

U.S. Amateur Championship

Sunday, August 15, 2021
Oakmont, Pennsylvania, USA
Oakmont Country Club

James Piot

Quick Quotes

Q. So talk about being the U.S. Amateur champion. What's that sound like?

JAMES PIOT: It's the greatest feeling in the world. I mean, as an amateur it's the best thing you can do. It was making that putt only 17 was just like, Oh, my God. I might've done it.

So, yeah, finally starting to process it a little bit. It feels phenomenal. Shows the hard work I've done is paying off.

Q. You make the turn and you're 3-down. Hit it tight on 10. Did it start to change it for you internally or from a momentum standpoint?

JAMES PIOT: Definitely, I mean, you could tell just getting a birdie in there, I don't think I've made any birdies on my own before that unless they were given, so definitely seeing that birdie drop was a big confidence booster.

But I told myself on that tee box, I said, I'm going to play this nine 4-under. That's what I put in my head after 3-under, so it is great.

But that definitely started the charge. And then 11 where he unfortunately three-putted from a short distance, that definitely gave me a confidence booster and it kept going from there.

Q. So you had a chance to close it on 16. You go from bunker to bunker on 17. What are you thinking there?

JAMES PIOT: You know what? I actually thought I hit two really good shots. That first one on 17 it came off the face and like, This is perfect. Then I look over and, I mean, it didn't even look like it was close to stopping on the green. It was like, Oh, my gosh, what did I just do?

The lie wasn't too bad on the second one and it was -- you know, didn't hit a great shot, about 15, 20 feet by, but scared the hole. My coach walked up to me and he was



like, How do you feel on this putt, and wanted to look over. I was like, I feel pretty good about this one. Kind of had a similar look this morning.

So just rolled end over end and it was perfect.

Q. What made you think that going to the turn that you could shoot 4-under given the way you had been playing? Not to be rude about it. What made you think, I can do that?

JAMES PIOT: Just self-belief. I feel like that's one of the things, the golfer I am. I'm that guy who never has an extremely bad round. In my head on the day I kind of doing a recap and I think he was like 6-over. I'm like, That's not me.

At the beginning of the day I kind of put a goal in my head. I said, You shoot even par today you will have some good chances. Obviously I knew they would have it set up hard and the greens getting faster, so I knew I was kind of a lot over par, and I said, All right, we're going to do what we do every tournament, especially Big Ten golf.

We play some hard courses where it favors -- you don't have to go out there and try and shoot a 62. You can shoot a 68 and that's a great score. It was kind of right down my alley as far as the mentality going into the back nine.

Q. Did you find anything ball striking-wise? I'm not sure you missed a shot on the its back nine. You were scrambling on the front for are.

JAMES PIOT: I mean, there were some tight swings on the front nine or the secretary 18, wide right misses is usually a tendency of mine when the clubs get a little up and the legs fire too fast.

I just slowed down the pre-shot routine a touch. I probably think you guys didn't notice that, but it was just reminding myself to keep the left shoulder rotating. That's usually my go-to swing thought, and I got it done on the back nine.

Q. What club did you hit on 10?

JAMES PIOT: On 10 it was 9-iron.



Q. And what did you hit on 18 in the morning?

JAMES PIOT: It was a 6-iron.

Q. What was your approach that opening 18? Not sure you played very many 36 hole matches. How do you approach that?

JAMES PIOT: It was one shot at a time. That's been my mentality this week. I knew it was going to be a long day, and I told myself, you know, it would be great to get up in the morning, but just keeping it somewhat around even if it was a bad round.

I feel like I managed it pretty well for how poor I hit it in the morning, and to get a 1-up lead going into the afternoon, I was pretty proud of that.

Q. How far in did you have on 10 and what did you hit on 16?

JAMES PIOT: I have 150 into 10, and then 16 was 226 and I hit a 5-iron in there.

Q. What was last night like for you? Obviously you're decompressing from a big day, trying to getting ready for today. Was a restless sleep? What was last night?

JAMES PIOT: I actually slept pretty well surprisingly. Had some Friends episodes on TV, so I just child out, watched that. Responded to a few buddy's texts.

Other than that, it was not as bad as I thought it would be. I was pretty exhausted so I got some pretty good sleep.

Q. You go into Michigan State, you know, you kind of helped build that program into what it is now. Kind of knowing why you went there, what does this win mean for you in terms of what it means for the university?

JAMES PIOT: It's just a phenomenal feeling. It validates where I ended up and feels like there was a purpose to going to Michigan State. I mean, definitely developed me as a player since I been there at Michigan State.

Just it's kind of nice to show the guys out there that don't go to the big time school that you can still do it. Coming from Michigan it's a phenomenal feeling being able to grind from a guy who wasn't highly sought after to U.S. Am champ.

Q. How much has skill taken you and how much has self-belief taken you? What's the balance?

JAMES PIOT: I would say about 50/50. Since a kid I

believed growing up in Michigan I felt like I was the guy to beat in a lot of those events. Even starting out as a young kid. So definitely always had that in the back of my head.

When I came to the national events guys were obviously a lot better players when I was younger. I used to come to the AJGA invitationals. And if I finished in the top 20 I was like, That's a great week. It wasn't like I'm going to go out and win.

So definitely over the past couple years my ball striking has gotten a lot more consistent. Changed it from I want to finish in to the Top 5, Top 10 in college events to I want to win every week.

Q. Do you feel like you were the guy to beat this week when you got here?

JAMES PIOT: I don't know if I would say that. There was a lot of great players. Obviously -- I can't say I thought that. I thought it was more of an underdog mentality. If you have to qualify for this event and you're the second guy out of your qualifier, not even the first guy, so it was definitely like anything I do this week people are going to be proud of.

I'm going to take it one shot at a time, and I didn't fully expect to be here. You know, in my mind I'm like, You're capable of it.

Q. Tell the story behind your putter, where you got it, how long you've had it. That thing looks like 1952.

JAMES PIOT: Yeah, so my dad got that from a golf shop actually just down the road from our house maybe -- had to be ten years ago. He just liked how it looked. He used it for like two weeks and was like, This thing is not worth it.

I think he got it for \$60 are \$70 at the time. I picked it up in probably sixth or seventh grade and started rolling with it. I was like, This thing is actually awesome. They actually nicknamed it the garbage putter, because I got line drawn on it and it's just -- it's not the best looking thing.

As far as you got guys that have the Scotty blades, Circle Ts, Ping putters, but I rolled with that through my junior golf career, a lot in high school. I bounced around putters a lot, and then college I kind of brought it back in the bag for a few events.

Then I was rolling with the Toulon for two years, and just I was like, You know, this is nice, but I need a change of scenery. I was too cheap to go buy a putter, so I looked in the basement. Oh, this thing is here. And then I went back to it probably middle of summer.

So right before --

Q. This summer?

JAMES PIOT: Yeah, right before the qualifier for this actually, and I putted lights out in the qualifier, so I'm like, This thing is going to stick.

Then shot 62 in the Southern Am with it in the bag, and this week it just got it done down the stretch.

Q. Have you re-gripped it over the years?

JAMES PIOT: I've re-gripped it plenty. I've done a lot to it. It's survived a lot, believe me. But, yeah, there has been about three or four grips on this thing.

Yeah, that putter has been through it all.

Q. What about accomplishing this on the course that Hogan, Nicklaus, Dustin Johnson have also won?

JAMES PIOT: I didn't think about that. That's a surreal feeling to know that my name is up there with some of those greats. It's definitely one of the coolest things ever.

I was fully unaware of that. That tells you how much history I know, but it's a phenomenal feeling.

Q. Why did you like the 10th hole so much this week? I don't think you lost it.

JAMES PIOT: I think we were 5 for 5 on winning it. I don't know. You can check the stat. My assistant coach on the bag told me that after I got through it, he was like, I think we might have won that hole every time.

And I don't know. It's just something about it. The stretch of 8, 10, 11, I think losing 9 was the first time I lost that hole all week. That stretch, I have gained one or two holes every time I played, so that's big momentum swing, especially into the closing holes.

That made a world of difference today.

Q. What was the first shot that you hit today where you really felt like, All right, that was a great shot?

JAMES PIOT: Well, I mean, I would actually say like the chip shot I hit on 9, even though it ended up about 10, 15 feet short, or whatever it was. But that one I was like, All right, I'm feeling great going into this closing stretch.

Hit a really good putt, too. So those two things. There was

like some clarity in the back of my mind, All right, we're feeling good now.

Hit that drive on 10. I smoked that thing and he still hit his 3-wood by me, by the way. I hit that as good as I could. Was like, Man, that was a good-feeling swing. Let's repeat that motion. It kind of snowballed from there.

Q. Speaking of smoking, 182 ball speed on 14 on that drive. Does that surprise you?

JAMES PIOT: What hole was that, 14 you said?

Q. Yeah.

JAMES PIOT: I told my assistant coach, he was sitting there in the tee box, What do you want to hit? We got to put some pressure on him. I said, Give me the driver, and he was like, What do you mean? I was like, I got another gear in the back of the bag I don't use too often, and he -- I mean, being so tight out here I didn't want to pull out, but I knew if I got in one of those front greenside bunkers it was be an up and down possibly, so I stepped on that one a little bit. Yeah, that's pretty good for a little guy.

Q. Did you notice something starting to change with Austin on the back nine?

JAMES PIOT: Not really, but I kind of knew in the back of my head from leading matches that you're just not fully comfortable out here when you're in control. I mean, it's hard to just hold onto a lead unless guys are really giving shots away.

Earlier in the week I was playing lights out against Eddy Lai and it was still like, I got to 5-up and I was like, I could still lose this match in the back of my head, as bad as that sounds. It's like, you got to stay committed and keep the foot to the pedal out here, because any hole you can make a bogey.

So I just knew to keep pushing, and then, yeah, he did give away -- that three-putt on 11 was a big momentum swing, but I never really thought that in the back of my head. I said I'm going to earn these holes.

Q. Where on the back nine did you feel like you took control?

JAMES PIOT: Right after 12, that par-5. Yeah, where we got it to even. I just felt like from there all the momentum was on my side. I had a lot of people out here who happened to be Michigan State or fans of me somehow, some way, but that definitely -- the crowd getting going, and it just felt right from there.



After I hit that 7-iron right on the flag on 13, too. It was like, Oh, my gosh, we could do it.

Q. When you were first handed the trophy you glanced down and looked at it. Do you remember is there one name you saw right way or anything stand out?

JAMES PIOT: I was just trying to see if it was real or not. I couldn't believe it. I mean, I honestly was like, did I just win the U.S. Am, in the back of my mind. I didn't really sit there and stare at all the names. 4.

I probably couldn't tell you one name right now on that thing. That's how crazy it was and that's how unbelievable it felt.

Q. You got plenty of time to read the names. What do you think about playing with Jon Rahm and Collin Morikawa in the U.S. Open next year, because that's what's going to happen?

JAMES PIOT: I'm going to on outdriven a little bit again, but, you know, I'm going to just enjoy it. Obviously those are two of the biggest names in golf right now. I'm looking forward to that. That's obviously something you dream of as a kid, to play in the Masters, especially getting to play in the marquee group with those two guys is a coolest thing ever.

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