

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW
January 25, 2020

RYAN PALMER (-11)



DOUG MILNE: Ryan Palmer, thanks for joining us for a few minutes a day after your 62, 1-under 71 today on the South Course, four birdies, three bogeys, still right there. Just a few comments on today's round.

RYAN PALMER: A grind, that's for sure. I won't lie, a little nerves there on the front nine. I get a little loose with the golf swing and a little quick, but had some great shots. A great putt on nine for birdie I think was my calming factor, a little five, six-footer downhill. I went to 10 tee and it seemed to calm me down and I was able to kind of get my tempo under control.

On the back nine I drove it really well and hit some great iron shots. The putter wasn't there obviously. It's hard to follow 11 birdies and then expect to make them again, especially with the poa annua greens and the traffic that comes with it, they get a little bumpier.

Overall, it was a solid day, a grind. It could have gone the other way very easily and I was able to salvage 1 under and I'm right there.

DOUG MILNE: I imagine this is a place you feel comfortable; you had a share of second place in 2018, your round yesterday. Is this a place that you really feel comfortable playing?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, no, I'm excited. I love the golf course. It's not easy and you've got to grind and you've got to drive your ball. You know, we're going to have three -- two really good drivers of the ball in Jon and Rory and I'll hit it as far as I can and hit first all day. But it will be fun watching those guys play, obviously what Jon and I did at Zurich last year. I'm looking forward to the chance. I'm one back going into Sunday in the final group and you can't ask for more.

Q. It's hard to compare a 71 to a 62, but was there a certain amount of satisfaction today given the fact that everybody started two hours late and it kind of disrupts your routine and all that goes with that?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, I did a 20-, 30-minute workout twice, sat around the locker room with the guys chitchatting. Yeah, it makes for a long day when you're ready to go at 8:00 to warm up and go to the putting green and get ready for a 9:45 tee time and then you're not teeing off until 11:45. It just kind of drags on, but you do the best you can to just relax, not think about it.

But my third round's have not been very good the last couple years and I think I'm turning the corner and it's nice to shoot under par today in that position when guys are shooting 3, 4, 5 under par. I could have shot 2 or 3 over pretty easy. I'm really proud the way I hung in

there, stayed patient, stayed calm and just hopefully there will be a few more birdies tomorrow and we'll have a chance.

Q. I had one more thing. I mean, you've had some good results on this course the last two years. How does that affect you going into Sunday and the fact that you've got some confidence that you've been able to handle this course more or less?

RYAN PALMER: You know, in my mind the hard part's over, today was that round. Getting through today's round, leading by 2 obviously, but to keep myself in striking distance, obviously the final group, one back, that was huge for me. So tomorrow I can kind of go out there a little bit more relaxed.

My history on Sundays has been pretty good this past year and I'll take that into tomorrow, plus the way I played this golf course in years past. I'm excited about it. The way I feel going into tomorrow knowing the rounds I've shot and the way I've played on Sundays as of late, so confidence is high. It's a matter of just executing.

Q. How much comfort or discomfort is there going out with your Zurich winning partner?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, it's going to be a lot of fun. Of course you're rooting for him at Zurich and trying to say "hit it here" and "hit it there," so maybe tomorrow I'll say "hit over there" instead.

It's fun when you get to play with guys you know well and you have a good time. I know Adam Hayes, his caddie, as well. He and James are buddies. That will be a relaxing factor. Then obviously getting to watch him and play with Rory, that's the position you want to be in. You want to be with the best come Sunday late in the day, so I'm excited about that chance. It will be fun playing with Jon in this setting and then I look forward to the opportunity.

Q. You know, after a round like yesterday, and we know kind of the history of golf, it's so rare for somebody to come back the next day and go low again, is that something that you think a lot about even when you're warming up? Do you start to wonder how to get that sensibility back from the day before or is it just something that's in the past already and you just move on?

RYAN PALMER: No, everybody thinks about it. It's hard to follow those low rounds, it's no doubt, because you're making everything, there's nothing you can do wrong in one day and the next day you get up and okay, how do I -- people are telling you make sure you eat the same thing, do the same thing at night.

But I go through the same routine every morning on the range and you try to find that feeling, but you know, totally different golf course, the greens are different. You're not going to have the perfect surfaces that the North had because when you get poa annua greens and a lot of traction on them, they get real bumpy, it's hard to make a lot of putts.

The key to today was just to survive for me, try to shoot under par and just be right there. I accomplished a pretty big goal for myself I kind of set this morning and I'm excited to go at it.

Q. Two things, and this maybe old news to you, but how did you get hooked up with Jon in New Orleans?

RYAN PALMER: With Jon?

Q. Yeah.

RYAN PALMER: Me and Jordan played with him and Wesley Brian a couple years ago, and I've known Adam Hayes a long time and I've played a lot of rounds with Jon in the last two, three years, had him at my charity event and became pretty good friends. I knew Jordan wasn't playing last year. It was a matter of James and I saying who do we really look at playing with. I didn't want to just play to go play, I felt like I wanted to find a partner that I got along with, but also I knew I could really contend with.

I texted Adam and mentioned it and he said to text Jon, see what he says. Of course I'm getting harassed by, why do you keep playing with these young guys, you know? Jordan, then Jon. No, we hit it off and I knew our games related so well, the way we both drive it, his short game and my iron play was a perfect match. You know, we're looking forward to doing it again.

Q. Just secondly, from a confidence standpoint, how do you feel about being right there in the mix twice in two starts?

RYAN PALMER: No, it's great. The game's been right there. Even in the fall I played well in Korea and Japan, to be right there on Sunday at the Sony Open and here we are again. The more times you get in that position, the easier it becomes, I think. It's a matter of just getting into that situation more and more often. This is the arena you want to be in, you want to be there with the greatest players with all the crowd around you and cheering you, heckling you, whatever they're doing. That's where you want to be and we're there again. So now it's a matter of just relaxing my nerves and being as calm as possible and execute the best I can.

Q. What was the last time you got heckled?

RYAN PALMER: Oh, some idiot on 14 today, he kept telling me how to read the putt from the stands and he said it four times. I was like, okay, I got it. I was over the ball when he yelled it, "Hit it right." I turned around and kind of motioned with the putter in hand, like you want to come hit it? So he kind of -- yeah, that was it.

Q. What happened on the putt?

RYAN PALMER: It was shitty. Maybe he should have hit it. (Laughing.)

He was harmless. You get guys in the stands that are far enough away, they're having fun. It wasn't that bad.

Q. Can you talk about the course and how it's played from Wednesday until today, a little bit more moisture and the fog that's rolled in?

RYAN PALMER: Nothing different. I would say the greens are a little bumpier just from all the rounds of golf played on it. Poa annua greens when they're soft, they get really beat up. You can hit perfect putts that are like -- look like you just went blind.

But the golf course is playing no different than it did Thursday. It's still playing long with the moisture, the heavy air. Like I say, you hit it in the rough, you're going to get penalized. Unfortunately, we had a few rough shots but I was able to draw a decent lie where I could play out of it. The fairways are key and that will be our objective tomorrow.

Q. You mentioned the bumps on the greens a couple of times. Do you account for that or do you try to hit firmer? Do you change your style or do you just accept that that's the reality?

RYAN PALMER: You know, you really can't do anything. The spike marks you can see you're allowed to tap down, but you can't go tap around different pieces of grass to just tap down. If it's a footprint or spike mark, obviously you can repair it.

When you get on greens like that it's just a matter of hitting solid putts. If you hit the putts solid, after that, okay, hopefully it keeps a good line. Everybody's got to putt them. That's the main thing on greens like this, you don't want to hit them too hard because they're still pretty quick and you can get three- or four-footers coming back, which is the last thing you would want on these kind of greens. So you're trying to dive putts in a lot on bumpy greens, gets tough.

Q. You said yesterday that you stopped playing here a few years ago, but when you came back you found the South Course perfect for you because it's hard and that fit your game now. At what point in your career did you become that player that wanted to play hard courses and are suited for it?

RYAN PALMER: It's probably in the last five or six years, I guess. First six, seven years of my career where I loved the golf courses you shot 20 under par. Then I guess the older I got and became more of a veteran, I guess you could say, I just learned to control my game better. I think my ball-striking's gotten better the last five or six years, the way I drive it and my irons. I really enjoy the hard tests, the patience and grinding it out. I love those kind of golf courses where single digit winners, I feel like I have a chance to win every week when I have those kind of tournaments. I still enjoy playing the easy courses. Obviously next week we're going to play a course where you have to shoot 15, 18 under par, I'm sure.

I just enjoy the grind, knowing I don't have to go shoot 7, 8 under par every day. I feel like I have a chance every week when it's a grinding golf course. I'm excited.

DOUG MILNE: All right. Ryan, thank you. Best of luck tomorrow.

RYAN PALMER: Thanks.