

TIGER WOODS (-5)

Q. (In progress) third round of THE PLAYERS. How were you able to really kick the game in gear then?

TIGER WOODS: You know, I tried to clean up my ball-striking a little bit, continue doing what I was doing on the greens yesterday I hit a lot of good putts, they just didn't go in. I started on my line with the right pace and today I did that and a lot of them fell.

Q. You were very optimistic with the putter yesterday. Describe the difference in how it feels compared to the previous putter you had been using and that stretch you had, the last four holes.

TIGER WOODS: Well, it's swinging more. It has a little bit more toe hang, so it's releasing a little bit more than my old Scotty. That's kind of -- as I said, it's a tweener between my training putter at home and what I normally go with, so go ahead and just trust it's going to swing. And I can feel it swing in my practice strokes. It's a good feeling for me. I don't like blocking putts, I like feeling that toe move and cover that ball. It felt good today.

Q. Seemed like you were striking the ball well your first nine and then you get a chip-in on the 9th. How much did that energize your round?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I had just come off a three-putt there at 17. It was a bonus. 18 was a pretty easy hole today, went off the right, I just flared it to the right. Hit it down in the bowl and it set up pretty good. I like to hit my little cut spinner in there and I did.

Q. Tiger, big picture, how close is this to putting together your ball-striking and your putting?

TIGER WOODS: You know, this golf course, you've got to be patient on this course. There's not a lot of low scores out there. Just got to let my round build. Something in the mid 60s would have been a good score today and that's what I end up with, which is great.

Q. Were you pleased with the 65? Might have been the highest you could have shot today.

TIGER WOODS: I was happy with it. I basically had one bad hole with a nice little three-putt at 17. But overall, the hole-out there at 18 and hitting the ball as well as I did for most of the day and I made a few putts, which was nice. Overall, I just thought that something in the mid to high 60s would have been a good score and I was able to shoot that.

Q. Yesterday, as you mentioned the putts, only 48 feet of putts, today well over 100 feet of putts. Was there anything different? I know you worked on it last night.

TIGER WOODS: No, it was the same. I felt great yesterday. I hit a lot of good putts that were starting on line and with the right speed and I was able to start seeing my line, which is nice. Just continue with it. As I said, I wasn't disappointed the way I putted yesterday and this is just a continuation of it. Today, the same thing, I felt like I could see the lines, ball starting on my line and they went in.

Q. Why did you hit the putter on 10? Secondly --

TIGER WOODS: I shouldn't have. Yeah, I was caught in between, should I hit my little 56 and run it over the top. I figure the greens were a little bit faster early in the morning but the fairways are a little bit dewier. In hindsight, no, I should have hit my 56 and run it over the hill.

Q. But the second part of it, does it matter to see a first putt like that go in from 20, 25 feet just for peace of mind?

TIGER WOODS: I hit a good putt. That was something I did all day yesterday, I hit good putts, started the ball on line and with the right speed and they just didn't go in. So what. If I just continue to do that, which I haven't done in probably about four tournaments, they're going to start falling and today they fell.

Q. The second shot on 11, a mistake or did you just miss it?

TIGER WOODS: No. I was trying to cut it in there after just watching those two guys hit it in the left bunker and left of the bunker. I was practicing that bunker shot there and I was just saying it's not a good spot, just hit it -- feed it off the bunker and leave it short of the hole. I was trying to hit it short left of the hole but on the green. I flared it, overcut.

Q. You finished par, par. You could have easily gone bogey, bogey there. How satisfying and important was it to finish off the round like that?

TIGER WOODS: It was nice. I felt like I played well enough to shoot the score I shot and I didn't want to lose it on the last couple holes. And I could have easily lost it, as you said, but I made two nice saves at 8 and 9 and was able to post 5 for the day.

Q. How much do you believe you're going to win?

TIGER WOODS: I think as the years progress, I think I'm not that far away from putting it together where I can win. Right now I'm only 4 back. The scores aren't going to be that low, the golf course is getting a little bit more difficult. Again, just be patient with it and a long way to go.

Q. Tiger, I know it's been actually a couple of years since you actually played here in D.C. What's it been like to kind of be back on the course here in the D.C. area?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, well, this is a tremendous sports town. They really support their sport around here and they've come out and always supported our event and they've done the same thing here. This is on the more difficult side of a walking golf course and it's hot, but they're out here supporting and cheering, and boy, they're into it and it's fun.

Q. What was the shot you were most proud of today?

TIGER WOODS: Probably that 3-wood on 2. I had 280 front and smoked it, flew it 280 with a nice high cut off a downhill lie. Not exactly an easy shot to hit, but I pulled it off.

Q. You mentioned how you were able to finish off the round, keep that score together today. You had a few times earlier -- THE PLAYERS, Memorial -- where you had it going, obviously great scores and you weren't able to finish it off. Did you analyze that at all to think what you didn't do? Was it mental or was it just part of golf?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I just didn't finish it off the right way. I'm supposed to make birdies on those holes coming in and not bogeys. I've just got to keep pushing, keep trying to make birdies, keep trying to go low. These guys, they don't just hang around par, you've got to keep pushing it and I didn't. The putter's a little bit different, I was trying to push it too hard and it ended up going the other way, but Memorial was the opposite.

Q. How important was 18?

TIGER WOODS: 18, 18 or my 18th?

Q. 18, 18.

TIGER WOODS: After three-putting 17, to hit a terrible drive up the right and hit a good 5-iron to where I have a shot at it, I mean, I was hitting that shot in the practice round and it's exactly the same shot and it was pretty sweet because I was just trying to hit kind of a high cut spinner in there and it worked out perfectly.

Q. If you had another chance to go back to the tee on 14 today, would you take something off the driver or just hit a better shot with the 3-wood?

TIGER WOODS: I probably would hit driver.

Q. Is that too much?

TIGER WOODS: Driver's too much and 3-wood's not enough. I have to hit it perfect to carry that bunker. I liked driver initially because it was going to take the bunker out of play.

The wind laid down and so it was 3-wood, but I have to hit it perfectly and I didn't. I just missed it just a touch and I ended up in a bunker. But I liked driver initially and probably should have stuck with it.

Q. You've had a couple nice tournaments where you come in on Saturday and do something to get yourself back in the game. What's the difference this time?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I'm not that far back. I'm in a similar position to where I was at Valspar. The scores aren't going to be that low and it's going to be a tough weekend. It's going to be hot, it's going to be long grinds. It will be hotter than now, which is scary. It will be over 100 degrees and it will be a long weekend mentally and physically. I'm in a good position right now.