

Desert Classic

Friday, January 18, 2019

Phil Mickelson

Quick Quotes



Q. Sadly the very first shot I saw you hit this year was the tee ball left at 18. But that back nine that was solid.

PHIL MICKELSON: Thank you, it was a good way to finish the round. I had kind of struggled that front nine doing not too much and then I doubled that 18th hole. But I ended up birdieing four of the last five and turned it around and really I struck the ball every bit as well, I just didn't putt anywhere close to as well as I did yesterday, I putted really good. So it's been a fun first two rounds and hopefully I'll keep it going this weekend.

Q. No. 2 today that was your 21st putt you had 21 yesterday, so it wasn't quite as good. The shot you hit at number 8. Talk about that.

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, it was a little draw to that back right pin into a slice wind and had it turning in there and hit it about 12, 15 feet. It was a good shot. My irons are starting to come around, they were a little bit today even than yesterday. I putted really well yesterday.

Q. Thoughts with the Stadium two days in a row?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, I like it in the sense that you can make birdies there if you play well. If you hit good shots. I'm starting to drive the ball a lot longer and straighter than I have in awhile and so that sets up nicely for that course. I feel like I can play aggressively with the way I'm hitting it off the tee.

Q. 18 out of the way. What happened on that approach shot?

PHIL MICKELSON: On 18 it really wasn't as hard a shot as I made it look. I had a decent lie after dropping off the cart path, but I had the ball a little bit below my feet and a slight uphill lie, which the tendency on those shots is to pull it and I just didn't adjust for that very well and I pulled it right in the water. But that's been the only hole I played over par this week so I can't complain too much. I finished strong with birdieing four of the last five and so I turned a round that was not very good into a respectable round.

Q. It looked like the first nine today you didn't make any putts and then suddenly on the back nine everything clicked in again.

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, so the back nine there I missed putts on 11 -- well on 2, 3 and 4 that could have

easily been birdies and struggled -- and even 3-putted that par-5 from 75 feet. But when I made one, I started to see the ball go in the hole and I made a few more and ended up birdieing four of the last five. So I just needed one little spark and finally got it.

Q. You left the pin in on that one putt on that par-5.

PHIL MICKELSON: I did and it felt very uncomfortable, I kind of eased into it thinking that if I hit it too hard it might hit the pin and miss, so I don't think I'll do that again.

Q. The sun is out, how different was it out there for you today?

PHIL MICKELSON: The weather being so nice I think we're going to see a lot lower scores, actually and it was very enjoyable day for the pros but also for the amateurs and we had a good time because of the weather.

Q. What was your point of emphasis coming into the year when you kind of looked at what times of things you wanted to work on going into this season?

PHIL MICKELSON: So, there's two areas that guys tend to decline when they hit about mid 40s or so forth. One is speed and one is putting. The last two years I've done a good job of improving my putting, I've actually putted better the last few years than I ever have in my career. The last thing is speed, because if I have speed with the driver then I can worry more about accuracy, it's much easier to control it when you can hit cuts, but you can't hit cuts if you don't have enough speed. So I had a good off season, I spent a lot of time all last year gaining speed and in the last couple of months of the year speed picked back up and so I'm able to drive the ball a lot longer and in return also straighter.

Q. Do you know yet whether you're going to play Torrey Pines next week?

PHIL MICKELSON: I'll know shortly. It's a tough thing for me because I love that tournament and I love the community and to play six in a row is just, it's not going to happen. So I don't know which ones I'm going to miss and we're still trying to figure it out. I should know shortly, I just don't know right now.

Q. I talked to Aaron and he mentioned how much

fun he's been playing with you and looking up to you, he almost thinks that he's been watching you so much he needs to worry about his own game. How would you describe the experience playing with a 22-year-old?

PHIL MICKELSON: It's fun for me to watch players, these young players who are so talented, like Aaron, because it keeps me motivated to worked hard because I see how talented they are and how good they are. It keeps me motivated to get in the gym and to practice and to get my game sharp to be able to compete against them and it's inspiring to see these guys, especially Aaron.

Q. You putted with the flag in and you also had a little bit of a false start on your drop there on 18. What do you think of the new rules?

PHIL MICKELSON: I feel uncomfortable right now because I don't know, I don't know them well enough and I've been trying to get like a seminar to learn them all and I just haven't had time or a chance to. So playing this game, not knowing the rules, is unsettling feeling, so hopefully I'll figure out, I'll be able to get a seminar and learn them.

Q. Back-to-back rounds at Stadium now. Some people hate that, some people embrace that golf course and say let's go get it?

PHIL MICKELSON: So I think there's a benefit to playing when we're playing them with good weather rather than yesterday. I think it was a tough day yesterday. You get nice weather out there and you hit some good shots, you can make birdie there. The greens have a very soft pitch to them, can you make a lot of putts on them. Par-5s you can reach them. I feel like it's a course you can take advantage of. But the penalty for miss is greater so you just have to play a little bit better to shoot the same score. You just can't get away with the mistakes as easily as you can on the other two.

Q. Does that mean playing more conservatively or carefully or what? How do you avoid the big mistake?

PHIL MICKELSON: You just have to drive the ball a little bit better off the tee and hit better iron shots into the greens and miss it in the right spot. But there's so much water, so many deep pit bunkers that are very difficult to recover from that it's a course you need to be more precise with ball striking, not so much let's say at La Quinta where you still need to hit great shots to shoot a low score but if you hit a few bad ones you might get away with it.