

ROUND 2 QUOTES
June 8, 2024



ERNIE ELS (-9)

Q. Well, you had a great week last week. Did you hit on something last week and this is sort of a carryover?

ERNIE ELS: I think I hit on something last week. I just, I was a little easier -- I wouldn't say easier, but just more comfortable today. I was really struggling with the wind yesterday, really had me off balance for most of the day. Greens were very fast, I felt like I was playing defensive. Today with a little less wind and softer conditions (inaudible.)

Q. You talked about expectations last week. Is the comfortability with your game with the win last week leading to that?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, of course. When you're playing well and you have confidence, you know, things happen. If I'm not winning, you know, there might be a bit of doubt here and there, but when you've won, the hole feels a little bigger sometimes and a bit more comfortable than trying to search for it all the time. I'm definitely going off last week and the week before, and even Birmingham. I've been playing good for a month now, so I'm just trying to put one foot in front of the other.

Q. You talk about playing aggressive. How does that kind of manifest in your game? Do you attack pins more, kind of more direct in where you're trying to go and not worry so much?

ERNIE ELS: Well, no, it's just that with less wind and softer conditions, you can kind of feel how the ball's going to react. Yesterday, like on the first hole yesterday I hit driver and wedge, but I'm trying to get the wedge over the bunker but the ball bounces through the green. It's just stuff that you're not quite used to. Today was a little bit more calm so I could feel what the ball was going to kind of react to.

Q. Ernie, how did you eagle 16 and what did that -- you know, how good was that eagle in that situation versus what you had done to that point to get in position?

ERNIE ELS: Well, the whole day was kind of a chase. We had 1 under, I knew the leaders with the conditions, I felt I needed to get to 8 under, that was kind of my goal. The whole day was a bit of a chase, to be honest. I was trying to get birdies, trying to get up the leaderboard, whatever it takes. So 16 was just one of those holes that really helped because the hole round was trying to chase, get as many birdies as I can.

Q. The confidence, does that help going into tomorrow, sleeping tonight and getting ready for tomorrow and get going tomorrow?

ERNIE ELS: You know what, I'm in a good position. Whether I'm leading or not, tomorrow we have 18 holes. There's a lot of guys up there. Depending on conditions you're going to have to shoot a good score. Stricker is going to be still the man to beat tomorrow, going with the crowd and everybody. I don't know how Jerry's playing, but there's a lot of really good players up there. We've just got to do what we have to do.

Q. I think David Duval said after his finish last week that even though the performance doesn't always reflect it, he still feels he can be the kind of player he was in his prime. Do you share the same attitude during your ups and downs, especially the downs, that you can always get back to where you once were?

ERNIE ELS: Listen, you're not going to lose your talent. Our talent is there. And David was obviously a great player back in the day. It's taken him a long time to get into golfing shape. You don't just start shooting low scores. He's taken a while to get in the golfing mode and he's there now and he's going to believe in himself. So we see that a lot out here, we see the guys with talent that haven't played a lot, they eventually get it, and he's getting it.

Q. You played in this tournament quite a few times. This is going to be the last time at this course. How have you seen this tournament kind of grow in the time you've been here?

ERNIE ELS: I love it here. I just love the condition of the golf course, every year it's brilliant. The grounds -- greens crew, grounds crew are doing a wonderful job every single time. The greens are running -- these are basically (inaudible) all year, the speed's good, everything.

I've been speaking to Steve about his new golf course and I hear it's a very different animal, so we'll see when we get there next year. But I'll miss this place.

Q. And it looks like you might be playing with Tim O'Neal tomorrow in the final group if he's able to hold on. Kind of to maybe a lot of golf fans a relative unknown, but I know you've played with him I think maybe at the Hoag?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I've played with him many times. Great talent. Never really got his break on the PGA TOUR, but he stuck with it and he's really coming through now. He hits it a ton, he hits it probably the longest out here. So he's got a lot of length and just an all around good player, a good guy.