

ROUND 2 INTERVIEW: ROD SPITTLE
Saturday, August 29, 2015



PHIL STAMBAUGH: Rod, you match your best score ever at En-Joie Golf Club shooting 66. Obviously we all saw it, the shot at 16, holing out for a two to leap into the lead. Maybe just start us off by talking about the day and then take us through the round, and then of course the eagle at 16.

ROD SPITTLE: Good afternoon, guys. Hopefully, first of all, everybody's told you what great shape the course has been in all week. I think I've probably played here six or seven years now and probably the best condition. I think everybody knows how hard everybody works to get the course ready for us, so it's been a great last couple days.

As you said, Phil, I shot 68 yesterday, which was a good start, and gosh, in a hurry today I birdied the first two holes so I was kind of off and running before we had a chance to wake up. So I played pretty consistently again. I wish I had something new or different to tell you, but I made four birdies on the front. I turned in 3-under, made a couple more on the first part of the back nine, of course. And then, like you said, it was probably the stretch of holes, 15 -- which one is the par 3, Phil?

PHIL STAMBAUGH: 14.

ROD SPITTLE: 14, I hit just -- I hit it in that pond. That pond -- the pin, first of all, is in that back left corner today. That pond, it's just way over there barely in play. I hope that shot doesn't show up on TV, I hope nobody's got that one. I just came off it and hit a 4-iron in that pond and made a good up-and-down for bogey, which probably, you know, ranks right up there with the two.

Then I made a good par on 15. Then again, I'm sure you've seen 16, as I mentioned to a couple other folks already, the pin's in the back right corner. I hit 4-wood down in the fairway to have a better angle today and I had about 70 yards. And again, that fairway sits down underneath the green, so you really can't quite tell deep the pin is. So I told Dave Marr, I guess on 17, I was just trying to skip something back up there, hit it 60, 65 yards. That green's always firm, of course. Folks started jumping up and down, so we guessed right.

Then I made a couple good pars on 17 and 18. So obviously, again as I've mentioned to Phil lately, I've played real well. I played very solid this summer, been very consistent the last five or six weeks, and pretty cool always to come here and play because everybody knows and we'll see if we can have some more fun tomorrow.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: We looked it up, I guess you were tied for the 36-hole lead at the Allianz earlier this year.

ROD SPITTLE: I was, yeah.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Now you're in a little better position as a solo leader. Just talk about that.

ROD SPITTLE: Well, again, as you know, Phil, I was very fortunate to have won -- I've won all of one time out here, of course, in San Antonio five years ago, which was amazingly exciting and that's why everybody shows up on Sunday afternoon. It's very fun to have a chance to win. I know that probably sounds corny, but that's why we all work hard. And again, with the tradition here with the BC Open and with the party that John puts on every year and the concert, the whole thing. As one of other reporters mentioned to me outside, Joey Sindelar and I went to Ohio State together so we're kind of tiptoeing into Joey's backyard. So hopefully we have his blessing tomorrow to play the best we can, we'll have to see what happens.

Q. What will you take from February in Boca and apply to tomorrow?

ROD SPITTLE: Well, gosh, that's a good question. You know, the fact that I can win tomorrow, without a doubt. You know, as I said, it's been five years. Again, I never thought that I would win on the Champions Tour, number one, so when we did that, that's been the pinnacle of my career out here so far. You know, we started this year, this is one of the goals to win again, so it's nice to be in a position to have that chance and we'll see what happens tomorrow.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Why don't you recap your win there in 2010. Give them the circumstances. It was the last of only five starts that year.

ROD SPITTLE: I'm not sure we have enough time, do we? The quick version, and for those of you who have heard it, let me apologize on the front end. My two-minute deal is the first thing, I did not play the regular tour. I played golf at Ohio State with John Cook, Joey Sindelar. I turned pro at 49 and played the Canadian Tour for a year, and then really got started through the Monday qualifying system out here back in, let's see, I went to the Q School in the fall of 2006, so I was playing for about three and a half to four years, which was our game plan. We had our five-year game plan of trying to work our way onto the Champions Tour through Monday qualifying and 2010 was going to be our last year. We were kind of winding down. I was getting ready to go to Q School for the last time.

Last tournament of the year -- some of you may know, of course, we don't play anymore at Oak Hills in San Antonio -- I shot 65, won the qualifier. I was headed to -- which was always very cool. The following week I was going to the regional qualifying for the finals and I think that was in Dallas or someplace in Houston. Like I said, I had the chance to play in the AT&T 2010 and was very fortunate, Jeff Sluman and I tied the three-day deal, obviously Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and I won on the first hole of sudden death playoff.

As I tell people, and Phil's heard me say this many times, I won in San Antonio four years and 10 months into our five-year plan. The other nice part about it in addition to having a check, which was very cool, I didn't have to go to Q School. But out here, and it's not quite

as big a deal, if you have lifetime money status, of course, it gives a player a 12-month exemption to come play. So the following year, so 2011 I played a full schedule, finished 22nd on the money list and we've played fully exempt ever since. We've just had a great time. We've been incredibly blessed. The reason that I still play is because I think I can win again, hopefully we can have a conversation like this tomorrow afternoon.

Q. Do you have a number in mind for tomorrow?

ROD SPITTLE: Gosh, you know, I really don't. I really wasn't looking at the board very much. You know what, I'm at 10-under, I told somebody else outside I would think I have to shoot 4-, 5-under tomorrow, maybe even lower. Again, we all know what Kevin Sutherland shot last year. I think that's a little bit of a stretch obviously, but as I said earlier, with the greens being so nice and I know what, were there a couple 64s today?

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Yes, two.

ROD SPITTLE: So guys want to shoot 64, 65, 66 tomorrow. I hope I'm one of them.

Q. Why did you wait so long to turn pro?

ROD SPITTLE: I was raising a family and I never had any desire to turn pro until -- which is one of the reasons why I have so much admiration for John and Joey and everybody else who did it. I graduated in 1978. I graduated in four years and I put a shirt and tie on, went to work in the corporate health insurance world for 25 years. Got to play amateur golf, got to be at all of my kids' basketball games on Saturday morning, got to be their coach for 20 years while they were growing up. My kids are now 36, 34 and 31 with five grandkids. So my priority during that time was never to play golf, sir, at all. I was home being a husband and a dad.

Q. What's it like to be 10 years older than the guy who's in second place, Scott McCarron, and a guy who's on the PGA TOUR? What's it like to compete against those kinds of people week in and week out?

ROD SPITTLE: I'll tell you what, Travis, I'll give you one smart aleck answer. The fact that I waited so long, and you've heard me say this before, I think, I try real hard not to think and act 10 years older than everybody else. Phil's heard me say this. When we started -- I had a birthday last month -- I never expected to still be playing, Travis, because we just didn't know. We just didn't have any expectations, and from the start the whole deal was to play as long as we can.

And yeah, I turned 60 last month, which is unbelievable. Again, I try not to look it, I try not to act it most of the time, but seriously, the fact that I didn't play for 25 years is the biggest asset that I have. I'm still big and strong and I'm not broken, and I'm still foolish enough to think that I can shoot 66 and win a golf tournament tomorrow, so we'll see what happens.

Q. When you were leaving Ohio State, did you feel like you had the game to go out there?

ROD SPITTLE: Oh, yeah, without a doubt. You know, again, I was very fortunate. So much is different, that's almost 40 years ago now. There wasn't any money on the tour, relatively speaking.

Two things. I had won my two Canadian amateurs while I was at Ohio State; one was amazing, two I still pinch myself. So I was extremely proud of that. As I said earlier, I just never had any desire to go travel and live out of a suitcase to take care of my family, that's all. So I was real happy to be home and watch the guys come to Muirfield once a year. That just so happened that it worked out that way, that's all.

Q. You must have had a ton of people tell you why don't you turn pro because you're such a good golfer. Can you talk about that, and when you're out competing against these guys that have won tournaments all over the world, how it makes you feel to compete day in and day out with them?

ROD SPITTLE: Well, it's a thrill every day. Again, not to sound corny, as you mentioned, Travis, the fact that -- here's the other thing, Travis. I guess if I hang around 10 more years, maybe I can play with Tiger. What do you think about that, buddy? There's something.

But it just goes to show how, again, how great the game is, number one. Like I said, and Phil's heard me say this too many times, why did you wait so long or why did you think you could play? Well, I always had the dream to win a golf tournament on the PGA TOUR. Most guys do it at 25 or 35; just so happens I did mine at 55, that's all. Like I said, I always had taken care of myself, I always played amateur golf. I had a pretty good start at it. But we've worked -- we still work really hard at it for nine months of the year, and my game, this is the best that I have played during my tenure as a professional. I would like to do it for two or three more years.

And what's it like being in the last group on Sunday? It's pretty damn cool. I mean, that's why we all play. Everybody who shows up and is from outside the ropes would like to trade spots with us. Absolutely, I absolutely get it. I'm trying to win tomorrow for about a thousand of my buddies. They know who they are and that's why we still chase all this.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Anything else for Rod? Good luck tomorrow.

ROD SPITTLE: Appreciate it, guys. Thank you very much. Have a nice evening.