

SAM SAUNDERS (-10)

Q. Sam, no time better than the present as we sort of wind down the year. You're playing a golf course that your grandfather designed here at TPC Twin Cities. As you go around this course, does that make you think about him a little more?

SAM SAUNDERS: Not necessarily, to be honest. You know, I'm always -- when I'm out here doing my thing, I'm always thinking about things we talked about, whether it's on the course or off the course. I think about him all the time.

It's nice to be playing on a course that he designed and I don't do that a lot on Tour. Certainly see some characteristics that I know he likes. I just think it's a good golf course. It's got 18 good golf holes on it. There's nothing out there that's overly tricked up, just a lot of good holes where you've got to hit good golf shots.

Q. You've been kind of through this, down this road, this routine a while. How are you dealing with it as this season comes to a close?

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, you know, it's been a very frustrating year for me. I've played poorly, but I've been hitting the ball really well lately. I'm trending in the right direction. I know guys say it all the time, but it's one of those deals where you've just got to stick with it. It's a long season and sometimes you're pulling your hair out there and you go through some dark times, but you've just got to stay positive.

I kind of hit rock bottom a couple weeks ago in Connecticut and, to be honest, wanted to just be done. But you can't do that. You've got to hit that point and then you've got to turn it around and say, you know what, there are thousands of professional golfers in the world who would give anything to have six starts on Tour. I've got now five, but I've got plenty of golf left and going to make the most of it.

Q. You head into the weekend at 10 under par. What's gone right this week for you?

SAM SAUNDERS: Putting, honestly. It's all been putting. Earlier this year I putted well, I really struggled with the driver all year and I finally got everything kind of figured out a couple weeks ago. So where was that, I don't even remember, but I drove it really well. Last week in Detroit I drove the ball awesome. I got a driver that I just feel really comfortable with. The guys at Callaway, I mean, we spent three hours together and they really made every effort to make -- get me in a club that I felt really comfortable with and it's made a huge difference off the tee last week and this week.

But most importantly this week has been the putter. Again, Callaway guy, Joe Toulon, he

was a huge help. He spent an hour and a half, two hours with me on Monday and Tuesday and watched me hit a lot of putts and watch me kind of figure out something that I was missing the beat on and got it going the right way. I've seen a couple putts go in these two days and it's a welcome surprise.

Q. You said a couple weeks ago you hit rock bottom?

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah.

Q. What's rock bottom for you and how did you --

SAM SAUNDERS: You don't want to play golf anymore. You don't, you know. It sounds -- it sounds so whiny because so many people would give anything to be playing on the PGA TOUR, and I get that. It's a wonderful life and it's a wonderful career, but I was happy when I was with my wife and kids, I was happy when I was hanging out at the hotel and the house. The second I got to the golf course, I was pretty miserable. It's just -- you know, you feel -- you just feel horrible out there and it's frustrating. You don't want to be playing bad golf and you certainly don't want to be playing bad golf in front of a bunch of people and cameras. It's just not fun.

But you've got to -- I kind of remind myself that there's so many good people out there that are pulling for me. Sometimes you get text messages that say "hang in there" and it's easy to look at those as frustrating and annoying. You don't want that, you know, cheerleading, but at the same time I try and look at the positive of all of it. I've got all these wonderful friends and people that I've met along the way that are genuinely pulling for me to do well out here. I'm trying to use that to inspire me to really grind out these last five weeks.

I feel good again, I feel normal, back to my happy self, smiling on the golf course, which you've got to do. It's an effort sometimes, it really is. We all go through it at times, but I definitely feel like me again and excited about the way I'm playing golf and know that this is what I want to do, I want to play out here and I'm not done yet. I've got a lot left to accomplish out here. I certainly have other aspirations in my career, but I haven't done what I need to do out here yet.

Q. So it was more a mental thing then?

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, yeah, it always is. We're all pretty good. I hit some shots the last few weeks that even though I wasn't performing the way I wanted to, I kind of impressed myself a little bit because I've been hitting the ball really well. I said, you know, I'm still pretty good at this game and I'm going to go ahead and use that and take advantage of the fact that I've got, you know, a lot of talent and ability to hit a lot of shots that some guys just can't do, and I need to use that and have a positive attitude. I've done that pretty well so far this week. The putting, it frees up everything. When you start making some putts, you drive the ball better, you hit your irons better, you chip better. It all does always come full circle to that.

Q. So talk a little bit about today specifically. You finished great, two birdies on your last two holes and everything. Just talk about your round today.

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, I played -- I hit the ball better as the day went on. I made a nice birdie on the first hole, and then on the second hole I pulled the drive a little. I never was really worried about it, but it hit the cart path and went out of bounds and that was kind of, you know, a shock to the system because -- but I hit a great -- I hit a provisional, ripped it down the middle, hit a 9-iron on the green and made the putt for bogey. So that was a really good bogey and that kind of settled me into the round. I hit a few crooked drives early, but once I got settled and started making good swings, it was just good, solid golf as normal.

Q. And talk about the rest of the week. You say you've got five weeks left and everything, that this could be a big --

SAM SAUNDERS: Yeah, I need to win, that's pretty much it. And that's the cool thing for me. I mean, yeah, fourth place finish would be nice, or third, whatever, but that's not going to change anything for me at this point. I need to win, that's about the only thing that I'm going to be excited about. I guess solo second would lock up a job for next year, but I'm not thinking about it that way. I really just want to try and win a golf tournament and hopefully I have a chance on Sunday this week.