

Q. You said you were close early in the week; looks like you're still very close, huh?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, I am really pleased with the way that I'm swinging the club and I feel really good. This is the best I've swung in a while, and I'm excited about these upcoming events and hopefully I'll put it all together. I really enjoyed playing here, and to have this perfect weather on the weekend is incredible. I was a lot closer to the top of the leaderboard than a few shots that separate me now, but this was a good week, a good steppingstone, and hopefully I'll continue to build on that for these upcoming weeks and put it together. But this is the best I've swung in a while.

Q. How does the west coast set you up overall for just momentum-building purposes?

PHIL MICKELSON: It's always been really my favorite part of the season. A lot of it has to do with I grew up around here, and even at 46, every time I come out here and look and walk the fairways here, I think about when I was with my dad from the outside looking in and how much it meant to me to ultimately play golf for a living and play inside the ropes.

Now I've competed here well over 25 times I would guess, 28, and it still feels fresh and new and exciting every time I get here, I just love it. To have this kind of weather, too, is spectacular. More than that, my game is starting to feel like it used to.

Q. How's the stamina?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think by next week I'll be 100 percent would be my guess based on what I'm able to do in the gym. Currently I'm probably 75, 80 percent of where I was before and it's slowly coming back. I'm now six weeks removed, so I should be pretty much 100 percent here fairly quickly.

Q. Phil, you've got to know Jon Rahm pretty well. What have you seen in his game that (inaudible)?

PHIL MICKELSON: John doesn't have weaknesses. Every part of his game is a strength. I think he's one of the best players in the world. I think he's more than just a good young player, I think he's one of the top players in the world. I think there's an intangible that some guys have where they want to have the pressure pot, they want to be in that tough position, they want to have everything fall on their shoulders and he has that. He wants to be in that situation. He's the one searching it out as opposed to not wanting to look at the leaderboard, I don't want to know where I stand, I'm just going to go play my game, that type of mentality. He's got a little bit different approach. He wants to know exactly where he stands, what he has to do and he intends to go do it. He's a very tough competitor. I think a

lot of him.

Q. When did you first see that in him? Has it been a gradual process for him?

PHIL MICKELSON: When my brother coached him at Arizona State, he would go up to him and say, "What do you need from me, Coach?" He says, "I need you to birdie three of the last five holes." He says, "You've got it," and he'd go do it. It's just a little something that it's hard to quantify or put words on, but he has that intangible.

Q. After the redesign you haven't had the success that you wanted but you're getting closer. Do you think that you're getting back that advantage that you lost growing up on this course?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think that that might be the case. I've had some good tournaments now here. I had that one time where I came close with Bubba and I feel like I'm starting to learn what holes to attack and where not to and play to the conservative line. Good example, No. 12, I've had that left pin. You simply can't go at it. You're hitting a long iron into a section that goes away. A small section of the green actually goes away from you there. So, I hit it in the middle of the green and made par. It's learning not to give away shots like that that has been helping me perform a little better here.

Q. Even though you maybe a little less than 100 percent, given that you had to have the second surgery, how big a bonus was having these two weeks to play?

PHIL MICKELSON: I thought I probably should start -- if I were going to start 100 percent, it'd be about Phoenix. Yet my game came around quicker than I thought it would and I felt the best place to sharpen it and to see where I was at was to play last week and this week. I'm really glad I did because my touch is starting to come around a little bit. The sensitivity to shotmaking, chipping, putting on Tour-caliber greens and rough and things that you can't replicate at your home course is getting sharper because I did play these last two weeks. So I'm looking forward to these next three weeks and I get to play at three spots that I really love. I haven't been back to Riviera in quite some time. I'll be going back there this year. It's been my kids' break and so I've missed it, but I really like that golf course and I'm looking forward to playing there as well as Phoenix and Pebble.