

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW: PHIL MICKELSON
May 5, 2016



Q. Do you see tangible evidence of that hard work today?

PHIL MICKELSON: I thought so. I thought that I hit a number of good shots. I had a good start to the day. It wasn't playing easy in the conditions with the weather but the soft greens allowed us to make some birdies. I thought it was a good start to the week.

Q. You said over many years that you love coming here to Quail Hollow, it fits your eye. You have seven top-10s here including a tie for 4th here last year. You're always a positive person but I have a question for you: Are you frustrated in the fact that you've come so close so many times and yet --

PHIL MICKELSON: It keeps me coming back because I feel like it's imminent. I feel like I played well here so many times that I'll continue to give myself chances on the weekend. I really like the golf course. This is the best conditioned course I've seen here at Quail Hollow, this is the best it's been in years. And what it really does now, the subtleties and the nuances are coming out. So when you leave yourself downhill putts, when you miss the greens long and have downhill shots, very difficult to get the ball close and get it stopped. So you have to strategically play and manage your way around the golf course. You can hit it in the rough, you can miss greens if you're in the correct spot, if you're underneath the hole and it's very playable, and there are enough birdie holes where you can shoot a good score.

Q. Finally, close to I should say three and a half inches of rain since Saturday on this golf course. You saw it out there today. How much are you expecting this golf course to change maybe even tomorrow, especially through the weekend?

PHIL MICKELSON: I thought the greens were -- we were having a hard time holding a lot of shots so I thought the greens dried out quite a bit. I think the greens will be very difficult come the weekend. And the fairways, they're in such great shape, they seem to be drying up. I think tomorrow if we don't get any more rain, I think you're going to see a fast and firm golf course for the weekend.

Q. Continuing what has been an excellent record at this golf course, if I can start straightaway with your highlights today, 3 under for the back nine, coming home in 33, excellent start.

PHIL MICKELSON: Thank you. This is a good putt here to make. It was quick and it broke quite a bit to the left. To see it go in, that was a good birdie there.

Q. To pick up another one straight off the bat before you head into the Green Mile, nice to take advantage here on the par 5?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yes, I had a pretty straightforward chip hitting into a slope, and then right about there the green starts to go away. So once I got over that crest was going to feed down to the hole. It was nice to have a tap-in birdie there.

Q. I mentioned your record as I show you this. Five top-5s in all here at Quail Hollow, eight top-10s without a victory. How frustrating is it for you that you had so many close calls but haven't quite got it done, but on the flip side, how excited about your opportunity to try and change that once again here this week?

PHIL MICKELSON: I really like this tournament, I really like the golf course. I've played it well and I feel as though if I can -- I'll give myself chances on the weekend and eventually I'll break through and win here because I've been in contention too often. I like the golf course too much to not eventually win here.

Q. As you look at your performance here today in particular, what gives you the most satisfaction now as you end that round one and look ahead to the next three days?

PHIL MICKELSON: I know that I can hit a lot better than I did today. I've been striking it a lot better this past week in my practice sessions and rounds than I feel I did today. But I managed my way around this golf course and hit the ball in the correct spots, left myself with up-and-downs that were uphill as the greens have become so fast that you get above the hole here, very difficult to get it close, and I just thought I kind of scored my way around.

Q. Well, Phil, considering the changing weather conditions, how good was that 69 today in your estimation?

PHIL MICKELSON: I'm really happy with the start of the tournament, with the first round. I thought that there were some low scores out there if you played well, but the conditions and the wind made it difficult. The soft greens being receptive or somewhat receptive allowed us to be aggressive and to make some birdies. But this is the best I've seen this golf course condition-wise, and certainly the fastest I've seen these greens. It will pose a challenge for any player if you're in the wrong spots.

Q. What is it about this place that really seems to bring out the best in your game and you've performed so well every time you tee it up here?

PHIL MICKELSON: What I love about Quail Hollow how it has an equal number of right-to-left shots and left-to-right shots throughout the course of a round. It also has a number of birdie holes. On both nines you have par 5s that are reachable and a short par 4 that you can get very close to. That allows for a lot of birdies. And then there are some very difficult demanding tough pars like we have the last three holes, 16, 17 and 18. Because of that you can make up some grounds on some of the players by just making pars. So if you manage your game and manage your way around this golf course, you can shoot good numbers. I feel like I've been able to do that over the years. I just haven't been able to quite break through and get a victory. But I'll keep knocking on the door and hopefully keep giving

myself chances on the weekend.

Q. Phil, the last two tournaments, an aberration the way those ended up for you after making -- having such a good start to the year and so much progress in your game?

PHIL MICKELSON: I'm just kind of brushing them off because those two crazy rounds that I had happened to follow my two best warm-up sessions of the year. Sometimes those things happen. I went back home and had a great week of practice, I really played well. In fact, I was hitting it a lot better this past week than I showed today and I feel as though these next three days I can strike it a lot better, play a lot better and shoot lower scores than I did today, and I'm not disappointed with today's round.

Q. Kind got to like your position here, I know you parred the Green Mile. Even though it's 3 under, 4 off the lead, you've got to feel really confident that there's going to be more birdies to be had out there?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think so, too. We get to go out tomorrow in the morning and try to take advantage of pure greens and a good golf course. I'm starting to play well and I didn't -- again, I didn't strike it as well today as I have been. I think if I have a good ball striking round, I'll end up -- I should be able to shoot a pretty good score.

Q. Phil, there's been a lot of talk about how hectic the summer's going to be for you guys. Is it any more so for you than it's been? Does the cramming of the majors change anything for you or make it more difficult?

PHIL MICKELSON: I actually really like it. The way I see it is that around the Olympics, if I can play well in the next two months and somehow get on the team, what a great opportunity to compete in the Olympics. And if I don't, I've never had a three-week stretch of a break over the summer. So we'll end up going on a family vacation so it's a win-win the way I see it. The family would come with me down to Rio if I were able to make it. Again, I'm on the outside looking in but still hopeful. And if not, we'll end up having a family vacation elsewhere. I actually don't mind condensing all the big tournaments closer together.

Q. You've always had an affinity for this golf course. Have you looked at the changes that are proposed for the PGA and what did you think of those?

PHIL MICKELSON: I just heard about them yesterday. I didn't really see the plans yet. I'm sure it will turn out great. But this golf course already is great, it doesn't really need to do much now. The greens now have been softened to where when they roll 15 on the stimpmeter like they are today, it's still very playable and the subtleties and nuances come out as opposed to it becoming unplayable. It's just a wonderful test, it's a beautiful test tee to green testing you equally on left to right, right to left, low shots, high shots. Just very well designed, and now that the greens, they're just pristine. It's such a treat to play.