

**January 2, 2007**



An Interview With:

## **RORY SABBATINI**

TODD BUDNICK: We thank Rory Sabbatini for coming in the media centre at the 2007 Mercedes-Benz Championship, your first trip back in a couple of years I believe.

RORY SABBATINI: Yeah, three years.

TODD BUDNICK: Last year you got off to a great start in Hawaii, a T-2 finish and that led to a great West Coast and a victory at the Nissan Open. First let's talk about what you've done in the off-season.

RORY SABBATINI: I've actually been here for over two weeks already and played this golf course pretty much every day. So just kind of getting ready for the new year and, you know, the FedExCup is obviously going to be interesting. It's going to make it a different type of season, so I'm not quite sure what expect, so I figure I'd better be as prepared as possible.

TODD BUDNICK: As well as not being sure what to expect, have you made any goals for yourself or anything that stands out for you?

RORY SABBATINI: Same as every other year, just win them all. (Laughter).

### **Q. Any resolutions?**

RORY SABBATINI: No. I made a resolution not to make a resolution.

TODD BUDNICK: Let's talk about how last year, Hawaii in particular, was your spring board. Do you feel that possibility exists again this year?

RORY SABBATINI: Well, same as last year, first week of the year, I'm definitely prepared. Unlike previous years to last, I kind of came in rusty, because I had not been practicing and had not been spending much time on my game.

But I've been working hard and really just trying to get everything setup. No, I'm feeling really good. □.

TODD BUDNICK: Any changes in the equipment?

RORY SABBATINI: No, no changes since end of last year. Obviously still a day of practise to go, so you never know. The putter is about the only thing that ever changed in my bag frequently, so we'll see.

### **Q. Seemed like you were here early when you were not eligible for this tournament; were you usually here?**

RORY SABBATINI: My wife and I got married here, so we come over here and spend our anniversary here pretty much every year and about every second year spend Christmas over year.

### **Q. Married what time the year?**

RORY SABBATINI: New Year's Eve, so we just had our fourth anniversary.

TODD BUDNICK: Congratulations.

RORY SABBATINI: Thank you.

### **Q. You came off the West Coast No. 1 on the Money List, and I'm sure you've been asked this before, but did something change after that? We didn't see a lot of you after that.**

RORY SABBATINI: I played a lot on the West Coast, and unfortunately a few of the events in Florida, I'm not exactly real fond of, so I use that as kind of my break time.

Then, you know, nothing really changed. I was still hitting the ball well. It was just, one of those things. Sometimes the ball just doesn't want to go in the hole, and I went through a patch there where the ball just didn't want to go in the hole.

### **Q. Are you not fond enough of one of the Florida tournaments that you would skip a World Golf Championships?**

RORY SABBATINI: I'd have to say probably not -- I'm not that inept to play in Florida. I'm not stupid. (Laughter). It's like Mercedes, hey, here is an invite to come play the Mercedes. I'll be here. I'll be here even if I'm not eligible. If they gave me an invite, I'd be here.

**Q. Speaking of that, what do you think about the guys who are not here this week, Tiger and Phil?**

RORY SABBATINI: Well, I think obviously my congratulations and best wishes go out to Tiger and Elin. I think that's wonderful news, and I think that last year was a rough here for him. You know, I can understand that situation. It's one in which you want to be with your wife. You don't want her to be exerting herself physically. I completely understand. My wife and I just had this discussion, I think that's a good enough reason. I don't know if it's an excuse, but, you know, I feel bad for Mercedes. I feel bad for the fans. But you know, you've got to do what's appropriate for your family, and he's looking after his wife and their best interests.

You know, other than that, I think skipping this tournament, I'd hate to say it's a snub at the tournament. Because Gary Planos, Mercedes, they are phenomenal hosts. My goal every year is to get here. I figure, it doesn't matter, if you're here, you've had a good year, and I can't think of a better place to start the year than here.

To not be here I think is a shame, because they really are phenomenal hosts. They have spent all year planning this event for us and really go out of their way. This really is a wonderful event.

**Q. Generally, would you rather play in a field where the best players and all of the best players are there, or do you feel like, oh, I have more of a shot if some of the guys are not showing up?**

RORY SABBATINI: Hey, if the rest of the field didn't show up and I did, I'm guaranteed to win; I'm not going to complain. It's a process of elimination. Less guys here, less guys to beat.

**Q. How is being here this year different than previous years you've been here in the field?**

RORY SABBATINI: For one thing, I'm prepared.

But you know, it was just -- actually this year, it didn't seem like much of an off-season because we played the World Cup in December. I had a three-week break after the Shark Shootout to the World Cup and a week off, and we left to

come here and I've been playing every day. So I haven't really got out of the competition mode.

**Q. Were you aware that this is a new era in golf?**

RORY SABBATINI: Is it?

**Q. FedExCup.**

RORY SABBATINI: Oh. I wasn't aware of it being a new era. I figured it was a new format. (Laughter).

**Q. Does that make any difference this year or do we worry about that later?**

RORY SABBATINI: I figure I'll start this week and end in September, and I'll take a vacation. So I figure we're looking at my schedule, it's like, I'm playing eight in a row, one week off, eight in a row, one week off, eight in a row; it's like, I'm going to be worn out.

**Q. You talked about there not being much difference between the West Coast and the rest of the year. Did you do much analyzing and try to put a finger on it and think about what you could do differently this year?**

RORY SABBATINI: You know, golf is a strange game. You get what you get and that's about it. You can only put your best foot forward and hope it's good enough. You know, sometimes that happens. It goes in cycles like that, so you just -- I don't think you can spend too much time analyzing it. I think you can try to learn from it and try to improve on it.

But, you know, it doesn't matter how good you hit a shot. If it's not meant to go in, it's not going to go in.

**Q. Where would you put the FedExCup on your list of things to do this year as it relates to, say, majors, other tournaments, money title, Vardon, FedExCup; where would you put that?**

RORY SABBATINI: Probably be pretty nice to win all four majors, THE PLAYERS Championship and the FedExCup. I figure that would be a pretty good completion of everything.

No, FedExCup would be great. Obviously to win the money title has always been one of the challenges for everybody out here. I think to win the FedExCup has kind of replaced the money title in a sense -- well, not in a sense; in fact.

I'd like to just -- you know, I think it being the inaugural year, to win it would be a great honour.

TODD BUDNICK: You have an announcement about a charity partnership?

RORY SABBATINI: For the new year, we have actually expanded our work towards the America Fallen Heroes Fund and Charity, and we've been joined by a partnership with Banfield Pet Hospitals, and John Payne is the president, he's sitting right behind you over here, of Banfield Pet Hospitals. There's 600 of them around the country, two in the U.K. and one in Mexico. Obviously they specialize in trying to improve families' experiences obviously through their pets, because everybody gets attached to their pets.

We thought, a feel-good issue with pets, try to raise some money and awareness again and expand it further for the families of the Intrepid Fallen Heros Fund and support the troops. We came up with an idea to do a pet tag for dogs and cats and has the logo for Banfield Pet Hospital on there, and it also says, "My family supports our troops." And they are going to be sold for two dollars in all of the stores and 100% of the funds go towards the Intrepid Fallen Heros Fund, and we thought it would be just a great relationship and a great -- it's a dog tag, so just an addition onto the Intrepid Fallen Heros Fund and get the public involved in it.

**Q. When did you come up with this idea?**

RORY SABBATINI: It was actually a great idea that came up between John Payne and my wife. It was a great merger and a great idea. Banfield really, you know, they came up with the idea and then Amy just kind of got involved in trying to help with maybe some of the creative aspects of it.

Banfield has been wonderful in supporting this, and John Payne and his company, they are obviously going above and beyond in this effort.

**Q. What are your pets?**

RORY SABBATINI: What are my pets? There is a picture of them on there, we have two little Daschunds.

**Q. You love your pets so much, I think you have their names embroidered on your head covers.**

RORY SABBATINI: Yeah, my daughter didn't even make it onto there. We have my dogs and my son, but my daughter is not even on there. (Laughter).

No, they are a part of our family. You know, think of any kid that's lost a pet, how sad they are. Just think for all of the military families who have lost family members. Obviously it's exponential the grief they encounter.

It really is just a great way to expand on trying to get people involved in supporting them. You know, two dollars for most people, they go into a pet hospital and they will see this and it's kind of like the Lance Armstrong bracelet for cancer.

TODD BUDNICK: Will they only be available at Banfield?

RORY SABBATINI: Well, they will be available at Pet's Hotel, which is owned by Banfield, and they will be obviously available at PGA TOUR golf courses, facilities. We'll obviously down the road try to expand it further through Banfield and everything.

This is the logo that's actually going on to the pet tags and it's actually on my golf bag, too. If you're wondering about my family, it's because normally you have a family if you have a dog, so they own you.

TODD BUDNICK: Thank you, Rory. That's a great program.