Production Transcript for REWIND\_24ZOZO\_ECHAVARRIA\_1.mp3

[00:00:28] >> The PGA TOUR is proud to bring you the FedExCup Fall, now coverage of the 2024 Zozo Championship.

[00:00:41] >> From Chiba, Japan at first-round coverage of the Zozo Championship. Mount Fuji rising more than 12,000 feet above the ground. It's a volcano which has been dormant since its last eruption back in 1707. On a clear day driving to the course this week, you can catch a glimpse of Mount Fuji, Downtown Tokyo, and Tokyo Bay, which actually connects to the Pacific Ocean, and this, the most populated area in all of Japan; Tokyo actually the biggest city in the world, including the metro area population of more than 38 million people. About 25 miles to the northeast in Chiba you'll find the Accordia Golf Narashino Country Club, a 36-hole facility on the eastern coast of the main island of Japan. This week we'll have a composite 18, one nine from each course testing this 78-man field. Let's take a spin through these early highlights. We'll start with Justin Thomas making his second appearance in this event. Began his day on the 10th, this is 11 for birdie.

[00:01:40] >> Yes, slippery putt here from just above the hole. And how about this track, and these greens running 12 to 12-1/2 from above the hole. You have to beat the sites. Beautiful putt there for JT.

[00:01:51] >> Circle on the cart for JT, 1-under after 2. Hideki Matsuyama next hole at the 12th had bogeyed 11 trying to bounce back.

[00:01:58] >> Yes, big tee shot here at the long par 4. It's pinned kind of in the back left corner today. Takes dead aim at that, just above the hole and he was able to make that for birdie.

[00:02:08] >> Matsuyama leveling the score card through 3. Let's spin it to the front side. Morikawa beginning his title defense the right way on the opening hole.

[00:02:16] >> Yes, perfect tee shot on 1, and then this lovely wedge shot in there picking up right where he left off last year after that record-setting performance. Tap-in birdie there at the 1st.

[00:02:25] >> Min Woo Lee par 3 3rd.

[00:02:28] >> Yes, and how is this to get your day started, even through the first two holes, par 3 3rd today.

[00:02:34] >> Just a short iron for these guys.

[00:02:36] >> He takes dead aim at that one as well, tap-in birdie.

[00:02:39] >> Min Woo Lee flagging it up on the green. Rickie Fowler different looking wand, but the putter heating up.

[00:02:46] >> Yes, you can see this track. And great angle from behind the hole here. And that thing was dead center in every -- missing.

[00:02:53] >> Fowler 1-under through 3 as well. More from Justin Thomas on the back side on 17.

[00:03:01] >> And yes, again from just above the hole. And you get it above these holes and it's tough. And you see that trickling just in the right side. Nice catch by the hole and great start for Justin Thomas.

[00:03:10] >> Let's take a peek at the board. And it's the sixth edition of the Zozo Championship. Four-under the co-leaders Nico Echavarria and Kevin Yu are each at 4-under par. Then you see 3-under. And that fills until the bottom of our board.

[00:03:27] >> Let's head back out to the action at the 7th.

[00:03:30] >> Morikawa trying to bounce back. Nasty 7th on the previous hole.

[00:03:36] >> Got to get it just up and over that little ridge short of the hole. And he's done just that. Beautiful tee shot. And that's how you rebound from a double.

[00:03:45] >> Out to Max Greyserman at 16 with a birdie putt for the solo lead.

[00:03:50] >> Greyserman emerges from the pack. He's now at 5-under par, standing clear from the rest of the field.

[00:03:59] >> Morikawa to make his birdie at 7 after that really good tee shot. And a nice bounce back. He's got some work to do.

[00:04:08] >> Sam Stevens approach into 17.

[00:04:15] >> What a golf shot in there. That's got to be the best one at 17 all day.

[00:04:20] >> Matsuyama at 3 to pull back to even par.

[00:04:25] >> Threes by PGA TOUR standards, pretty gettable. And there's one for Hideki.

[00:04:32] >> One of the best iron players in the game. Let's watch Collin Morikawa at the par 3, 16th.

[00:04:43] >> Did you know that was going to happen, George?

[00:04:45] >> I mean, it wasn't too hard to call. I mean, you've got a guy who routinely leads the PGA TOUR in iron play.

[00:04:51] >> Shimizu on the 18th.

[00:04:53] >> Got to force the lay-up here. But this is a pretty accessible wedge shot. Green kind of tilts back to front back there, so you can be aggressive.

[00:05:02] >> Little twirl from Shimizu.

[00:05:05] >> Not the nice way to finish the day, stress-free birdie at the 18th.

[00:05:11] >> Just about how close he hit it here. Stevens for the birdie.

[00:05:15] >> Yes.

[00:05:16] >> And his second appearance for the Zozo Championship.

[00:05:21] >> Greyserman, this is his third shot at the 18.

[00:05:27] >> He's been pretty accessible. Everything kind of back to front from where this pin is, so it's going to be pretty aggressive.

[00:05:37] >> Beautiful play.

[00:05:40] >> Morikawa on 16, after that gorgeous iron shot.

[00:05:46] >> And there's red figures for Collin, and just kind of going about his business.

[00:05:53] >> Taylor Moore with his 3rd at 9; his last hole of the day.

[00:06:04] >> And have a chance to save par.

[00:06:09] >> Can Eric Cole finish on a high note, eagle putt on 18.

[00:06:12] >> Here and there.

[00:06:13] >> You got it.

[00:06:15] >> Nice.

[00:06:16] >> Six-under 64 for Eric Cole. Seeing some really good scoring so far today.

[00:06:25] >> Over at 9 Taylor Moore, to finish off what would be a very good round. And that is a 63, lowest opening round of his career on the PGA TOUR, has him at the top of the leaderboard here day one.

[00:06:40] >> That's Taylor Moore in that top spot. And we have Max Greyserman, Nico Echavarria, and Eric Cole all one shot back.

[00:06:48] >> Round two is next.

[00:06:57] >> The Accordia Golf Narashino Country Club hosting the Zozo Championship. Players have been raving about how good a shape this course is in. We have softer conditions for today's second round, so guys can take it low today. Let's take a spin through some of the early second round highlights. Hideki Matsuyama trying to get it going on the 2nd.

[00:07:17] >> Yes, you see this front pin, big high finish trying to bring this ball in high and soft to this front right pin; and he's able to do just that. Kick-in birdie at the 2nd to get his round going.

[00:07:28] >> Matsuyama back to even for the Zozo Championship. Xander Schauffele sluggish Thursday with a 73. Different story today.

[00:07:36] >> Yes, tough pin to get to here at the 16th; tucked on that right side. And this is one way to make a deuce.

[00:07:42] >> Schauffele started his day on the 10th already 3-under on that side, back to even for the week. Those guys looking up the leaderboard at this man, Taylor Moore rolling it on the 5th for birdie.

[00:07:56] >> Yes, and when you have a lead in the PGA TOUR event, usually it's because of this club, and I mean a big swinger left to right, right in the middle, must feel good.

[00:08:06] >> Moore would go to birdie the 6th as well, get to 10-under par, and having another birdie in his crosshairs on the 8th.

[00:08:13] >> Yes, just dead center. Again, I mean, he's feeling it with that wand right now and he's got to keep that going here the next three days.

[00:08:21] >> Here's the leaderboard. And Moore the only player in the field double digits under par at 11-under. Two-shot lead over last year's runner-up, Eric Cole, playing nicely once again. He's 3-under through 12 today. Cole at 9-under, solo second. Couple players had 8-under par, Max Greyserman, Nico Echavarria. Ryosuke Kinoshita from the Japan Golf Tour at 6-under par inside the top ten. Ricky Fowler among those in the top ten at 5-under, 3-under on the round.

[00:08:49] >> To the 2nd, Fowler in there tied for birdie.

[00:08:53] >> Yes, and he's just so solid on these putts. See how still he is; very nice. And he's got a good round going here this morning.

[00:09:02] >> Fowler kicking it into gear.

[00:09:05] >> Let's welcome in Tom Abbott.

[00:09:06] >> Thank you, George. This is Kevin Yu on the par 3. Not long par 3s here; gettable holes, at least 146 yards today. And there you go.

[00:09:19] >> Yu would tap in for birdie.

[00:09:21] >> I talked to Mattie Minister, that's JT's caddie, and he said he made a couple of putts earlier which gave him some confidence. But he's been dry so far today. This one should move left and straight and up around the hole.

[00:09:35] >> He was just waiting for the cameras, Craig. Birdie there for Thomas; first one on the round. He's 5-under. Eric Cole a hole ahead on the 6th, his third to the par 5.

[00:09:50] >> It's tough to hit this fairway, so a lot of guys will end up laying up here.

[00:09:55] >> Oh, ooh, that took a serious look at it.

[00:09:59] >> Cole converted this birdie putt to move to 10-under par.

[00:10:03] >> Min Woo Lee on the 4th, couple under par.

[00:10:07] >> Just played last event at the Macau Open, was his title defense; had a top ten finish. When he won it a year ago, was 30-under for the week.

[00:10:19] >> Wow, Min Woo, heating up. Clean card today, 2-under on the round. Fowler's third. Nicely done at 6.

[00:10:37] >> Very nicely done, wide open blade, but kind of drags it in there low with some spin; beautiful.

[00:10:44] >> You see Eric Cole tapped in for birdie. He's a co-leader at 10-under behind Cole, Chan Kim for eagle. Can he go from black to red? Oh, you bet. From downtown Chan Kim goes from 1-over to 1-under. Saw Fowler play his 3rd. Can he pay it off?

[00:11:09] >> Ooh, that's really confident with that putter in his hand right now.

[00:11:15] >> How about the birdie run by Fowler; one, two at 6 now. Justin Thomas's second. Craig, what makes an approach uncomfortable when you can't see the bottom of the stick?

[00:11:27] >> Yes, it's all about depth perception, in my opinion. You know, to Graham's point you can't go long. These greens are very receptive. It's all about spin control. Seven weeks off since he last played, so it's sort of the old debate about competition versus rest, but he's always chomping at the bit to compete. This just from 75 yards.

[00:11:54][ Applause ]

[00:12:00] >> And it's Justin Thomas.

[00:12:04] >> Yes, he's certainly got a good viewpoint from watching Si Woo's come up the green. Again, should move ever so slightly to his right plate. Hit it firm enough, you take it all out of play.

[00:12:21] >> What a start to the back side for Justin Thomas.

[00:12:29] >> Max Greyserman has a chance for a birdie here to tie the lead at 3rd. Yes, very well done. So it's a two there. And we've got there players tied at the top at 10-under.

[00:12:42] >> Six birdies through his first wall poles.

[00:12:47] >> First time we're seeing Seamus Power today on the 14th.

[00:12:54] >> Filling it up for birdie. How about that run that Seamus Power is on, hot out of the gates, birdies on 4, 5, 6, and 7. Second shot for Ricky Fowler, one hole back on the 8th; one he can be aggressive with.

[00:13:11] >> Yes, that pin just over that bunker, but he's got about 7 short. Nicely done below the hole.

[00:13:18] >> Over at the 7th, Xander Schauffele.

[00:13:25] >> Wow, that is pretty. Little run; he's kind of making his way back 5-under par. Today was just a couple to play. The 8th is a birdie hole; you get that tee shot in the fairway.

[00:13:38] >> Ricky Fowler to pull it in 2; this for birdie on 8th.

[00:13:41] >> The other guy just -- like I said, looks so comfortable, just nice and relaxed over that putter.

[00:13:50] >> Put this putter in the bag back at the Sanderson Farms. Paying dividends right now, Graham.

[00:13:57] >> Yes, it sure is. And I mean you just -- you can just see the confidence as he's standing over the putt. It just looks like he's going to make everything right now.

[00:14:06] >> Seamus Power sandwiched in the middle at the par-3 16th. Flagging it.

[00:14:18] >> Just outside the circle of friends for Seamus Power.

[00:14:21] >> Yes, what a great look. That's got to be just inside right; beautiful.

[00:14:26] >> Two on the 16th. Power 8-under par.

[00:14:30] >> That's three in a row, 14, 15, and 16.

[00:14:37] >> Justin Thomas on the tee at the 13th. Going to walk back to this tee. It's kind of in the corner of the property here. Just 146 yards today, nothing but just a smooth pitching wedge for these guys. Look at that.

[00:14:57] >> Thomas would convert for birdie.

[00:14:59] >> Fowler to finish off at the 9th. Good round of golf. Seamus Fowler out on the golf course at 7-under par. Ricky posts 6-under, a round of 64 today. He's in the hunt here to win the Zozo Championship this weekend.

[00:15:18] >> Back to the front side, Greyserman birdies his 6th with a stem to tie it after going bogey double on 4 and 5.

[00:15:28] >> Matsuyama's third from the fairway at 14th.

[00:15:30] >> Yes, 93 yards. Just do not want to go long here with that little thumbprint beyond the flag.

[00:15:44] >> Good one for Matsuyama.

[00:15:46] >> Let's go to number six. How about the move Nico Echavarria is making, 6-under on the round. And he's grabbed the lead.

[00:15:55] >> Good angle there to that right pin, and very well judged. Little tumbler back there. He's got about four feet for birdie.

[00:16:04] >> Matsuyama past champion of this event back in 2021.

[00:16:18] >> Should be a kick-in for Echavarria on the 6th. Nico Echavarria opening things up at 12-under. He's now leading by two. On the 16th green Justin Thomas. You got a beat on what this birdie putt's going to do, Craig?

[00:16:39] >> It's going to move a lot from left to right, really the entirety of the way there. Tough to get to match the line with the piece. Swing it a lot.

[00:16:55] >> Darting right. Flies it by with a cut. Justin Thomas at 8-under. He's been playing such patient, smart ball; driving it nicely. Obviously he's been putting great for the last two days, and he finds himself right in the mix.

[00:17:12] >> And on the other side at the 9th, Echavarria. Does he have another birdie in him?

[00:17:23] >> Some great playing for two days, 12-under par on this golf course. So demanding off the tee. They've got that tough stretch in the middle, and he's done pretty well through two rounds, George.

[00:17:34] >> Yes, he's been going lights out 64, 64 Echavarria; 12-under 128 for two rounds. That's a scorching start. Couldn't be in a better spot if you're Justin Thomas.

[00:17:49] >> Yes, you could not walk it down and drop it in a better spot; 209 front, 214, little helping birdies. I think from this spot you feel like three is in play here, the eagle, the last shoot 64. And a good-looking shot if it's enough to help.

[00:18:15] >> He's posing.

[00:18:16] >> Incredible 2nd from Justin Thomas.

[00:18:22][ Applause ]

[00:18:30] >> If this goes in, then Justin Thomas really making his presence felt on the first page of the leaderboard.

[00:18:36] >> Yes, no question. And I mean, you know he wants to be in that final group tomorrow. There's no question about that. And puts a little bit extra pressure on Echavarria and Moore in that final group, too knowing, you know, one of the best players in the world is hot on their heels.

[00:18:51] >> And Graham stared at the leaderboard to get an idea of exactly where he was and what this would mean. If you look at the top of the leaderboard no one that has won a lot, even at all. For a guy that's won 15 times he's got a bit of a presence to him.

[00:19:17] >> Thomas for eagle. What a day by Justin Thomas.

[00:19:23] >> Attaboy, JT.

[00:19:27] >> A 64; he's now at 10-under, tied for second with Moore, two back of Echavarria. Watch out this weekend.

[00:19:35] >> After two rounds in Japan, Nico Echavarria sits atop the board with Taylor Moore and Justin Thomas two spots behind. Round three is next.

[00:19:49] >> We are into the weekend at the Zozo Championship. Another pleasant day here in Japan, bit overcast, temperatures in the mid 70s. We've seen good scoring conditions with the field on a record-setting pace through 36 holes. Can they keep it up and take it deep for Saturday's third round? George Savaricas, Graham DeLaet looking at some of the early highlights. How about the defending champ, Collin Morikawa, from distance on the 4th?

[00:20:11] >> Yes, needs to make a big move today if he wants to get himself in contention. Putts like that definitely help; up and over the big ridge there at the 4th to that back left pin.

[00:20:21] >> Starting the day Ricky Fowler was four back going into the third round on the 2nd for birdie.

[00:20:26] >> Yes, we talked about how good this putter looks in Ricky's hands right now putting with so much confidence. Could he be a guy to make the big move today?

[00:20:33] >> Fowler making a lot of putts early going. Justin Thomas in the final group, making a statement on the 1st.

[00:20:39] >> Yes, "statement" is right. I mean, right out of the gates, this thing didn't leave the flagstick, right below the hole, perfect place to lead from. He'd make that for birdie, right out of the gates.

[00:20:49] >> A birdie on 1. Thomas to go back to back on 2.

[00:20:52] >> Yes, we talked about how a fast start would be crucial for JT. And look at that, that putter also looks so good in his hands right now. He's been putting lights out so far this week.

[00:21:02] >> Thomas to 12-under par with his share of the lead, and living right on the 4th his second shot.

[00:21:08] >> Yes, definitely some luck involved here. I mean, for this ball to skip up over, it's about an 18-inch little ledge to get up and over. And not only that, coming out of the rough with that ball knuckling, for it to skip like that, very, very fortunate for JT.

[00:21:21] >> Thomas, all I can do is smile. When it's your week, it's your week to get up and down for par. Right now he leads by one over 36-hole leader Nico Echavarria. Seamus Power also off to a quick start, couple under today. He's one back. Up to 7.

[00:21:37] >> Here's Ricky for the birdie.

[00:21:44] >> Oh, yes, that's just perfect; right in the middle at perfect speed. And he's been doing that all week, and that putter looks good.

[00:21:55] >> Beau Hossler, he knocked it into the penalty area, so he had this for his par. That's one way to make it through. How about that?

[00:22:05] >> Nico Echavarria, the only guy to find the fairway off this sixth tee in the final group. And he's in prime position now after two, Craig.

[00:22:13] >> Yes, that was pretty sweet driver off the deck and, you know, all the focus is obviously on JT. And Tom Abbott talked about it's been two and a half years since he's won both of these players. Nico and Taylor Moore have won more recently than Justin, both winning in 2023. Pretty simple pitch here, one you would expect to get very close.

[00:22:36] >> Yes, exactly that, Craig, tap-in birdie for Nico here.

[00:22:42] >> To CT Pan on the tee at the 7th, third easiest green to hit on the golf course here with Narashino players. Really trying to take advantage of the par 3s. There you go.

[00:22:56] >> That would lead to a birdie for Pan. Over to the 8th. Echavarria.

[00:23:02] >> Green tilted back towards you here in just 99 yards for Nico. And this one is carrying deep. Is it going to spin back?

[00:23:12] >> Nicely done by the leader.

[00:23:15] >> Yes, very steep there. You can see that big divot puts a little bit of extra spin on it; uses that slope. Perfect.

[00:23:23] >> This is Greyserman's second at the 9th. Just looking at the stats, only one player had a 12 and has bound a green from the right rough. So it's just that was crucial that he wasn't in the long stuff there.

[00:23:38] >> Echavarria had a two-shot lead coming into the third round and he's once again too clear of the rest of the field at the Zozo Championship.

[00:23:48] >> Out to the 9th, and Greyserman for a birdie. Hasn't played since the BMW Championship, so it was the first time he's taken that lengthy of a break without being injured. And maybe it was a good thing.

[00:24:03] >> Par-3 16th, Ryo Ishikawa has been kind of in the front right corner. Something just below the hole would be ideal. Anything right is trouble.

[00:24:13] >> Wow, what a shot. Ishikawa.

[00:24:19] >> Birdie putt here for the leader, Echavarria.

[00:24:22] >> Yes, and Graham, you mentioned he's leading the field on approach. He was third in the field through 36 holes in putting, so nice combination. And not a difficult one here, gently downhill, moving slightly left around the hole. Good chance.

[00:24:40] >> Wow, he's on --

[00:24:41] >> He really is in good form. He's got to keep it going, though, that's the key. But right now he looks very comfortable at the top of the leaderboard.

[00:24:50] >> Opening for Thomas at the 10th.

[00:24:52] >> At the strength of his game, 104; so effectively playing 108, 109. Perfect lie on the fairway. These are always the fairways, and they are prepared magnificently. And looks to be the right number.

[00:25:14] >> Yes, perfect judge of distance. That birdie pushes Justin Thomas to 13-under par.

[00:25:19] >> So here's Takumi Kanaya, a man who's won seven times on the Japan Golf Tour, including a few weeks ago at the ACN Championship.

[00:25:29] >> Oh, wow. Unreal. That's just so close to going in.

[00:25:39] >> JT.

[00:25:40] >> Green light here, Tom, 7-iron 188. He can just hit a gentle fade, knowing that that cannot go long. You certainly don't want to go over this green. He's been in complete control of the golf swing and distance with the irons. Beautiful-looking shot, if it's the right one.

[00:26:01] >> Yes, it is.

[00:26:04] >> Seriously happy at the -- show, wasn't he?

[00:26:06] >> And perfectly right below the hole there as well, so great look.

[00:26:10] >> Greyserman trickled to the intermediate cut at 12.

[00:26:14] >> Got a little sawed-off finish. Yes, beautiful.

[00:26:18] >> The birdie putt would fall, moving Greyserman to 12-under.

[00:26:24] >> Out to 11.

[00:26:25] >> Echavarria for a par at 300 on the round with the bogey. This would be probably the most important if he could make this one after the wise decision downhill breaking right.

[00:26:38] >> Well, it was a good roll. We had a perfect angle from right in behind. A little less speed obviously would have fallen or just picking a little bit less break off the line.

[00:26:48] >> It's going to be his second bogey of the day, but after he made a bogey at the 4th.

[00:26:55] >> Could be a two-stroke swing here.

[00:26:57] >> Yes, but he went on a tear after he made his bogey on the front 9, so we'll see. Yes, he mentioned that potential swing at the top of the leaderboard. This is the birdie putt for Justin Thomas.

[00:27:12] >> He's got to be in a great frame of mind, Tom, they've either gone in or they've looked like they should. This one pretty much just up the hill. Could carry it with enough pace so that you don't give the hole away.

[00:27:31] >> Yes, he's got it.

[00:27:32] >> So we've got a tie at the top. It wasn't that long ago that Echavarria was edging ahead for the comfortable lead. And now they are tied at 14-under.

[00:27:44] >> Here's where Fowler ended up on the 14th, his third.

[00:27:48] >> Yes, much easier from that rock. You can kind of get something tumbling. That's pretty well done. Below the hole there, you've got about eight, ten feet.

[00:27:56] >> Again, Ricky within three. Cruise up to the closing hole. What a day for Nate Lashley. Well, it's another circle on the card. And he gets it. Lashley wake up Sunday with a chance to win the Zozo Championship next to a 63.

[00:28:19] >> Fowler staring down a birdie putt on 14.

[00:28:23] >> Yes, it's one of those up and downs where it kind of almost takes two good shots to get up and in from there. Well done from Ricky. And he's got a nice little chance here as well sneaking back into this.

[00:28:34] >> Greyserman with a second to the 15th.

[00:28:41] >> That ball just hanging a little bit below his feet makes that little wedge shot a little bit more difficult. He's probably overcorrected for it slightly.

[00:28:52] >> Greyserman coming back down the green on 15 for birdie. It was quick. Oh, it looks really good.

[00:28:57] >> And puts him within one of the lead.

[00:29:04] >> Lengthy eagle putt for the co-leader Thomas back on 14, correct?

[00:29:07] >> Yes, this green is like an upside down kettle chip. There are all sorts of ripples, and bumps, and humps, and shallowed-out areas. Yes, he's got to stay right here. If he misjudges it, it could go awfully wrong here. Yes, I'm thinking he's thinking side five feet would be wonderful.

[00:29:30] >> Well, much like Ricky Fowler needed two good shots to get up and down, I think it takes two good putts from here, one great one.

[00:29:36] >> Seventy-eight feet the distance.

[00:29:40] >> Putt. Putt. Well done.

[00:29:42] >> Can be a little fidgety at times, can't he, a little twitchy; but he does look rather calm over it.

[00:29:56] >> We had to learn he was going to be high on that putter sitting so still on the ground and rolling perfect on these greens.

[00:30:03] >> Thomas to 15-under par; kicking it into gear 5-under today.

[00:30:13] >> Edgy birdie here for the 2nd.

[00:30:15] >> One thirty seven, little upslope. Pretty accessible flag here, Tom. And he's got it on line from that upslope if it's the right number.

[00:30:24] >> Starting it down. Wow, yes. Really goes down and gets these balls, especially with his short arms, doesn't he, Craig?

[00:30:32] >> Yes, it's pretty impressive.

[00:30:35] >> Echavarria converted that birdie to move into a tie for the lead.

[00:30:40] >> This is the third shot for Kevin Yu. Had his first PGA TOUR winner earlier this Fall in that play-off at the Sanderson Farms.

[00:30:50] >> Sometimes on those long bunker shots, it's an advantage to be on that little bit of a downslope, but how well played is that?

[00:31:01] >> Taylor three over on the round today, so just looking for something; maybe finish 244, get a little spot for tomorrow.

[00:31:11] >> First leg done. That's a 2 at 16.

[00:31:18] >> Kevin Yu to get within four of Thomas and Echavarria.

[00:31:23][ Applause ]

[00:31:28] >> They could have a shot on Sunday. To the 18th, adventure us all for Ricky Fowler. Tee shot was in the tree, so played his 2nd up the 9th fairway; try and give himself enough space to carry these trees with his 3rd.

[00:31:43] >> The difficulty is getting the proper number as a caddy and a player. But pretty acceptable there.

[00:31:52] >> Greyserman's third shot up by the green.

[00:31:54] >> Pretty good place to be playing from the lie, looks pretty clean; just kind of tumble it back there. And it's pretty well done.

[00:32:04] >> Nice.

[00:32:04] >> Getting up there.

[00:32:06][ Applause ] Fowler on the 18th green.

[00:32:14] >> I mean, a long putt across the green here, just trying to get down in 2 in all honesty.

[00:32:18] >> Done in one. [Laughs]

[00:32:21] >> What a finish. I mean, that did look like a birdie the entire hole. And that gives him a little bit of hope going into the final round tomorrow. What a putt, and what a way to finish.

[00:32:33] >> Don't count out Ricky Fowler.

[00:32:39] >> Greyserman, pull within one.

[00:32:53] >> Wow, what a round of golf there for Max Greyserman.

[00:32:57] >> Six-under 64. He'll be in that final group on Sunday. Echavarria.

[00:33:08] >> You know, the lofted middle here, 242 to that flagstick. To 224 to the front. This is obviously plenty of club. Starts in the middle of the green but cutting.

[00:33:30] >> Wow. How good is that from Echavarria?

[00:33:33] >> Well, as we said the only way to get close to this can is to hit a big cut, and that's exactly what he did there. And that takes some guts to try to pull that off.

[00:33:43] >> It truly has been clinical from Justin. And they really hadn't put a lot of pressure on himself apart from, you know, couple of those lengthy putts coming down the closing stretch here. And again, back-to-back 64s is pretty remarkable. This is not an easy golf course, especially with all those difficult par 4s.

[00:34:07] >> Inside six feet for birdie.

[00:34:16] >> Maybe the first putt that -- makeable putt that he's missed all week, Craig.

[00:34:21] >> Think of the one little timid effort at the 12th when he hit such a great shot there. I think those two he may reflect back on.

[00:34:33] >> Sixty-five for Thomas. How about this, if Echavarria makes this for eagle, he will have matched Justin Thomas shot for shot, tying his 65, and his lead would be two.

[00:34:55] >> Echavarria, an eagle on the 18th. Began this third round in the final group, facing the former world number one leading by two. He'll walk off the 18th green the lead two. He had a couple missteps, and both times bounced back. This now his second time being in this spot. He'll have good memories from Puerto Rico a year ago.

[00:35:23] >> Nico Echavarria remains on top after 54 holes at 17-under, but Justin Thomas lurks just two shots back. The final round is next.

[00:35:36] >> The FedExCup Fall is here.

[00:35:38] >> Anything can happen.

[00:35:40] >> Fierce competition.

[00:35:41] >> They know what's at stake.

[00:35:43] >> And endless possibilities.

[00:35:44] >> This is going to be good.

[00:35:51] >> Big names and rising stars. All have the chance to make their move. See who will prove themselves during the FedExCup Fall.

[00:36:09] >> Welcome into the final round of the Zozo Championship. The sun trying to peak out, should be some cloud cover later in the day. We have good scoring conditions, pretty much what we've seen all week. Let's take a look at some of the early highlights. George Savaricas, Graham DeLaet. All starts with the final group. Justin Thomas among the chasers on the 1st.

[00:36:29] >> Beautiful tee shot down there, just a flip wedge in. And what a way to start the day for JT.

[00:36:35] >> A birdie out of the gates. He was two behind; that margin now one next hole. The leader, Nico Echavarria answers.

[00:36:44] >> Yes, you see that little kind of cut hold-off finish that back right pin trying to bleed it back there, judged perfectly.

[00:36:51] >> What a shot by Echavarria. Back up by two looking for his second win on the PGA TOUR, Justin Thomas. These two guys just trading blows early. Par-3 3rd.

[00:37:03] >> Yes, 176 yards today, and it's been tucked over the left bunker. Just an 8-iron for Justin.

[00:37:13] >> JT two deep after three. Once again within one. How about Max Greyserman also in the final group?

[00:37:20] >> Yes, this is how you answer that tee shot from JT, rolling it in. Beautiful on that downhill left and righter.

[00:37:27] >> Greyserman at that time two back in, and wasn't two back for long on the 4th.

[00:37:33] >> Yes, a lot of times you're in that final group the nerves show with the short stick in your hand, and you look very comfortable and confident.

[00:37:41] >> Three birdies his first four holes. Let's take a look at the leaderboard. Nico Echavarria 18 under, up one over Max Greyserman, Justin Thomas. That final group four clear of the rest of the field. And you see Ricky Fowler solo 4th at 13-under.

[00:37:55] >> We go back to the 6th hole.

[00:37:58] >> Yes, this will be Justin Thomas's third shot. What do we have here, Craig?

[00:38:01] >> Well, another good start for Justin 2-under through his first five holes. But I think he's got all the pressure on him today. Twenty-nine months since he last won. And this is a pretty thick lie. He's got one of the best short games in the world. He's going to need it here. Where this ball's going to land just over the fringe is on a downslope. Let's see if he can show some skill here.

[00:38:31] >> How would you grade that, Craig?

[00:38:35] >> Yes, that's pretty dang good right there.

[00:38:39] >> Up one.

[00:38:41] >> Ricky Fowler for a birdie. He's going to roll it in from long range. Yes, he is; so Ricky Fowler trying to stay in touch with the top of the leaderboard here, give himself a chance to win.

[00:38:55] >> He's been rolling that new putter very nicely.

[00:38:58] >> Returning to the par-5 6th, Nico Echavarria in with par. Justin Thomas now for birdie and a share.

[00:39:05] >> And we've talked about it all week, he does look very good on the putter -- over the putter, and his gained strokes every day. Has been the weak link this year. But I think this week, he looks different over the ball, Graham.

[00:39:19] >> Yes, he sure does, just super confident, nice lines, keeping his head very still.

[00:39:28] >> Game on, we've got two at the top, Echavarria and Thomas.

[00:39:33] >> Echavarria now on the tee at the 7th.

[00:39:35] >> Yes, and leads the field through 54 holes in approach. And then this is a 9, 9; should be a comfortable 9, 9 for Nico.

[00:39:47] >> And a little left of this flag.

[00:39:50] >> Oh, yes. Echavarria would cash in to take the solo lead at 19-under.

[00:39:56] >> It's just enough breeze, I think, that's wreaking a little havoc here, George, 89 yards. Also needs to get down. Is it going to spin enough?

[00:40:18] >> Well, the best of the bunch. That's going to be a good look the way he rolls it.

[00:40:21] >> Nine one by Greyserman. Yes, Max Greyserman really got on PGA TOUR golf fans' radar over the summer. First it was at the 3M Open. Was trailing Johnny Vegas, put his tee shot way left. This is at TPC Twin Cities. You see all that water, had a 4-iron more than 240 yards out, tried hooking it around the trees, and said, "I'm trying to make birdie and I'm trying to win the tournament; that's why I took on the risk with that shot." Wound up getting a share of the clubhouse lead. Birdying the last with the hero shot at 16-under, Johnny Vegas went on to win by one. Very next week at the Wyndham -- very next tournament at the Wyndham Championship, Greyserman with two-shot lead on the backside. This was late in the day on Sunday. And this was just spectacular, the approach to the par-4. Holds out for eagle. We were late in the day in Greensboro. There had been weather delays earlier in the week. They had to play until sunset. Very next hole four-shot lead, the par-5. You've been here before, Graham.

[00:41:28] >> I've hit this exact same shot off the car path and out of bounds. And, you know, not a great tee shot, but a horrible break there for Max Greyserman.

[00:41:38] >> Wound up OB, made quad. Four-shot lead evaporated, goes on to lose by two to Aaron Rai. So these final nine holes at the Zozo Championship could be life-changing if he can get across the finish line, finally snag that first one on the PGA TOUR.

[00:41:57] >> So great opportunity here.

[00:42:01] >> Point shoot for Greyserman, pours into another. He's at 18-under, one back of the leader, Echavarria.

[00:42:07] >> Only one back with that kind of confidence on the greens right now.

[00:42:11] >> Yes, you give a guy that good and with confidence, he feels like he's going to make them all, or at least he should. This is a good litmus test for our leader.

[00:42:20] >> It's pretty much straight up the hill.

[00:42:25] >> Wow, well neither of us have a crystal ball, Craig, but you're going to look back. He had 118 yards with a gap wedge in your hand at the 8th to make bogey.

[00:42:36] >> Well, we got three tied at 18-under par. This week for Joel Dahmen came in 129th in the FedEx standings, now projected 125th at birdie to last at this point backside. At one point, he was at 8-under par, three bogeys his last eight holes. So final round 70. He knows how much is on the line for him this FedEx Fall.

[00:43:05] >> Sugiura now for birdie 17. Yes. And he's kind of a fearless player. Out in 30, couple of birdies on the back nine, massive stage for these players from the Japan Golf Tour. And he's performed very well indeed.

[00:43:25] >> Can we make it four birdies in a row? Kitayama. You bet.

[00:43:32] >> Wow, what a run. And this is going to get you some valuable FedExCup points and get a couple more coming home.

[00:43:39] >> Fifth birdie on the round for Kitayama. Taylor Moore, letting it fly on the 18th. Oh, yes.

[00:43:53] >> Moore would finish his week off with an eagle for a final round 66.

[00:44:04] >> Craig, he just keeps knocking, and knocking, and knocking it. We're waiting for that big birdie putt from Justin Thomas; really takes control of the Zozo Championship.

[00:44:14] >> Well, George, listen, if he wants to get his 16th win and the first win in 29 months, he has to make this putt. He's got a birdie ball par-3 coming up, the par-5 is reachable for him. He needs to enforce his will here. This is the -- pretty much the sixth straight hole that he's got a great opportunity at the birdies, made none of them. Time to step up and make one.

[00:44:37] >> It's -- I'm hoping tomorrow afternoon I'll have a lot of energy coming down the back nine and have another great round, or have a chance in the last couple holes. The chance is now at the 12th. Thomas for birdie.

[00:44:55] >> Wow. Well, I'll tell you what, he started that exactly on his line and that thing was dripping towards the middle of the hole, and at about two feet left just went left.

[00:45:08] >> What about this one, Craig, for Nico?

[00:45:12] >> Well, it's amazing. He's got -- stood on the 9th here at 18-under and none of them made a birdie since down the hill. Now, I had this breaking left; so speed pretty quick.

[00:45:28] >> And there you go. Ends the drought for this final group and takes a one-shot lead. But of course, Justin Thomas still has a good birdie chance to come.

[00:45:40] >> Ensure the lead on the line for Justin Thomas at 13.

[00:45:51] >> Just can't get anything to drop; the putter going cold at just the wrong moment for Justin Thomas.

[00:46:01] >> At 14, Graham, are you surprised Greyserman laid up to here?

[00:46:05] >> I mean, it -- a little bit; but like I said is it was an uncomfortable shock because it's a force carry off a downslope.

[00:46:15] >> Here's his 3rd.

[00:46:15] >> Now, it looks like the right -- if that stays up, like I said, there's a big round and it's such a difficult wedge shot.

[00:46:24] >> Coming up severely that slope.

[00:46:32] >> Greyserman, the unlikely birdie.

[00:46:39] >> Echavarria for bogey.

[00:46:41] >> Nice.

[00:46:42] >> And that was pretty well done. That's a tricky little putt, especially when it's for bogey.

[00:46:49] >> Mistake off the tee, missed the fairway, mistake with his 2nd.

[00:46:53] >> I like the draw here, Graham, because there's some tilt right of this flag that you could sort of ride along, but to me from over here, again, directly at the flag.

[00:47:07] >> This last birdie came all the way back on the 6th hole riding nine straight pars to the 16th tee.

[00:47:17] >> Well, it's on a good line. If it's going the right club, it's a great shot.

[00:47:22] >> Yes, that is perfect.

[00:47:33] >> His caddy, Reynolds Robinson, stepping in.

[00:47:36] >> Yes, flag his limbs, really know when speak of it, you know, just trying to secure the target here.

[00:47:40] >> Back to the tee and Echavarria.

[00:47:49] >> Little knockdown 6th; left of the flag.

[00:47:53] >> He's twirling.

[00:47:54] >> Wow, that is the best place to be putting from.

[00:48:02] >> Thomas trying to take the lid off, put some heat on Greyserman.

[00:48:08] >> This swings a lot from right to left.

[00:48:18] >> Birdie putt. Another miss.

[00:48:24] >> This is all about the moment, controlling the nerves, and putting a good stroke on it.

[00:48:29] >> Yes, he's made a lot of critical putts this week. Does that putter have another one in it? Echavarria gets that to go. He's at 19-under. We're all tied up.

[00:48:42][ Applause ]

[00:48:48] >> Up on the green, Ricky Fowler. Birdies on 15 and 16. Will we see another? Nice round. Ricky finishing on a high note. Back in the fairway, Echavarria.

[00:49:03] >> Does he need to get this moving left to right, Craig?

[00:49:07] >> Not really; he can hit it pretty straight. Well, it's hit really well. And if this is enough, this is right on line with the flag.

[00:49:16] >> Oh, just clears.

[00:49:17] >> Well done. Well done.

[00:49:18] >> And that's on the green. And 2 will be an eagle putt for Echavarria.

[00:49:25] >> If he can launch this high, he can cut it, he get it to land softly.

[00:49:32] >> This tournament slipping away from his grasp.

[00:49:35] >> Well, he knows he needs three. So there's a clearer picture what he needs to do. It needs to carry. It was on a good line.

[00:49:45] >> Will it carry? Was it enough?

[00:49:52] >> We're getting 120.

[00:50:02] >> Greyserman pulled that one left.

[00:50:05] >> Yes, a little scruffy off the tee, but laid. And that one there wasn't his best.

[00:50:10] >> It will take one of the best bunker shots of his career. Thomas's third. Well played.

[00:50:24] >> Inside 40 feet for eagle in the wind.

[00:50:39][ Applause ] Likely a must make for Greyserman.

[00:51:00] >> It's a birdie putt. Agonizingly close.

[00:51:07] >> What a roll. That must have looked good until the very last second. And like you said, George, you hang your -- or hold your head high after a final round 65 in the final group, but most likely not going to be enough.

[00:51:27] >> Thomas to join Greyserman at 19-under par. Birdie on 18; totaled up to 4-under 66. Echavarria for birdie and the win. Echavarria so clutch in winning his second PGA TOUR event. He's your 2024 Zozo Championship winner. Two birdies in the final three holes to go from one behind to a one-shot victory.

[00:52:23] >> He's a deserved champion.

[00:52:25][ Cheering ]

[00:52:35] >> Nico Echavarria is your winner in Japan. This concludes the PGA TOUR's coverage of the Zozo Championship from Narashino in Chiba, Japan.