



FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: SCOTT STALLINGS

Sunday, January 26, 2014

MARK STEVENS: I'd like to congratulate Scott Stallings on his win at the 2014 Farmers Insurance Open. Scott, if you want to just talk about your thoughts on picking up a big win here on a tough course and then we'll take some questions.

SCOTT STALLINGS: I have never played good here. In fact, I've never made the cut. The golf course requires a lot of patience and I started on Thursday and I was 2-over through 3 starting on the back. I just told my caddie, I said, man, we're going to have our chances, we've just got to do a really good job as far as being patient and never being surprised. I did a good job all day. I didn't drive it my best but I gave myself chances on my short game and hung in there and was pretty fortunate on 18 for that ball to stay up. It's pretty cool to win at such a great event in the best field I've played in so far this year.

Q. Talk about 18, what you had and (inaudible).

SCOTT STALLINGS: 18, we had 220 front, or 222 front, 227 hole. I had kind of like a hanger lie and we knew 2 iron was -- or my little hybrid thing was way too much, but I was going to have to hammer a 4 iron to make sure it carried. The lie was perfect to kind of hit a hot hook and we knew that all I had to do was hit it solid and it would be enough. A little gust got it as it came down and kept it from really going in the middle of the green, but I knew it was enough to carry, I just didn't realize it was going to be that close.

Q. Were you aware at one time there was (inaudible)?

SCOTT STALLINGS: No. I told John we weren't going to -- I wasn't going to look at the leaderboard. On this course the moment you start worrying about what someone else is doing and how they're handling themselves is the moment that this place will beat you down. I've learned a lot of lessons in my four years out here and learning that, you know, I can only control what I can control, and especially on a course that difficult, you let your mind go for a hole and you're going to make double bogey really fast. That rough is really long and those greens are really firm. It's not a surprise single digit under par won.

Q. When you're standing over the shot, your second shot on 18, you've got water in front, any thoughts fly through your mind about Humana last year, second shot?

SCOTT STALLINGS: Absolutely.

Q. Expand.

SCOTT STALLINGS: Was that the only part of your question? Absolutely. It was a very similar lie, too. It was kind of hanging above my feet and my coach was at Humana last week and we went to the same spot that I hit in the water in and just tried to learn from the situation. The shot I hit at Humana last year was solid, I just didn't account for the lie. I kind of got so wrapped up in the moment, I didn't really kind of take into account what was happening, I just kind of saw my shot and hit it and wondered why it went left. Stepping into it, John and I talked about the lie. He said maybe you want to scoot it back just a little bit and left is okay there, but we just want to make sure I hit it solid enough to get it over the water. He said you can hit it absolutely as hard as you want and that was all I really thought about.

Q. Was there any thought to laying up?

SCOTT STALLINGS: No.

Q. Why not?

SCOTT STALLINGS: You don't get very many opportunities to win golf tournaments on this TOUR and I've been fortunate to come out ahead three times. As a player, all you ever want is chances. I didn't necessarily understand the situation I was in as far as the score and so on and so forth, but I did know I had an opportunity. Humana was unfortunate last year hitting it in the water on the 18th hole and missing out on an opportunity to win, but I was playing to win. I think any player out here would tell you they would do the same thing in the same situation, and knowing that you have an opportunity to win a golf tournament, you have to hit a 4 iron on the green and two-putt to win, every person on the PGA would tell you the same thing.

Q. Sometimes we see out here pretty quickly people abandon golf courses because they don't play well and you talked about never making the cut here. What kept you coming back to Torrey Pines if it hadn't suited you?

SCOTT STALLINGS: When I went over my schedule with my coach, we were sitting and talking, I went through every tournament on the west coast and I said I felt like the tournaments that I put on my schedule, like I had an opportunity to win. I said, you know, my length helps. I said the more and more -- I've never really given myself a good opportunity to play well out here. I got hurt my second year, my rookie year was a disaster, my third year was kind of -- I played good at Humana and then I had my son, that was crazy in itself. My wife and I, we moved to Scottsdale for the winter and gave myself an opportunity to play and practice and do whatever I wanted for pretty much two or three months. I said I'm going to play as much as I possibly can on the west coast and just see, you know, if it made a difference.

I played pretty solid last week. I never really kind of got enough going to make any

birdies, but going into Monday and Tuesday this week John started seeing it. My trainer Adam has been on the road with me. Everything started feeling better and better and better. I felt like it was going to be a good week and very fortunate and here we are now.

Q. Scott, when you look at the past champions here at Torrey Pines, what they've done and what they've gone on to do, does that -- what kind of confidence maybe does that give you for what the future may hold for you?

SCOTT STALLINGS: There's not many lists on the PGA TOUR where your name is as close to Tiger Woods is ever a bad thing. Obviously Tiger's had a tremendous amount of success here. Winning anyplace that he's been a part of and he's etched his name in history in so many things that we've done, but having my name close to his in a great event that he's obviously dominated is pretty awesome.

Tiger was the one that made me want to play golf. I remember watching him within the Masters when I was 12 and at that moment I quit everything, every sport I was playing and said that's what I want to go do and every one of my friends thought I was crazy. So any opportunity to be around him. Obviously Brandt, Nick, Bubba, all those guys have had unbelievable careers, but obviously Tiger's the standard and to have my name close to his was pretty awesome.

Q. What year was that at the Masters?

SCOTT STALLINGS: 1997.

Q. From the time you made your putt at 18 to the time the tournament ended, how did you spend the time and what was going through your mind?

SCOTT STALLINGS: I was trying to run away from this guy. No, obviously I didn't really know what I was going to do. It was tough to -- the range isn't really close, we didn't know what Gary was doing, I couldn't find my family. It was very chaotic there for a little bit, so John said we're going in the locker room and whatever happens from there we can just deal with it. Went up there, and then they told me Gary made double on 17 and we had no idea what was going on. We finally got to see it on TV. Then I finally found my family, so I was just chasing my son around.

Q. I'm just curious, when Tiger won the Masters and you were 12, were you any good?

SCOTT STALLINGS: I was decent. I was a very good baseball player and I was on a traveling baseball team and we were getting ready to start in the spring, kind of around April, to kind of start figuring out where we were traveling for the summer. I told my dad, hey, I'm done, I quit. I could shoot about 75. He told me, he said, you know, hey, that's what you want to do. I mean, I love playing and I just never really

could -- baseball season was always around it. I said that's what I want to do like as a job. He was like, all right, we'll just figure out what we've got to do to do it. He never pressured me, never did anything to kind of, you know, anything to where I ever regretted it. But it was a pretty weird conversation to be 12 and look at him and say I'm going to do that and him going okay. We talk about it all the time.

Q. Before you got to 18 you had to survive 17. Talk about the par save at 17 and how crucial that ended up being, especially since a lot of the guys didn't save par there.

SCOTT STALLINGS: 17 is a tee shot that just looks really weird to me. I told John, I said, man, I would just rather hit driver and just hit it way down there. Even if I'm in the rough, I would have a wedge. But I mean, 3-wood's the right play. I'm making some changes in my game and I'm kind of getting a little bit underneath and kind of blocking it a little bit, but I knew I wasn't going to miss it left. That's some of the things in my game that we really started working on, just knowing that I'm going to eliminate one side, and I kind of got to the point where I was missing it both ways and that's not a good way to play out here, that's a quick way to lose your job. I knew it was a bad shot, but at least I missed it in a place where if I had a decent lie, I could figure something out. I hit a good shot. I hit a lot better chip than the ball ended up being. It ended up being five or six feet. It came off perfect like I wanted it to, it just was a little slow, but happy to make the putt and go to 18.

Q. You've got three wins on TOUR now, a nice little career. Are you someone who gets recognized out of the golf circles pretty much or do you fly under the radar pretty much?

SCOTT STALLINGS: Very in between I would say. Some places yes and some places no. In very strange places. I'll go to a golf place and they'll be like, who are you, and then I'll go to a baseball game or something and people will recognize me. It's very weird. I'm not really one for the limelight, I like to lay low, but it is what it is.

Q. Scott, the list of guys that have three wins or more under 30 is a pretty short one. Do you feel like a win on this course with this field puts you in a different category?

SCOTT STALLINGS: No, I know where I stand and I'm never going to be one that would try to put myself where I don't belong. Obviously I've been successful a few times, but I mean, I'll be the first to tell you I would be lying if I said I've been consistent in my career and it's something I've been lacking. When we sat down and kind of, after the playoffs, I remember I shot like 80-something my last round in the playoffs in Chicago. We had like 10 weather delays and I kind of just bagged it and was trying to figure out what I was doing. Said to my coach, my trainer, said what are we going to do to get better? I said I'm sick of playing like this. I said even if I have to go play bad, I'm ready to make the changes. We started implementing them and my

coach Brad and my trainer Adam have been on me every single day. The fall was a struggle knowing that I was going to play bad. I was going to play really good for stretches and play really bad for stretches. I needed to play tournament rounds to kind of get it going instead of taking four, five months off and then come back in January without having played.

To answer your question being in a weird category, I am where I am and obviously I want to be a lot better and I want to be a more consistent player, but you have to put yourself in those situations week in and week out in order to get there.

Q. Scott, the guys this week talked about how the setup of the golf course was almost like a U.S. Open. To win under these trying conditions against a terrific field, obviously you've had a chance in the U.S. Open on the leaderboard last year. Does it kind of change your mentality or does it give you more confidence going into the majors now that you're considering yourself a possible winner?

SCOTT STALLINGS: U.S. Open, obviously I didn't play here in 2008 but I understand the course played much faster than it did now, especially being in June. The rough is every bit as long as it was at Merion, every bit as penal. When you get in it, you just kind of cover your eyes before you find your ball because you don't really know -- you may be able to hit a great shot, you may be able to hit it 50 yards. I learned a lot from my first U.S. Open at Merion this past year and kind of how to handle yourself for four days and be prepared for pretty much everything. This golf course, I don't want to say it was set up like a U.S. Open but it's as close to a regular event that I played that felt like a major in just the terms of the way the golf course is set up. And we have a single digit winner, there's not many of those on the PGA TOUR.

Q. Were you watching Leishman's shot on 18, and if so, what were you thinking as it came back down the hill towards the hole?

SCOTT STALLINGS: I saw his shot, we were sitting there with the little camera guy. When we were watching it, we were actually trying to figure out and we found out it was Charles Howell that I think it was when John Daly won that flew it in the hole and it came back in the water. For some reason I remember that shot, and I said, man, you know, I honestly wasn't really thinking about him making it, I was trying to figure out who was the person who hit it in the hole and it came back in the water.

Q. Just curious, when did you go to Scottsdale, how much golf did you play and how did that compare with the previous years?

SCOTT STALLINGS: Well, I went -- before Maui two years ago I went to Palm Springs. We had a good time but it was only for a couple days right before I went to Maui. But last year before I went, I went to Scottsdale for probably four or five days. I

spent some time with Kevin Streelman and he took me around Whisper Rock and showed me the ropes. I was like, man, you can get really good here. There's guys I was playing with, I played an unbelievable amount of golf with Richard Lee and Josh Teater this off season. I mean, literally I probably played with them almost every day and it's nice to be with guys who do what you do and are trying to figure out what it takes to get better. In Tennessee, I love being home, I love being where my family is, but it's not going to help me be a better golfer, so we made the commitment. The weather is fantastic obviously, but we went right after Mexico, I met my wife and my son out there. We did the whole thing, we shipped cars, we did everything. We rented for almost four months and so from November, December, January and February, we've been based out of there.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTT STALLINGS: I'm currently in the process of joining. I played a few times.

Q. You said on TV that you struggled with your driver today. When you stepped to the tee box on 18 knowing you need to hit the fairway in order to have a chance to go for it, what's the mindset you have to put yourself in, you forget about everything, just focus on that?

SCOTT STALLINGS: Yeah, what you did before doesn't matter, the only thing that matters in that moment is the shot. For some reason I handle a hard time very well, and especially from those that are close to me. John every now and then will kind of throw one at me when I'm not really ready for it. He's very soft spoken. We've only worked together for two weeks, so he's kind of figured his mentality and mine are very similar. We're stepping up on the tee after I made a really good far and says, all right, son, let's see what you've got. It was kind of like, this is like the last hole, you're gonna throw that at me right now? He kind of needled me just a little bit under his breath and that kind of lightens the mood a little bit and it's time to execute after that.

Q. I'm going to go back to talking about early putts you made. (inaudible).

SCOTT STALLINGS: Both. I don't think one would happen without the other, if that makes sense. Obviously you don't like hitting in the water on the last hole and losing, but you have to learn kind of at the moment I was frustrated and disappointed, but when you look back at it, that's going to be something I'm going to think about every single time in that situation to make sure you kind of take in account everything that happens. I was so jacked up at Humana I think I had -- obviously the ball flies pretty far in the desert, but I had 225 and I had 6 iron and there was no doubt in my mind I was going to get there. There was no account for the lie, just hey, there's the hole, I'm going to hit it at it. The ball's above my feet, I don't account for it, start at the middle of the green, it goes left in the water and I kind of got ahead of myself a little bit. I walked really slow today, I made sure that I was patient, I never got frustrated no matter what happened and I just kind of dealt with how it came. I learned a lot

from that at Humana, especially having such a large lead and kind of going and kind of coming down the stretch.

Q. (Inaudible)

SCOTT STALLINGS: A long time. I still think about it a lot just because I played so well for -- I didn't make a bogey for 62 holes or something like that. But, you know, it is what it is, but I'm thankful for that. I actually thought about 18 at Humana the whole time on 18 today. Not that I was like, oh, don't hit it in the water, but it was just make sure you pay attention to everything that's going on.

Q. Going back to the '97 Masters, what was it to a 12 year old's eyes that charged you up so much? I mean, we all have our memories, of course, but through a 12 year old's eyes who was playing all these other sports, what was it?

SCOTT STALLINGS: Just like pure domination. He was going to beat them so bad they were going to end up having to like it. I just like, I mean, in golf obviously Tiger's done it a ton of times now, but at that point no one's really kind of come on and just like smoked them, and I was like, man, that is awesome, he's driving it a hundred yards past these guys he's playing with. I'm like, man, I want to do that. Obviously the course has changed a lot. I remember my first time I played my practice round at Augusta, I went to where Tiger hit it on 18 on Sunday way over there and I'm like, how much different was it playing. But you've got to go back to the memory of just my dad, that's what we've always done, Masters Sunday, we watched golf together, just sitting there as a little kid saying, man, that's 16 years ago now.

JOEL SCHUCHMANN: Thanks a lot, Scott.