

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW
July 1, 2018



FRANCESCO MOLINARI (-21)

JACK RYAN: We'll go ahead and get started with Francesco Molinari, champion of the 2018 Quicken Loans National. This is Francesco's first win on the PGA TOUR. Francesco, you move to No. 42 in the FedExCup. Could you talk a little bit about what that does for your goals moving forward?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, I came here obviously because I was right on the bubble in the FedExCup and I wanted to gain a better position, so I guess job done.

Last year I missed the TOUR Championship I think by a single shot in Chicago and it wasn't nice. I'm in a better position now to try and get there this year and I think that's just going to be my goal going forward, yeah.

JACK RYAN: You had a five-hole stretch on the back nine that you played 6 under. What was the key there today? How were you able to score so well on those holes?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: I think the par save on 9 was massive just momentum-wise. It could have cut the lead to two if I dropped a shot there, so it was a very good putt of mine.

So flushed the tee shot on 10, it's a daunting tee shot, and made a great putt for eagle. 11, I don't know, my thought was really if I get the ball on the fairway on 11, that was the last shot really that I was a little bit scared of because if you hit in the water, you can make a big number. So hit a good 3-wood there and then perfect 6-iron on the second shot to two feet, and then from then on I was just on a roll hitting good shots, making putts, so great feeling.

JACK RYAN: Very well played. We'll start with questions out here.

Q. Can you think of another stretch you've had like that in your career where you made everything and everything seemed easy to you?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, there's been stretches, but like last year at the U.S. PGA at Quail Hollow, I went I think birdied 11, 12, 14, 15, so it does happen. Obviously it's different if you're already leading the tournament, it separates you from the field. You know, a month ago at Wentworth it was a bit shaky, it was the end, so it was nice to play the last couple of holes with a bigger margin.

Q. You had played so well in Europe, specifically with the win and the runner-up finish. Why hadn't that translated over to the PGA TOUR in the United States?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: I don't have a definite answer, but I think it's the first part of the

season probably I wasn't playing quite as well as I am -- as I have been in the last month or so. The putting is definitely improved and that's taken pressure off the long game as well because if you know you can make 20-, 30-footers, you're not trying too hard to leave it close to the flag.

I think it's a combination of that, and I think for us Europeans it's harder coming over here. It's not your home country, everything is different, so it takes a little bit of time to get used to.

Q. Congratulations, Francesco. On No. 10, did you learn anything about how to play that hole over the last three days that helped you play it so flawlessly today or was it just a matter of striking it really well, making that long putt, reading the green right?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, there's no bail-out really because if you hit the tee shot right, you might be struggling to lay up. So no, I didn't learn anything, it's just about hitting good shots. I flushed the tee shot, flushed the second shot. I think it was a little bit unlucky to release so much and I thought, to be honest, it was going to be closer to the hole, but the putt was great, so it started an amazing run for me.

Q. You talked the other day about how you admired Tiger Woods which you were a teen, made you think about turning pro, obviously you played against him at Medinah. What's the perspective now winning his tournament in what may be the last year of PGA TOUR golf in D.C. for a while?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yes, it's amazing to win a tournament hosted by Tiger. Is probably the greatest ever to play the game and like I said the other day, I grew up as a teenager watching him on TV dominating golf tournaments. It's even more special to win in this style and to get his congratulations on the last green was a very proud moment for me.

Q. The last couple of days, how hot was it out there and how do you cope with it when it's that hot that many days in a row?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, it was probably as hot as I've experienced in my career. Just drink a lot and everywhere where I could find some ice, I was trying to rub some ice on my face and trying to cool down, stay in the shadow. It's tough, it's tough, and I'm even prouder of my mental toughness in those conditions in the last few days.

Q. Tiger said thanks to what you were doing, he would have had to shoot 24 on the back nine to have a chance. Did he say anything to you on the green?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: No, it was just joking and asking me what I had for dinner last night and I told him it was pasta, pasta is the secret.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the Ryder Cup. I have a hard time kind of following money and points. You seem like you're probably right on -- I think you're in right now, but right on the cusp of it. Was that any type of risk to miss two Rolex Series

events to come over here?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, it was, but the risk on the other side was I was 123th on the FedEx. So unfortunately or fortunately when you play two tours, you need to balance the two things. It wasn't an easy decision, I thought until the last minute whether to go to France or to come here, but seems like it was the right choice in the end.

Q. What number are you talking about, are you 15 or 12?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, it's not so much the number, it's the fact because I don't play 25 tournaments every year, I need to play a new event or an event that I haven't played in the past four seasons and I haven't done it yet, so that's going to be.

Q. Francesco, we don't see too many Italians in PGA TOUR events, you're the first one I saw to win since '47. What does it mean to you and what do you think the reception might be back home?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: I don't know. We see about the reception. I guess it's a good thing that Italy's not in the World Cup, so they'll have more time to focus on other sports. Like I said, I'm very proud. I've won on the European Tour, I won the World Cup with my brother, I've been part of Ryder Cups, but it's just another thing to think of to win over here in the U.S. It's not easy when you come from a country like Italy where golf is not really the first sport. It's been a long journey, it's been a long way and I'm very proud of standing here with the trophy.

Q. Just to clear up a question, you had played this event in the last four years, so this wouldn't count for your strength of field, correct?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: No. We were talking about John Deere, yeah, so John Deere is going to be my strength of field event for this year.

Q. And how aware are you, if at all, the cheers that were maybe coming from Tiger's group ahead?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Sorry?

Q. The cheers that were maybe from Tiger's group up ahead?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, I heard some of them, but I was trying to focus on doing my thing, hitting good shots. Obviously I was looking at leaderboards, so one good thing I have to say over here compared to Europe is that there's a lot more leaderboards, so if you want to look at them, you can be aware of what's happening any time. So I was looking at them and I saw I had the lead after the front nine, and the thought was just to keep pushing, keep making birdies and don't give anyone a chance to get me.

Q. At that point there were a couple guys right within a couple strokes when you made the turn. Did that put any maybe added pressure on you going into those first couple holes on the back nine to start hitting shots and going at it?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Well, not really because I started tied with Abraham and there were a few guys close enough to contend today. So there wasn't any added pressure, I was happy with the lead that I had built on the front nine. But like I said, in those circumstances it's really important to keep pushing. It's very easy to just focus on the two, three shots that you have and I did a very good job at it.

Q. A couple things. Was Wales the first time you had played with Tiger, just the two of you?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: I think we had played the same year the U.S. PGA in Whistling Straits for the first time.

Q. Okay. Did you pick anything up from that -- I know it was a pretty big defeat on your end, but did you pick anything up on that?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Don't birdie the first two holes if you play against Tiger in match play. (Laughs.)

Q. The other thing, I know you've still got the money and you've still got the ranking points and everything like this, but the Tour doesn't recognize your HSBC win even though you beat Westwood and McIlroy and Tiger and Phil and we could go on and on. Does that ever bother you at all? Would you like to see it --

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: A little bit, a little bit. When everyone was saying I never won on the PGA TOUR, I felt like saying, well, technically, it was pretty much a PGA TOUR tournament. But yeah, it's just a formality, and I think it's different anyway to win on U.S. soil. That was obviously in China and it's more international. It's just a different kind of event. So this win feels special.

Q. You're the first Italian to win here in forever, 1945. Is there anything in that?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, well, obviously there's been quite a few Italians winning on the European Tour, but it's nice to be the first in a long time to win over here. It's one of the many reasons why I wanted to win over here so much. Hopefully, there's more to come.

JACK RYAN: Congratulations on the victory.

Q. What's your knowledge or background on Toney Penna?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Nothing.

JACK RYAN: Congratulations.