

MATTHEW WOLFF (-11)

JACK RYAN: We'll go ahead and get started here. We would like to welcome Matthew Wolff into the interview room at the Rocket Mortgage Classic.

Matthew, as it stands right now, you're tied for the lead. If we can get an opening comment on the great position you put yourself in going into the weekend.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, today was -- I felt really good. Coming out of the gates I was feeling really good with my swing and came off a 69 yesterday, which felt like I could have had -- you know, been lower, but I told myself just to be patient and let it come to me.

I think the biggest thing is I got off to such a good start and six birdies, you know, from, what was it, 14 to 1, I guess, because I started on 10. I just felt like, you know, I wasn't really worrying about the cut at that point, I was worrying about putting myself in the best spot and keep on making more birdies. When you're feeling that good, you're not really worried about missing shots, you're just kind of taking dead aim. It was nice to not be around the cut this time and to put myself into a good spot going into the weekend because as I've learned the last couple weeks you definitely can't win on the first two days, but you can sure as heck lose.

Q. Before we take some questions from the media we have on the line, let's go through that six-birdie stretch there. What was working so well for you and do you tend to stay hot when you get hot like that?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I do tend to feed off myself. I mean, if I'm feeling really good and sticking it close and string together a couple, it makes me feel really good about what I'm working on in my swing, and once I'm seeing putts drop and other things, finding fairways, hitting the ball (inaudible) makes it easier for me to (inaudible).

Yeah, I think the biggest part was just my irons. No. 14, I drove the ball in the fairway and then got it up and down from there. But 15 and 16, 15 I had three feet and then 16 I had two feet. So just kind of felt like back to back, you know, really easy birdies. And then 17's a pretty gettable par 5. Then 18, I pushed a drive a little right and then hit it about eight feet or so below the hole, just leaving myself in the right spot to be aggressive and make some good putts.

Q. This tournament will end about two days shy of the one-year anniversary of your first PGA TOUR win. I was curious whether you subscribe to the idea that every player sort of peaks at a certain time of year and does that trend go back for you into amateur golf and junior golf where you always sort of peak around the Fourth of July?

MATTHEW WOLFF: No, I haven't noticed that trend. I guess you can kind of say it since I won 3M last year and then I'm playing well this year and it's Fourth of July weekend. But no, I mean, I feel like it was more in college golf and stuff I played good during the season and then once the summer came, I think we played so much that I tried to take it easy during the summer and I really didn't get to compete much in amateur golf in the summertime or around the Fourth of July or, you know, but yeah, I really like this time of year. It's hot, the ball's going far and I just feel like I really like this course as well as the 3M. I mean, both these courses set up really well for me. You know, with the rough a little longer this year, it puts a, you know, an emphasis on good ball-striking and driving off the tee and, you know, with how far I'm hitting it and how straight I'm hitting it, I'm leaving myself short clubs in and taking advantage of them.

JACK RYAN: Any for questions for Matthew from those on the line? All right. We appreciate the time, Matthew.

We are here again with Matthew, so we will take our first question.

Q. I happened to follow you 7, 8 and 9 so you can blame me for being a jinx today. Can you just talk about that stretch because you played so well, we were watching you. Then on 7 you kind of knocked it around. Does it get in your head a little, hey, there's a number I can make here that's really significant or doesn't that come into play?

MATTHEW WOLFF: To be honest, I never really thought about 59. I guess, you know, the low number was in my head, but I wasn't thinking 59, I was just thinking try to get it as low as possible. I was playing really good all day, hitting a lot of shots, making -- I made some putts, but I mean, I really was hitting it really close all day so I didn't really have to make any putts.

Yeah, I think 7 I actually hit a pretty good tee ball, I just didn't draw. I've been drawing my 3-wood like all day and just kind of left it out to the right. Had a gap and it was just one of those shots that, you know, I kind of heel skanked it and didn't get above my head and hit that wire holding up the ropes and just kicked straight left. It was just one of those shots you kind of have to laugh at. It was unfortunate it came on a day that I was hitting it so well, but it's golf, you can't hit every shot perfect. Luckily, I was well beyond the cut and not trying to make it or else I think that shot would affect me a little more.

But yeah, it was a little difficult coming in. I think the tee ball on 8, I was a little anxious over it, especially after coming off a par save, I was just trying to find the fairway. That wasn't -- that's not what I was doing all day. All day I kind of just didn't think about it, picked whatever club I felt comfortable with and just hit it. I think that one I tried to guide it a little more and it got a pretty bad break, landed in the bunker and went right up against the slope in that thick rough. So had a really bad stance, ball was buried and just had to lay up and ended up almost making par, just the putt slid a little right on me.

On 9 I didn't really do anything wrong, I think the wind was just blowing kind of hard before we hit, and then I hit a really good shot trying to keep a little right of it and thought it was going to be pin high and just came up a little short. You know, that's golf again, you know, just judging the wind and stuff like that.

Wish I could have maybe gotten one or two more coming in to make it an even unbelievable round, but not complaining.

Q. Does it help to open on the back where it's more wide open like this and get rolling? That front is definitely tighter and it seemed like on the back you really got your groove on?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, I don't really think so. I think with how long the rough is right now, there's still an emphasis on getting in the fairway off the tee because even though you can still make birdies on par 5s from the rough, you know, laying up I hit the ball in the fairway. You know, I think the only fairway I missed was 12. I hit No. 10, 11's a par-3, I missed 12 and then hit a good shot but then ended up not making the putt. Both par 5s I hit the fairway.

I think there's a little bit of water on the back nine, so I think both nines are pretty even. I really like the style of the course. There's no holes that you can really, you know, just be like, oh, this is an easy birdie, but there's a lot of chances if you're hitting the ball well. I don't really think it matters, but obviously it seemed like I liked the back a little more today.

Q. Just a quick question. You were so quick to find success last year, it's been a little slower this year. Has there been one aspect of your game that maybe you're surprised has taken a little more time to get back to the levels maybe you had it at a year ago?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I would say just maturity, just mentally. When I'm hitting it good and I feel like -- I feel like I was really caring too much about the outcome and thinking about every little factor on every single shot, don't short-side myself, was it a little into the wind, do I just want to hit it in the middle of the green to try to eliminate bogeys. That's really not how I play.

And I actually just switched irons as well, iron shafts. I added two degrees of loft to all my irons and went to the Project X-6.5s from the Nippon 130. So I feel like I wasn't really spinning them enough and that kind of affected my distance control.

So there's a few changes that I made that really seem like they helped, but I would say the biggest thing is just how I approach the game. I had a lot of success early, like you said, but I feel like I was always trying to change something or maybe, you know, I didn't really think it was going to take a step back, but for me I was trying to take a step forward and it honestly reversed my progress. I think that I'm kind of just doing what I usually do and go out there, keep it simple and have fun and remember that it's just a game and whatever happens,

happens. But I'm pretty confident in myself and know that I'm going to be out here for a long time, so I don't need to be putting all that pressure on one shot or one missed cut.

Q. Just quickly, the irons, when did you change, make that change with the irons?

MATTHEW WOLFF: On Monday.

Q. So instant success. This was one of your first tournaments a year ago. What did you learn about that experience last year, specifically what did you learn about the course? You missed the cut last year and now you're on fire today.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, I think the biggest thing I learned about the course is that it's definitely one that you can take apart. Like I said, it's a little different. The greens seem a little firmer this year and the rough is definitely longer, so it is playing a little bit harder, but in my opinion it's a course that, like I said, if you're finding the fairway and you're feeling good with your irons, you can definitely -- an 8 under, 9 under par round is out there for everyone because everyone's so good out here.

It's not so much what I learned about the course, it's just about what I learned of myself and my game and knowing that I just need to keep it simple in order to have success. That's what I did this week, along with changing a few equipment.

Q. Last year I think you got a sponsor's exemption into here. How big is that and how much will -- I mean, how much loyalty goes into that for you with this tournament moving forward? Do you anticipate this being a place you come back to over and over?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Well, it depends how the weekend goes. If I win, I'm sure I'll be coming back here a lot.

But absolutely, I think that it's really important. I think they gave two sponsor exemptions or maybe even more, I think they gave three, because Sahith and Peter Kuest and my other friend, Chandler Phillips, who got in really late. I think he got a call from Rickie on like Tuesday because someone was on the number and ended up getting into the tournament without an exemption.

They're really friendly to giving guys a chance to start off their career and I think that is one thing that I'm so thankful for because I took advantage of that, like Collin and like Viktor and like so many other players. Without that opportunity of getting sponsor exemptions, I don't know if I would be sitting here right now. I've definitely got to pay my respect and just say thank you to the tournaments that gave me a spot. I'm definitely a loyal guy, so I can see myself coming back here in the future, but I'm not going to make any promises. But I do like the course and everyone here has been really great and it's definitely a place that I wouldn't mind coming back at all.

Q. Matthew, Vijay Singh's a guy that you might have watched play on TV when you were a little kid, and you spoke earlier about maturity. What's it like to play with a guy who, you know, who you probably have more experience watching on television than actually playing alongside?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I actually, I think he was a little before my time. No, I'm just kidding. Don't tell him I said that.

No, it was a really cool experience. I was talking to him, I was telling him coming down the stretch, maybe I shouldn't have said this, but on No. 6 after I birdied, I said, gosh, maybe I just have a thing of playing with older guys and playing really well, because at the 3M last year I shot 62 playing with Tom Lehman. Maybe it's something about the old greats, me feeling like I need to impress them or something like that.

But it was a lot of fun. I haven't really heard much about him before. I never met him before this and this, the last two days were a lot of fun. He was talking to me the whole time. We talked about anything from, you know, golf to what he does just randomly and where he likes to go and travel. It was a really cool experience. Like you said, I feel like he has so much, you know -- he has so much experience, I'll say the word again, and it was cool to see how he approaches it and how he goes about his game. I definitely learned a lot from him the last two days. I think he's going to make the cut, so I'm not going to let up and let him catch me.

Q. He's a big student of the game and the golf swing. Did you guys talk golf swing at all? Did you think he was sort of soaking it in and taking in your approach?

MATTHEW WOLFF: You know, we don't really have similar swings, so there wasn't much to talk about the golf swing.

The one thing that he did say is he thinks on TV and the announcers, the way they emphasize my hip or my trigger, he said in person it doesn't look that weird because -- I mean, not weird; he says it doesn't look as unorthodox as they're describing it because it's all part of the swing. He said it's really cool and I should stick with it. Not that I plan on changing it, but it was cool to hear that from him.