

Bud Cauley Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Bud Cauley into the interview room here at the RBC Heritage, after a bogey-free 8-under par, 63, including three straight birdies to close his round.

Bud, just an excellent round to start with here this week, if we can get some comments on your day.

BUD CAULEY: Yeah, drove the ball well, got off to a good start with a couple of birdies. Just kind of kept giving myself the a lot of chances. And the on the back nine I had a few pars, great shot into 14 to make birdie there. And the last three holes, a lot of good ball-striking.

JOHN BUSH: Making your fourth start at this event. You've never quite had a round like this. What did you find today at Harbour Town?

BUD CAULEY: Just driving. Put the ball in great spots all day. It was warm, the fairways were firm. I could get it in the fairway and have a relatively short club in. That's what I did, gave myself a lot of chances like that.

JOHN BUSH: Before we open up to questions, recap your season. I know you had a third place finish at the Anderson Group Builder Challenge.

BUD CAULEY: It's been a little up and down. I didn't play well in the fall last year and then I played well -- and kind of due to some poor driving. So it was nice to see that turn around this week, and going to try to keep it going the rest of the year.

Q. Looking at your record here, things haven't gone your way, was this a course you said one day I know I can play this course, it suits my game, and that's why I like coming back?

BUD CAULEY: Yeah, I love this place. It's different than anything else we play. It's a lot of fun to go out there and shape shots and kind of think your way around. Just a comfortable week. It's always nice. The weather is nice. I like the course. It's just a fun place to be, regardless of the golf.

Q. Did you ever see 63 coming or something that you get into the round and you just don't?

BUD CAULEY: I mean -- I knew it was out there. I played a practice round and I knew the greens were relatively soft and I knew I was driving the ball well.

You never go out thinking you're going to shoot that. I just got into the round and was swinging well and tried to give myself as many looks as I could.

Q. I guess at what point did you realize that this could be better than good, as far as a round is concerned?

BUD CAULEY: Yeah, when I hit that iron shot into 14, obviously that's a really tough hole. And I was hoping to get three and get out of there. And I hit a great little cut 5-iron in there, a few feet and rolled the putt in. I knew I had the par-5 coming up. And I knew where the pins were on the last few holes and you could kind of get them. Once again, I was just trying to hit -- plot my way around and worry about the next shot in front of me.

Q. There were a lot of low scores from the get-go today. When you came out to the course and glanced at the leaderboard did you think that you had to go really low today to do something?

BUD CAULEY: Well, it's the first round, so obviously there's a ton of golf to play. When I saw the wind was down and I knew how the course was playing. I knew the scores would be relatively low. And you could see it with the scoreboard. A lot of 6, 5, 4, a bunch of guys around there. The wind is going to stay down so we have to keep on doing it.

Q. I don't think you had anything more than eight feet for any of those birdie putts today. Is that a pretty easy 63, when you didn't drop any bombs?

BUD CAULEY: No, it was pretty stress free, which was nice. I ran one by on 4. A short birdie putt, ran it by four and a half feet. That was the only stress today. I hit the ball well. And I feel when I can get in good rhythm I can get in close and start rolling the putts.

Q. People don't birdie 16, 17 and 18 in the same round most of the time. Is it partly because the wind's down that those pins are more approachable or did you see something in years that said -- or in practice rounds that gave you the chances to do that?

BUD CAULEY: Yeah, I think the conditions had something to do with it. Most of those holes played a little down off the right, which is a comfortable wind for me. The tee shot on 16 you have to draw, so that helps. The pin was middle left so it helps feed it in

there. 17 you can't go long, so it's a perfect 9-iron with the wind down. I could free swing and not worry about going long. And 18 kind of the same way, 3-wood down there and a short club in. And the wind definitely did help. But I hit the shots really -- all those shots on the last -- apart from the drive on 15, really the last five holes I hit every shot just kind of how I was looking. So that was a nice way to finish.

Q. Coming off the shoulder, how long have you been -- and the hand, how long have you been a hundred percent or are you a hundred percent?

BUD CAULEY: I feel great. Last year I played and felt pretty good. I had those Web starts I guess the year before that where it took a little time to kind of feel like myself again or feel like swinging the golf club the same way.

Last year I was able to play well in some events, and fill my medical and get that out of the way. This year it's been about staying healthy and having a normal year where I can just worry about the golf and try and fix to my game that way.

Q. You mentioned earlier that there's a ton of golf left. Does this change how you set yourself up the rest of the week or are you just going to take it round by round, obviously, and see where you wind up?

BUD CAULEY: Not at all. I think I -- Zach and I came up with a pretty good strategy of what clubs to hit off the tees and how we're going to play it. And the wind dictates a little bit the shots you hit and how you try and play it. But I'm just going to go out there and just keep doing what I'm doing and get the ball in the fairway first, and if I can go at a pin, I will, and try and roll in some putts.

Q. You mentioned that you were trying to make this year a normal year for the first time in a while. How long has it been since you've had a normal year?

BUD CAULEY: Yeah, you know, I got hurt -- when I first hurt my shoulder was at the -- kind of towards the end of '14. So I had to miss a couple of months with some physical therapy. Came back for only a couple of weeks and then really got hurt and had to have surgery.

And then even last year when I was able to play kind of with my status I was only able to play every now and again. It's been nice this year to be able to plan a schedule a little bit and come to places like I like like Harbour Town. So that's what I mean by normal. Just kind of playing a schedule and being able to prepare the way I like to or the way that I felt I could my rookie year or my second year and just come out and take away all the other variables, just go play golf.

Q. Was it a shot that hurt your shoulder or just prolonged wear and tear?

BUD CAULEY: It was just one shot. I hit my tee shot on the 9th hole at John Deere and my shoulder just slipped out of the socket, came out, just a freak thing. I had loose shoulders and played the rest of the tournament, which wasn't the best move on my part. And then took a couple of months off trying to avoid surgery to strengthen my shoulder, and it came out again. I had to have surgery. They put anchors in there to keep it in there and all that good stuff. So definitely -- once is enough, I don't want to ever do that again.

Q. You came out with some fairly high expectations after your career at Alabama. Certainly you're not the first that's had an early career kind of derailed a little bit by injury. What's the frustration level when something happens like that?

BUD CAULEY: Yeah, it's tough. It's just something that's out of your control. You can prepare and play and do all the things you're supposed to and then you get hurt and there's kind of nothing you can do. I guess it's better that it happened when I was younger, as opposed to later, it's easier to recover from something like that. And it's also something I'll have to deal with the rest of the career. But as long as I stay up with the PT and do the right things I think I'll be able to stay healthy and hopefully it will be something 20 years from now I barely remember.

Q. Other than working in strengthening the shoulder and rehabbing, what did you do with the downtime?

BUD CAULEY: I watched a lot of Netflix (laughter).

I was not very productive. I put on some weight. Nothing good. That's the thing. Some of my other hobbies were things that were kind of active. So other than going to physical therapy and then coming back home and planting myself on the couch there wasn't too much to do.

Q. When did you know that physically you could go after it?

BUD CAULEY: Really the start of last year. When I played -- I played a couple of events in the fall and I guess it was '15. And it didn't feel right. And I would look at my swing on video with my coach and it didn't look the same. It took about a full year for kind of what I saw my swing and it kind of looked familiar to me and to be able to sort of make adjustments out on the course, where I felt like I could go out and play.

Last year I felt good. I felt like my swing was similar to where it was before I got hurt. And so that was kind of

the first time where I was, okay, we're going to be all right. I can figure this out from here.

Q. So basically no major changes in the swing to accommodate the injury?

BUD CAULEY: No. I swing it pretty much the same way as I did before. It took me a while to be able to get the mobility, to get the club back as far as I used to. But other than that, like if you put my swing up now, kind of the way it was before, pretty much the same.

JOHN BUSH: Four of your best buds at spring break 2017 fun here, as well?

BUD CAULEY: They look like they're having a pretty good time. I had to keep my shirt on today. But we had a good time.

JOHN BUSH: Thanks for your time.