 5 of his last 9 worldwide. A Tiger-esque run.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER SOT: I got the win in Phoenix and then Jon went out the next week and beat me by a bunch of shots.

ANNC - And that’s three wins since January one. That’s crazy.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER SOT - Anytime you see a guy with that many wins out here, they’ve got an extremely competitive side to them, and it serves him well.

ANNC - 93 under par in his last 20 rounds of golf. That game travels everywhere.

**JON RAHM HAS LED THE COMCAST BUSINESS TOUR TOP 10 FOR SEVEN STRAIGHT WEEKS, AND FINISHED IN THE TOP TEN THREE OF THE LAST FOUR YEARS, WITH A CAREER BEST FIFTH COMING IN 2021.**

JON RAHM SOT - I kept on working on some things that I knew I needed to work on and kept focusing on the day-to-day grind with focus on the future that knowing that doing the little things right for a long time will eventually pay off. I've never had three PGA TOUR wins in a season and to do it this early on is incredible. I’m having the best season of my life and hopefully I can keep it going.

OPENING ROUNDS ACTION WRAP

ANNC - Well the winds have arrived at Bay Hill and as expected they have spiced up this second round of the Arnold Palmer invitational presented by Mastercard.

ANNC – Jon Rahm was out in even par, but problems on his second nine, big time.

JON RAHM SOT - It’s firm it’s fast it’s blowing 30 miles an hour. It’s a very difficult golf course.

ANNC – Kurt Kitayama biggest move of the day. He has zoomed up the leaderboard with these tough conditions. With rounds of 67 and 68. Nine under at the halfway point.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - I feel like when you get conditions like this it’s easy to kind of let things get away from you. For me it’s just keeping myself focused the entire way. You can’t let up at all.

ANNC - Back on 17, Jordan Spieth electing putter here just from the fringe, did he get it? Jordan Spieth right on the center of the flag stick. Birdie birdie for Spieth.

JORDAN SPIETH SOT - Sometimes it just takes one hole like that, where you’re like alright I know it’s in there let’s just keep pressing forward

ANNC - Just three back Jordan Spieth positioned nicely in just his second trip here to Bay Hill. Corey conners with a 66 today and Jon Rahm going from a 65 to 76 just like that. So there lining up, the stars align as we head to the weekend.

ARNOLD PALMER INBUMP

ANNC – Arnold Palmer currently playing at the peak of his powerful game. Has put together scores 64, 68, and 71 as he goes after his second straight Phoenix Open.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER SOT - He was such a special person, the way he treated the fans, the way he treated everyone that would come out watch him, Arnie’s army.

He was a special guy and he really embraced everything that goes with being a professional, he was kind of the ideal professional golfer for us, so he was somebody we always looked up to and try and emulate.

ANNC: Arnold Palmer.

ANNC - We embrace the enduring spirit of the man who’s love and respect for the game will never be forgotten.

AP OFFICE VISIT

Eric Cole - I think they just modernized it a little. Yeah. A little bit nicer. Yeah,

Sam Saunders - see it exactly like it was the same stuff on the wall. Yeah. Same chairs that you and I used to sit in right here and get yelled at for not winning every tournament. We played by my granddad here, he would just absolutely roast us if we would go play and whatever mini tour event it was, and, you know, we finished third or fourth, and he just, that was just not okay, which is great. That's how it should be like you should win. You know? Do you remember the first time we met?

Eric Cole - I do. Yeah. And we went and played, right?

Sam Saunders - Yeah. What did you think of me at that point? Well, I know what I thought of you.

Eric Cole - I didn't really know you. But everyone was like, Oh, you're really good. Yeah. And he's this great player. And I was like, Well, alright, I'd like to see how good he is. And

Sam Saunders - I didn't think there was any chance there was somebody that could beat me golf at that point. I think there's definitely a mutual respect for that. Yeah, mine. All right. He's legitimately good. And it was worse as you were like, the size of my leg at that point. And they still were just an absolute stud. The cool thing about Eric and I is we never sat here in these chairs and thought, wow, we're sitting across from Arnold Palmer, like he was, especially when we were in our early 20s. And we were living together and out here practicing every day he was he was like a buddy. Look at the loft of this two iron and then look at the loft of the driver and just think about modern equipment. I mean, that's a foreigner. Yeah, it is.

Eric Cole - It's got a tunnel off. Yeah. He took such great care and making sure everyone felt like he noticed them and that's something that I wasn't. And that was something that really stuck with me like Man, if I ever do anything in golf or in life I want my interactions to kind of make people feel the way he made him feel.

Sam Saunders - I think one of the coolest things now at the club since we redid the locker room, our club championships Yeah, right next to each other on the wall downstairs. Yeah, we're gonna have to go look at it to know exactly what happened hopefully we're gonna be on like major championship trophies together. But if nothing else, we got the wall in the locker room in Bay Hill.

Eric Cole - that's kind of cool. This is the year where both of us play

Sam Saunders **-** okay. I had a good year. Oh six. I peaked I peaked at golf at oh six literally the best I've ever played in my life. Pretty cool to have it on. It is cool though. I just I love that back to back years right there. We're good.

Eric Cole – We just need to move our names from this wall over to the wall with our Oh yeah,

Sam Saunders - that's true. We need that. Yeah, a little different. One would be all right. Maybe a big trophy someday that would be good.

SERVPRO

**THE CUT PRESENTS, RAPID RECOVERY**

**AFTER AN OPENING ROUND 74, SPONSOR EXEMPTION PIERCESON COODY SAT OUTSIDE THE CUTLINE WITH A BOGEY ON FRIDAY’S FIRST HOLE. COODY RESPONDED WITH 4 BIRDIES TO MAKE THE WEEKEND, WHERE HE CAPITALIZED ON THE OPPORTUNITY.**

ANNC - Pierceson Coody, a birdie putt rolling along beautifully today. Unbelievable round here from Pierceson to shoot six under today.

PIERCESON COODY SOT - That five-under on the front nine was awesome. It gave me an opportunity to shoot a great score like I did.

RORY MCILROY - The fact that Pierceson's you know here and made the cut and then goes out and shoots 66 and all of a sudden, he finds himself in the golf tournament.

**WITH A SATURDAY 66 AND A SUNDAY 73, COODY FINISHED IN A TIE FOR 14TH IN JUST HIS FOURTH PGA TOUR START.**

PIERCESON COODY SOT - I just don't think there's anything to lose and everything to gain. You're playing on the PGA TOUR. It's just such a cool experience for me, I couldn't be happier just to be playing.

THE CUT REJOIN

THIRD ROUND ACTION

ANNC - We are set up for what should be a scintillating Saturday just the way Mr. Palmer envisioned it.

ANNC - Golf’s biggest names are suddenly just rising to the top here at Bay Hill.

NAT – Good luck

ANNC - Total green light for Rory, swinging great. And he has got a spring in his step. It’s one of the great sights in golf isn’t it? Rory with confidence.

RORY MCILROY SOT - Anytime you can go bogey-free on the weekend at Bay Hill you're doing something right. Got myself right into the tournament, into the thick of things for tomorrow.

ANNC: “And there is the 36-hole leader, Kurt Kitayama. He’s been a runner up three times in his career. Big weekend ahead for Kurt Kitayama.

KITAYAMA SATURDAY BREAKOUT

REPORTER SOT - You played some golf at home with Kurt. He's put himself up there in some tough tournaments. What's he like?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE SOT - We call him Quadzilla or the Quadfather. He's got really big legs. So, I call him Quadz with a Z at the end. He's a good dude.

TAYLOR MONTGOMERY SOT - I have a lot of stories about Kurt. But he's been one of my best friends ever since I met him at UNLV. And I mean, the kid is the nicest guy you'll ever meet.

NATS - Look at this guy with the shoes, it’s like he’s a wannabe Michael Jordan. You counting? It’s actually pretty good form!

TAYLOR MONTGOMERY SOT - He definitely will win one of these times soon. Back home we call him Houdini because he just pulls stuff out of his hat all the time just chipping and making some bombs on the golf course and I love the guy.

BRAD FAXON SOT - I played with him in a fun event in Cabo San Lucas, and watching him now, he's got tremendous arm and hand speed through the ball. And he's in contention every week. And when I asked him four years ago, what do you have to do to get better? He goes just feel more comfortable on the golf course. He sure looks more and more comfortable.

ANNC - Tell you what, give it up for Kurt Kitayama. That’s his third second place finish on the PGA TOUR.

DOUG FERGUSON - I think if there's any stage fright, he would have gotten over that. Just by who’s played. In all those tournaments, he didn't do anything wrong, somebody played better and that's gonna give him a lot of confidence.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE SOT - He's a really good player and he hangs tough and he's got a good head on his shoulders. So not surprised to see him up there on the leaderboard.

ANNC – No one better than Kurt Kitayama, second at 11. He’s made just two bogeys in his first two rounds. Bogeyed his final hole yesterday on the ninth which is a tough hole, nearly holed that one out.

TAYLOR MONTGOMERY SOT – The way he's playing he's definitely buying dinner next week. That's for sure. Free meal next week on Kurt.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - I think I owe him. I owe him from a little practice round, I think. But, yeah, we have good fun. I think that we have a good friendship. I'm glad to treat him.

THIRD ROUND ACTION WRAP

ANNC - Kurt Kitayama has begun his day with three straight pars but has ran into some big trouble here at the fourth. Hit his tee shot out of bounds.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - One loose swing and I’m two over…bogey on nine, you know it’s just tough. But really proud of how I was able to fight back to even.

ANNC - Kitayama for birdie, and a chance to make it pay anyway. Maybe that’s the igniter that Kitayama was looking for.

ANNC - And that is nine under and your 54-hole leader. Comes home with four birdies on his second nine. What a way to finish.

ANNC - Hovland putting on a clinic today. 16 out of 17 greens, and the one green he missed he holed out from the bunker.

VIKTOR HOVLAND SOT - When I hit the ball my best I think I can separate myself in these conditions. If I make some putts I can shoot a low score.

ANNC - Just when we were talking about Jon Rahm being the best player in the world and no one could ever beat him, look at Scottie Scheffler, nuh uh. That is 4 birdies in his last 6 holes, Scheffler has gone just one off the lead.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER SOT - I'm sure Viktor's looking to beat me this year and I'm looking to do the same. So many talented players out there and it should be a really fun battle.

ANNC - Everybody who’s anybody on this PGA TOUR right now has got a chance. A mega challenge for these guys tomorrow to try to pull off this championship.

FANDUEL FEATURE

**HERE’S A LOOK AT THE FAVORITES IN THE SEASON-LONG RACE FOR THE FEDEXCUP**

**RORY MCILROY IS LOOKING TO DEFEND HIS TITLE AND WIN A RECORD FOURTH FEDEXCUP. HE SITS INSIDE THE TOP 10 THANKS TO A SECOND STRAIGHT WIN AT THE CJ CUP.**

ANNC - Rory arrived as the favorite, he’ll leave Congaree with the trophy.

**A RED HOT START TO THE SEASON HAS JON RAHM IN PRIME POSITION FOR A FIRST CAREER FEDEXCUP TITLE, WITH A TRIO OF VICTORIES UNDER HIS BELT IN 2023.**

ANNC - Last player to win 4 times in a calendar year before April 1st, the great Johnny Miller back in 1974, so Rahm is in rarified air.

**LAST SEASON’S RUNNER-UP SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER HAS CONTINUED HIS STRONG PLAY EARLY THIS SEASON, INCLUDING A TITLE DEFENSE IN THE DESERT.**

ANNC - Scottie Scheffler is again the champion in Phoenix.

**RAHM, MCILROY AND SCHEFFLER HAVE ALL HELD THE TITLE OF WORLD NUMBER ONE THIS SEASON, AND MATCH THAT** **POSITION IN THE CURRENT ODDS TO CAPTURE THE ULTIMATE PRIZE.**

PACIFIC LIFE PLAYERS PREVIEW

**TOURNAMENT INSIGHTS FOR THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP…**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER SOT - You've just seen it so much on TV growing up watching the players because it's our biggest event. It's a dream come true just to be in that field and, you know, be able to play the 17th hole.

SAHITH THEEGALA SOT - There's a special aura around the tournament and around the golf course. We know it's our championship and almost pretty much a fifth major it feels like, so we all know the importance of it, and it definitely feels different.

**THE 49TH EDITION OF THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP BOASTS THE STRONGEST FIELD IN GOLF WITH 28 OF THE TOP 30 GOLFERS IN THE WORLD TEEING IT UP, AND IT MARKS THE FOURTH DESIGNATED EVENT IN A FIVE WEEK SPAN.**

BILLY HORSCHEL SOT - Guys’ game should be really sharp. You're going to see, I think, a very stacked leaderboard at a course that is very challenging.

ANNC - The finish line so hard to reach…the water down the right of 16, you know the water surrounding all of 17, and it’s constantly on your side and on your mind down 18.

**WITH MORE THAN HALF THE WATER BALLS COMING IN THE FINAL THREE HOLES, THE FIELD MUST HANDLE THE PRESSURE DOWN THE STRETCH TO BECOME A PLAYERS CHAMPION.**

FINAL ROUND FEATURE

ANNC API SETUP: It is another hot one in Orlando Florida at Arnold Palmer’s Bay Hill club and lodge and in this final round some players on this stellar leaderboard are heating up as well.

ANNC - Now Jordan Spieth from beyond the green on five and he jars it, that’s his fourth birdie today and now he’s tied for the lead.

ANNC - Kitayama fourth shot and this is really cutting right gonna miss it to the right, oh boy. This ninth hole has cost a lot of players. He’s gonna have to settle for triple bogey.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - I still felt comfortable. I didn't feel out of place. It was just one bad swing.

ANNC - It’ll give Spieth and Hatton a co-lead and you’ve got all those other guys below McIlroy, Scheffler who might of thought they could be out of it, not anymore.

ANNC - This to get him into first place and his first birdie on this hole. He’s done it, McIlroy jumps into a tie for the lead, four birdies in the last five.

RORY MCILRORY SOT - I certainly felt it on the golf course, so I'm sure it was pretty good to watch and it was great to be involved with.

ANNC - Harris English who has made 13 straight pars, that for birdie that curls in on 14. So Harris English joins the group

ANNC- Jordan Spieth catches the right edge gets to ten under par and takes the solo lead.

ANNC - He needs this one for the share of the lead and gets it. Five-way tie for the lead. What a battle this is turning out to be watching these guys.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT- You know who is near the top and you can't ignore it. You got to know where you're at and you know who is there and just embrace the whole situation, I guess.

ANNC - It never broke, look at the disbelief. Three bogeys in the last four holes for Jordan Spieth as he falls out of the lead.

ANNC - Kitayama for his birdie putt to take the outright lead. Kurt Kitayama heading over to 18 with a one-shot lead.

ANNC - We got two guys on 18 with a chance to get to nine under par. From 18 and half feet to take the lead by himself.

ANNC- And Rory has seen this putt a lot of times over his lifetime here at Bay Hill and he knows this will give him the lead again. Nope always to the right.

ANNC - You work your whole life for this chance. He might just pour it in, oh wow. Step aside all you superstars Kitayama is in the winners circle finally.

FEDEXCUP STANDINGS

**KITAYAMA’S BREAKTHROUGH WIN AT BAY HILL MOVES HIM TO SIXTH IN THE FEDEXCUP STANDINGS, CAPPING AN IMPRESSIVE RISE FOR THE 30-YEAR OLD.**

ROLLOUT

ANNC - He rules Arnie’s Kingdom now after taking down all this firepower on this leaderboard.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - From what I've learned in the past few years and being in these situations. I've been able to control how I feel a lot better. You got to let it go.

ANNC - All those teammates watching that were on his UNLV team, they really nursed him through, they nicknamed him The Project.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - When I got into school I was struggling, but the guys at the course saw me everyday grinding, just working hard and that’s kind of why they nicknamed me that.

NATS - Congrats, happy for you, well done.

KURT KITAYAMA SOT - Finding those little successes around the world and making it out here, putting myself in contention, you start to really believe in yourself.