



**TIGER WOODS ( - 3)**

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**Q. One word to describe your round?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It was -- how about three words? Up and down because I had a lot of birdies, made a lot of putts. I didn't play the par 5s very well, made two 6s and I grinded it out and made a few pars, which is nice.

**Q. Pleasing to get this sort of first round out of the way?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It was not only nice to get the first round out of the way, but also I'm only three shots out of the lead. So to be able to put myself there after not playing for, is it 10 months or so, in the neighborhood of that, it was nice to feel the adrenaline out there.

I had to dial it back a little bit with my clubs, take it a little bit further because obviously I was a little jacked up. The shot that I hit over there at 14 was pretty sweet, a little 95-yard pitching wedge. If I would have had that same shot early in the round, I couldn't have played it because I hadn't figured out how to dial it back yet.

**Q. Tiger, did you allow yourself to think of where you might be after today this close to the lead or do you block that out?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I looked up at the boards. I wanted to see what the guys were doing.

**Q. I meant before the round.**

**TIGER WOODS:** Before the round? No. Just if I tried to shoot something under par would be nice. I was in position to really get something close to 5, 6, 7 under par today, but I made a couple mistakes on those par 5s.

**Q. No. 9 was kind of like an example of the rust?**

**TIGER WOODS:** What happens, it's just like last year, I was rolling in, got to 9 or 10 and made a couple mistakes and the round slipped away. I was not going to let that happen this year. I also made 6 there at 9, I came right back and made birdie at 10. Just tried to call it all square.

**Q. How concerned are you about some of the chips you had out there?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, it's frustrating because I have a hard time with this into-the-grain, ball sitting down. I have to hit the ball high. I'm used to using the bounce and hitting behind

it a little bit and getting it up, but it's so sticky that it's really hard to do. I haven't quite figured it out yet.

**Q. What in your game feels the best, what was really good out there?**

**TIGER WOODS:** The best part, my driver and obviously my putter.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I didn't talk to the kids, they're at school. I was very thankful this morning. I was in my head thanking all the people who have helped me in giving me a chance to come back and play this round again. There were a lot of people that were instrumental in my life; friends, outside people I've never met before, obviously my surgeon. So there have been a lot of people. I was very thankful. I make sure in my head I try to thank every one of them.

**Q. You've been thankful for a while about that but as you got closer to today (inaudible.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** This morning I knew I was going to tee it up and knew I was going to go full out. I had a great gym session this morning, lifted some solid weight, felt good. Yeah, it was good to go.

**Q. After you got out there, Tiger, does it seem like 10 months, so long ago since you last played, or once you're into it, does it feel like --**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I was very happy I found the rhythm of the round by the second hole. After I hit that 8-iron in there pin high, I felt I've got the rhythm. On 3 I just -- I smashed a drive down there and then about 265 into the wind with a 2-iron, I just hit it on a rope, put it up there on the green. I knew I was back playing again.

**Q. Tiger, what about today surprised you or you didn't expect?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, last year I got tired last year. You saw, you could see I was 3 or 4 under par and then make a couple dubs, a couple bogeys here or there and lose the round.

This year obviously with my back better, my training sessions have been much better, my strength is up and I didn't feel tired at all, which is great.

**Q. Do you feel any discomfort at all out there?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Uh-uh.

**Q. Question about winning this tournament (inaudible.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yes.

**Q. Have you changed the grip in any way since you teed up last?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No, nothing, I didn't change anything.

**Q. Tiger, by any chance did you see the double rainbow on 18 as you were playing?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No.

**Q. It was almost like someone above was sending you some signal.**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I had a lot of (inaudible). I was (inaudible) on that putt, I wasn't going to make bogey there.

**Q. But you walked it in a little?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It felt good. I just saw JT's putt hanging, I thought he was going to (inaudible) right in the middle but that putt hung and I figured my putt's -- I played it probably half a ball less.

**Q. That 15-foot par putt that you made, that was the first fist pump?**

**TIGER WOODS:** On 4.

**Q. Yeah, how good did that feel?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It felt great because I don't want to lose shots. I haven't played in a very long time and I can't afford to go out there and make a bunch of bogeys and know that I can make 9, 10 birdies and offset them. These guys have been playing all year, they've been playing well, and if they make a few bogeys, who cares, they can make seven or eight birdies a day, especially on a golf course like this (inaudible) putts. If I would have done that last year, I would have given myself a little bit better chance and that's what I tried to do today.

**Q. You said you came in with tempered expectations. Is it hard to stay patient, is it hard not to get a little impatient?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No, it's -- I was just grinding, trying to -- honestly just trying to put the ball in the right spot. I didn't want to do what I did at 15 today. You know, hit it up there on top of the hill and I could have made anything up there. I just didn't want to have holes like that where I could make bogeys or doubles or anything higher than that. So there were a couple times, yeah, I probably played a little bit safer than I normally would.

**Q. (Question about Tommy Fleetwood.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** He's been fantastic. I think I first got a pretty good glimpse of him this year in Mexico, he played really well there and he's had a very consistent year. He's one of our better ball-strikers. His putting stance and grip is unorthodox, but he rolls it well. You can see how fast the ball rolls off the face, and so he's just coming into his own, he's just learning how to play at this elite level and is maturing and (inaudible.)

**Q. Outside of the obvious, which is competing and contending or trying to contend, what's your biggest takeaway from the week? What does it need to be at the end of the week?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, just keep progressing. All I'm trying to do is just keep plodding along. Today if I take away the two 6s and play the round correctly, then I'm probably tied for the lead. So it's just little things like that I need to clean up and hopefully I can do that tomorrow.

**Q. Tiger, prior to this week, what was the most days in a row you were able to play, this now, the longest stretch?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I played nine straight days.

**Q. Was that cart, both, walking?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Both, yeah. I played in a cart just to make sure I get 36 holes in. Walking, there's no way we would get 36 in, especially with daylight and having to go pick up the kids.

**Q. Is that one of the biggest differences from last year to now that you've been able to get in?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, and be able to play -- I'm telling you, the guys have been great from JT to Berger to Rory to all the guys, Rickie, DJ. I played with all of them and they're all trying to help me. They're all texting me, c'mon, let's go out and play, let's go play for some dollars and have a good time, and they really want to help me come back and play. Especially when playing with Rickie a few times, I always had to ask him, "What are you hitting," because I didn't know how far I was hitting clubs. When I left the game, I was much shorter than Rickie and next thing you know I'm about the same length. So it was nice to be able to play rounds of golf with those guys. Obviously we were needling each other pretty hard and trying to get in each other's kitchen. That was good.