



“My dream course is to play Augusta because it is the pinnacle of golf,” says former San Diegan, Pat Perez, without hesitation. Pat is preparing both mind and body for the 2010 PGA Tour season which begins with the Mercedes-Benz Championship in Maui. This includes cardio training to build up stamina, plus a little R&R in Phoenix. Celebrating his one-year anniversary with his wife and resting after a long year on tour, 33-year-old Perez graciously interrupted his reprieve for a chat with FINE magazine.

“No, I don’t feel any pressure to repeat last year’s victory,” says Perez. “I just play. Of course, I want to win; I want to win them all. No one playing the tour has ever played there (in Maui) and all the equipment will be new. It blows nonstop, so the playing field will be even for all of us.”

Considering Perez’ injury from this past May (two torn ligaments in his right ankle caused by running with his dog), his answer is surprising in its confidence. “I am reminded it still hurts every time I step down from the curb,” he laments. “It will take about two years to completely heal. I am 90% there.” In spite of his injury, PP still finished the season strong with a T13 finish at the Frys.com

Open and a T10 at the World Golf Championships – HSBC Champions.

PP’s best finish on the PGA Tour in 2009 is 1st at the 50th Bob Hope Classic hosted by Arnold Palmer. He set a new Tour record for opening 36 holes and most strokes under par for first 36 holes. According to the official PGA TOUR website, Pat currently ranks 95th in Career Earnings on the PGA Tour for players in the nation.

When asked about his alleged bad temper, he sighs. “That started nine years ago at Pebble Beach when I slammed my golf club down, because I only had a one shot lead and blew it. Unfortunately, it was being broadcast on television.” The episode cost him \$2500; a fairly small fine when you consider the prize, but a big consequence in a gentleman’s sport that mandates etiquette from its players. Even the greatest in his field must answer to this standard and will do anything to maintain a positive public image. He hesitates before giving his opinion about Tiger Woods’ recent tabloid drama.

“You know, the stories regarding him are alleged, and any answer I give you is just my opinion, so it won’t mean much. Tiger has been an excellent sport to play with, (I have played with him since I was ten) and he has always been professional with me and I am really sorry for him. We don’t really hang out off the course.”

In the same breath, Pat agrees that image matters and sports icons have a responsibility to the public, especially the young children that look up to them. Regarding his own personal mentors, he comments: “I don’t really have any heroes and I didn’t when I was a kid either,” he says. “I guess a mentor for me would be Tommy Armour and Steve Elkington; Jason Gore is a good friend, too.”

Still, that hasn’t stopped Pat from becoming a mentor himself. As most San Diegans know, Perez graduated from Torrey Pines High School in Del Mar and earned a golf scholarship to Arizona State. Pat recounts with enthusiasm: “I would wake up at 4 in the morning during the Buick Invitational when I worked at Torrey Pines Golf Course, because I was so excited to be driving the pro golfers around... they wouldn’t have much to say, except for a few words...that was the best!”



PP turned pro in 1997. Looking back, it seems that San Diego had the biggest effect on his early decision to play golf, and that enthusiasm continues today. "I've lived everywhere -- in Encinitas, Cardiff, and Del Mar," he says. "My mom drove me everywhere and was completely supportive. Today, my dad is the founder of a non-profit organization in San Diego called Pin Pals Junior Links (Pat serves as honorary chairman). We help inner city kids by introducing them to golf and the careers available in the golf industry in an after school program at no cost to the students or schools."

In addition, PP helps the physically and mentally challenged wounded troops in a golf rehabilitation program called Wounded Heroes; Operation: Game On. They work with the Comprehensive Combat Casualty Care Center (C5) located at the Balboa Naval Medical Center in San Diego. Specially-fitted clubs are donated by Pin Pals at no cost to our Heroes.

"On Veteran's Day, we had four amputees playing golf with special clubs," says Perez. "Eventually, I would like to return to San Diego and raise a family. I really want babies." How soon? "Maybe, a year or two from now," Pat reveals.

Pat's other classics he enjoys are Roberto's and the movie, Caddyshack. "Three chicken tacos," he says with enthusiasm.

Speaking of enthusiasm, how could you not root for a down-home San Diegan who loves Mexican food, war veterans, and babies. Oh yeah, and he likes to win. We wish you all the best, Pat Perez!

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