

# Desert Classic

Thursday, January 17, 2019

## Phil Mickelson

### Quick Quotes



**Q. At what point did you think you could really go low today?**

PHIL MICKELSON: I really didn't think that this was going to be a day that I was going to go low. I came in with very low expectations, I haven't had a lot of time to practice and prepare and I felt like all areas were okay, but you never really know until you get out and you play and compete. And I hit a shot here or there and ended up making a putt and all of a sudden I was quite a few under par. The good thing was I made a couple bad swings and I got away with them. This golf course, there's out of bounds close by, it's easy to make big mistakes and I was able to get away with the one or two poor swings. And then I putted phenomenal.

**Q. The tee shot at 2 was one of those?**

PHIL MICKELSON: That's what I'm thinking there is that it's a tight little fairway and I held on to that drive, missed it left and I got lucky it didn't go out of bounds. I ended up making birdie. There was another one on No. 5. And fortunately there was an adjoining fairway. So those two bad swings I got away with, made birdies on both holes and that was kind of the key to the round.

**Q. It's only the first round but as you're coming down the stretch you're still feeling a little bit of that pressure, aren't you, thinking maybe you can put a 59 on the board.**

PHIL MICKELSON: Certainly on 16 I was aware that if I make that 4-footer for birdie and then birdie the last two I would shoot 59. I was aware of it, I was giving it all I had and I had a good chance. On 17 I hit a nice tee shot in a good spot to kind of hook a sand wedge into that back right pin for me. And I hit a good shot, I had 18 feet though, I should have hit that closer, but still had a good chance to make the putt.

Made a good birdie on 18. That's not an easy hole for me, that shot the way it sits along the water. I hit a good shot in there, made a nice putt.

**Q. You say you didn't feel as like you practiced all that much over the last six week, but how fresh did you still feel coming in?**

PHIL MICKELSON: I think that's the big key is that my excitement level of playing and competing and my fresh attitude after having a few months after allowed me to be really focused throughout the round and focus on

each shot very clearly and kind of have a good picture of the shot I wanted to hit as well as where I wanted to miss it when I did miss it. And that was very helpful today.

**Q. Was this another chapter in a really strange year? I mean you win in Mexico and end the drought, you have The Match, you have The Open, you flirt with 59 today, it's a lot to consider in a year.**

PHIL MICKELSON: Those were all last year. That was all 2018. So we're starting fresh and right now. It's a good start to the year. So this is, it's been a fun round.

**Q. You take a pretty long off season between seasons, and this is about the same maybe a little bit shorter with the match, but did you do anything differently?**

PHIL MICKELSON: I had a really -- I didn't do much differently, no. But I had a really good off season in that I had I was very committed in my workouts, I felt stronger, my speed is starting to come back, I'm starting to hit the ball pretty good distance now, and I've been putting really well now the last few years. So I felt like heading into 2019 if I can drive the ball longer then I won't have to worry about that, I can start trying to hit little cuts in the fairway and make some putts like I've been doing and I thought it would be a good year. Well this is I'm -- hopefully this is kind of a little foreshadowing of the year to come because this is a nice way to start.

**Q. The conditions here are always exceptional, but with the little bit of rain we have had this week did that soften the greens up at all?**

PHIL MICKELSON: They softened them up, they slowed them down just a touch and it also, when the rain comes down, it just makes them pure. They knock down any imperfections and you can really make a lot of putts when we putt in the rain.

**Q. Can you hit more aggressively into the pins or is that pretty much the same as it always is?**

PHIL MICKELSON: You certainly can, yes, the ball was stopping and stopping close. Sometimes the greens here can be firm and a little bit more difficult to get it close, but certainly the rain added to the scoring potential for the guys.

**Q. Will you play the Farmers and why or why not?**

PHIL MICKELSON: I'm waiting until tomorrow to -- quite honestly I just wasn't sure I would be ready for a golf course that long and hard. And so I've been kind of waiting to see how my game felt the first couple of days. That's one of the hardest courses we play, it's 7,600 yards, fairways are tight, there's a lot of rough and it's, unless I'm playing my absolute best that's not really a great place for me.

**Q. Rain or shine you had quite the gallery following you. Despite the weather how special is it to be back at La Quinta.**

PHIL MICKELSON: It's always fun to get back here and I love starting the year here because we have great courses, practice facilities great weather and even though today's an anomaly, the next three days are going to be pristine, it will be fun to have the good weather for some concerts. I think Sammy Hagar is playing tomorrow night, that will be cool, and it's a great place to start the year.

**Q. An absolutely incredible start to your 2019. You were flirting with the number the last couple holes, you wind up tying your low round in a PGA TOUR with that 12-under 60. Describe what came together to have such a special first round.**

PHIL MICKELSON: It was a kind of a lucky day for me in the sense that I did not feel sharp heading in, I haven't really had the intense practice sessions that I would like, but I felt like all parts were okay and it just clicked, I don't know, some days you have those days where it just clicked. And the bad shots that I hit I got away with, I was able to kind of not have the big score, and I made a lot of birdies. It was a fun day, but I certainly did not expect this to be the case, but I'm also excited to start the year so I was fresh.

**Q. What was the turning point in your round where you thought, hey, I can really push it and take it low today?**

PHIL MICKELSON: I don't know if there was any one particular point because I didn't have expectations to go out and shoot and score really low and I was just kind of staying more present for the simple reason that I didn't feel like I had, I was firing on all cylinders. And then everything just kind of clicked. I think that where I hit a good shot on 13 and it came up short of the green and I chipped in, that was an interesting shot because I could have easily lost one and I ended up picking one up, I guess that was 14.

**Q. You birdie 16, Twitter's going nuts, you have to go birdie, birdie 17 and 18 to shoot 59. At what point did that start to creep in your mind?**

PHIL MICKELSON: So I, it came it the realization on 16 when I had that putt for birdie that if I make that 4-

footer and then birdie the last two I would shoot 59 and I gave myself a decent chance. I just, the shot on 17 I was trying to hook a sand wedge and kind of get that thing to side spin towards the pin and I just didn't hook it enough and left myself a still a good look at it and I just didn't quite roll that one in.

**Q. We see you skiing in the off-season you tell Aaron Wise who was in your group, I'm rusty, don't expect much, you shoot 60. So no indication in your practice leading up to this that you could have your A game out of the gates.**

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it's, I knew it wasn't far off but it didn't feel like I was ready to go. I just felt like I needed to be careful. I felt I played a little bit more conservative. I got into trouble I wasn't as aggressive, I didn't think, and I tried not to make too many big mistakes and then I putted really well.

**Q. Last time you opened with a 60, Phoenix Open, you went on to win that event. How does that round alter your approach for the rest of the week?**

PHIL MICKELSON: It's very difficult to start a round and go low like this and then follow it up because the expectations are anything short of a victory is a failure. And yet we have three full rounds on some challenging golf courses with a lot of potential birdies. So it's a tough position to be in, but it's one that I thoroughly enjoy.