

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW: SAM SAUNDERS
Thursday, July 16, 2015



Q. Impressive round, 7-under. What got you going and what was going well today?

SAM SAUNDERS: I just putted a lot better. I've been playing really well lately, been hitting the ball as well as I've ever hit it in my career in the past few weeks really, really last month, and I just had been putting terribly. I finally just had a few putts go in today and that always turns over into a little bit of confidence and it was really just that.

Q. How important were those last two holes on 8 and 9? No. 8 you hit it over and had an awesome save there, and then the birdie out of a bunker here on the last.

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, I struck the ball awesome all day. Then the eighth hole I got distracted and made a stupid golf swing there, but I left it in a spot where I could manage and I hit a pretty decent chip and had a straight-up-the-hill putt, wasn't that difficult even though it was 15 feet and made that, which was nice to go in. The second shot on 18 was a little bit difficult out of that bunker, but just made a nice swing and got fortunate to hit it into good spot and made another putt.

Q. Seems like many of the players, at least I've noticed it, the back nine's been scoring a lot better than the front. Was there anything that kind of gave -- that lended toward that?

SAM SAUNDERS: This is the back nine?

Q. Yes, the one you just played, yeah.

SAM SAUNDERS: Well, they flipped the nines so I don't know what you're talking about. I'm so confused.

Q. However they're listing 10 through 18.

SAM SAUNDERS: For the tournament?

Q. Yeah.

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, 10 through 18 you have the two par 5s, which always makes a difference. And the pins were pretty accessible on that nine, so I just finished on the ninth hole, which is the more challenging of the nine but you still have some scoring opportunities there. I think it was more just the pin locations. Like the eighth hole couldn't have played any more difficult today. It was 220 yards into the wind to a really tough pin, so we didn't have any holes like that on the back nine, most of them were pretty gettable.

Q. You spoke yesterday about how important this tournament was for you. I know

it's only day one, but is there any relief from the finish that you had today?

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, it is important. It is just the first round, yes, but it's always nice to get off to a good start. It's a golf course that I mentioned to you that I really liked and felt suited my game based on you have to hit the ball well here and I did that today. I drove it well and I hit a lot of good iron shots. You don't have to putt great here I think to shoot a good, solid score, but to shoot 7-under, I had a lot of putts go in for me today, which is nice. I haven't seen that happen in a long time, so it was great. And yes, nice to get off to a good start.

Q. What was your reaction to 8 and 9?

SAM SAUNDERS: Nothing. It's hot and I like to think of it when it's hot like this, you've got to conserve energy. So getting excited about a birdie or getting mad about a bogey just burns energy that you need to try to hit good shots, so I try to walk like I'm in a daze out there all day and just stay very level. I played with Maverick McNealy over there and I don't know, he's probably 19 years old and I was just so impressed with him. I enjoyed watching him play today. Just such a nice young guy and refreshing to see a good young college player like that.

Q. What do you like about him?

SAM SAUNDERS: He's just such a nice kid, so level headed. He does exactly what I'm talking about very well. He made a few mistakes out there and you would have never known it. He made a silly three-putt bogey and bounced right back with an eagle and a birdie after that. So it's really nice to see somebody that young be that level headed. It's almost a lesson for me because it's easy to lose patience out here sometimes and you play with a young guy like that who's as level as he is, it reminds me that's what works and that's what I need to do, too.

Q. What did you say to him over there on 9? I saw you had a little conversation.

SAM SAUNDERS: Oh, I was giving him a ruling. He was going to call for an official and I had been in the position where he had been just through experience and I knew what the ruling was so I did it for him. It was a fairly straight-forward ruling, but he was just making sure that he was doing the right thing, which everybody should do out here. He knew what to do. You always kind of want your playing partner to give you an assist.