

DEAN & DELUCA

Invitational

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Phil Mickelson

Quick Quotes

Q. Nice finish. Pretty happy with six birdies on the scorecard?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, it was a fun day. Fun to be back. Haven't been here in a little while, and it was fun to finish the round with a few birdies.

We got a nice break because it was pretty calm this morning and we had an opportunity get it going early.

Q. You haven't been here for a while, but this golf courses generally promotes and rewards a bit of experience. Talk about the conditions out here being a little bit different.

PHIL MICKELSON: I think it's a fun challenge to play holes into a lot of crosswind where you have to work the ball back and forth. The thing about Colonial is you will be rewarded with a pretty good birdie putt if you get it on the green. The greens are in perfect shape and they're fun to putt.

The course challenges you tee-to-green, but once you get on the greens you really have an opportunity to take advantage of the shot you hit in there, as opposed to some courses we play that are so overly contoured you're playing defense after hitting great shots.

That's probably why I think so many guys enjoy playing here.

Q. Let's talk about the last three holes. Sensational finish. Great iron shots in there.

PHIL MICKELSON: It was a fun way to finish. It's a course where you can birdie just about every hole out here, but you can also make bogey if you make one little mistake.

I hit a good drive on 7. If I missed it a little left or missed it a little right I have tree trouble and I'm fighting for par. I hit it the center of the fairway, surprise, surprise, and had an L-wedge in and hit it to six feet and made birdie. I saw I was rewarded again for taking on a little bit of risk. I think that's what guys like about this golf course.

And the greens, once you're on the greens, you really have a good opportunity to make putts. They're not the ridiculously overly contoured, fast, get-away, double-



breaking putts that we have on a lot of modern courses. This is a course where if you strike it well, you're rewarded with good opportunities.

Q. You were working your irons today. No. 9, that was a great drive iron off the tee. I know you're setting things up for down the road, but got to be pleased with that.

PHIL MICKELSON: Thank you. That's a shot that has come in handy at the British Open, being able to flight it down into the wind and keep it in control and get some distance out of it and so forth.

I actually hit a really good shot into 9. That was a pin where I actually played away from it surprisingly. I don't do that often. But if I go long on that pin, now I am chipping downhill, downwind towards - not that the water is in play, but it's very tough to stop it.

So I played over to the center of the green and I got rewarded and made a putt. I mean, that's fun when you make one unexpectedly like that.

Q. New grip on the putter?

PHIL MICKELSON: I love that No. 9, Odyssey No. 9. I kind of change some of the heads and so forth. This is a smaller square grip. All it does is because it's lighter and smaller it gives you a little bit more head awareness.

I didn't putt great today though to be honest. I didn't make the putts I expected to make with the way I've been putting. I'm going to give it another go tomorrow, because I didn't get hot on the greens like I thought I was going to.

Q. Did you thank Kuch for the read on 9?

PHIL MICKELSON: That was thoughtful of him to hit his ball just behind mine. I appreciated that and was able to take advantage of it. That was fun?

Q. Talk about being back here and what you think about the layout after one competitive round under your belt?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, I enjoyed playing today. We got a good break, we really did, to have calm conditions the first probably nine holes we played. It really didn't pick up again until the last couple, so we really got a good break and a good opportunity to get

out to a good start and shoot a low number.

I didn't play or score as well early on as I would've liked, but I finished strong and turned it into a good round. I really like working the ball back into the crosswinds here. I think that's some fun shot making that's is the challenge this course provides.

If you do pull those shots off, you're rewarded on the green with a very good, makable birdie opportunity, as supposed to many of the modern-day courses that have severely-pitched, double-breaking putts; you're playing defense all the time.

Here, you hit a good shot, you get rewarded.

Q. When you have a slow start to a round what clicks on the back nine?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think the nice thing about Colonial is you know nobody is going to really run away with it. There aren't four par-5s. There are only two. There are challenges on every par-4.

Although every hole is birdieable, every hole is bogeyable too with a poor shot. I think nobody really runs away with it here, especially with the way the wind was going to pick up.

So you can be patient and fight for pars and know that if you just make a birdie here or there you'll get right back in it.

Q. As your game has evolved, does it feel better out here for you?

PHIL MICKELSON: I don't know. It's been a while since I played here. I enjoyed the first round. We had fun. We had, again, some nice conditions.

It was a fun start.

Q. Talk about your preparation for the U.S. Open. Is that starting now?

PHIL MICKELSON: It's hard to say. It's hard to say. That's a month away. It's not really on my mind right now. I feel like I need to get my game sharp. I've been playing what I feel is at a level much higher than the results have been bearing, and I need to start getting the results without forcing the issue.

So that's what is on my mind right now, not a tournament a month from now.

Q. Will you go play there?

PHIL MICKELSON: Unlikely.

Q. What's the key to doing that?

PHIL MICKELSON: Part of it is being patient and part

is trying to not do too much. When you force the issue you end up making mistakes.

The other part though is just staying focused and determined and committed to shots, as opposed to letting negative or seeing where you don't want the ball to go. Really stay focused on where you want the ball to go and stay connected to your target. All the little nuances that can sometimes slide when you're not playing your best.

Q. Do you find you're pressing a little because you're not putting yourself in such a position? Is that what you mean?

PHIL MICKELSON: It's possible. It's possible, yeah. It's possible I start thinking about the results and I start playing poorly.

I'm enjoying the challenge because I know my game is back to where I want it to be, but I haven't been getting the results, so it's like that final push.

For a couple years, my swing, my game was so off it wasn't close.

Q. Phil, after saying you probably wouldn't come back, can you let us in to what changed? Obviously the people at Colonial were thrilled.

PHIL MICKELSON: Nothing real specific. It's been a while and I needed to -- I felt it was in my best interest to get in contention and try to play more events and try to get the scores, results out of it.

I felt like the best way to do that is to play rather than practice at home, so I added it. I've enjoyed it.