

# The LPGA Drive On Championship presented by Volvik

Saturday, March 6, 2021

Ocala, Florida, USA

Golden Ocala

## Austin Ernst

### Quick Quotes

**Q. Austin, 3-under par today, the solo leader heading into tomorrow. Take us through the day, especially the chip-in that you had.**

AUSTIN ERNST: Yeah, I didn't quite have it ball striking-wise today. I hit a few good shots but then kind of sprayed a few drives and kind of had to work a little bit harder that I have had to work the last couple days.

Yeah, the chip-in on 9 I actually kind of chunked a pitching wedge in the fairway, and then got a little lucky. I flew that one a little farther than I wanted to, but it was accurate so it kind of one-hopped straight in, so this was fun.

**Q. You and Jennifer have really separated yourselves this week, and obviously she made that eagle to finish off things. Was there kind of a slight acknowledgment of, Hey, game on?**

AUSTIN ERNST: Not really. I think we both just recognize we played pretty well today. I don't think either one of us had our best stuff but we got it in the house under par. So, I mean, I saw the leaderboard. I saw that we had kind of separated. For most the day I was at 13 and she was at 10, and 7 was the closest.

I was just trying to make as many birdies as possible to separate even more. I didn't quite hit it close enough on the back nine after No. 11 to be able to do that, but to come in and have some easy pars coming in after where I hit a few of the shots, I was pretty happy with that.

**Q. We talked yesterday about you being more mature and strategic. How satisfying is it to not have your best stuff and still be able to go out and put up 3-under?**

AUSTIN ERNST: Yeah, it's great. I couldn't have that done that a few years ago. I don't think I would've been as patient as I was today. When the wind picked up on the



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back nine especially, we had a few longer shots than we've had and we had a few pins that were a little tougher to get to.

Just to make the bogey on 10 after where I hit it, I was just trying to hit that one in the middle of the green and pulled it and then kind of rode the wind and went way over the green.

But to get the ball up and down for bogey, I thought that was huge. And then to be able to birdie No. 11 and get that shot right back. But I think I just stayed more patient than I would've in the past.

**Q. And I looked the hole locations on the pin sheet before you went out and I thought, Ooo, there is not a lot of them out there today. Was it a situation where you just said, Middle of the green, let's stay patient, and go.**

AUSTIN ERNST: Yeah, and then I didn't have a lot of good numbers today, so I had a few where I kind of had to pick whether to hit a little 8 or hard 9, that kind of thing. So I think I did a good job of choosing the correct one and not having too many chips.

I had a few longer putts, but my speed control was good and I pretty much had something inside three feet that I could just kind of go in and not really have to work too hard for it.

**Q. Any change in mindset going into tomorrow?**

AUSTIN ERNST: Not really. I think -- I mean, especially before she made eagle I knew I needed to go play well and put up a low one. I think it's going to be the same thing.

You still have people that could go shoot a low score. Carlota shot 7-under yesterday. Depending on conditions it's out there. But I think it's just the same stuff I've been doing. The game plan has been good and I've executed it well. I think just keep doing the same stuff and try to make a few more birdies.

**Q. Speaking of a low number, Albane Valenzuela played herself into the final group. Have you ever**

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**played with her?**

AUSTIN ERNST: I have not.

**Q. That will be a first?**

AUSTIN ERNST: Yeah.

**Q. Your dad, your coach, how much does he watch the coverage for this week for example, and then do you guys dissect things at all after rounds? What's what relationship like?**

AUSTIN ERNST: Yeah, he does. Obviously him being a club pro he can watch the golf a lot so I know he watched it Thursday and they showed me a lot. He said that. On Thursday he said, Hey, everything looks good. I'll talk to him today. I didn't hit it quite as well, but we'll talk about it.

Actually after the British Open he noticed something in my putting for Arkansas that I kind of put in and immediately played well and putted well and won that week.

So I think it does help having his eyes where he can see something, whether it's tempo related or whatever it is, just a quick fix.

**Q. What did he see in the putting?**

AUSTIN ERNST: I think I was standing too tall and I was a little too close. So I just backed up a little and moved over a little bit more.

**Q. Have your parents been on hand for one of your victories?**

AUSTIN ERNST: They have not.

**Q. You maneuvered, we talked about it yesterday, a new role for you. First time holding a 36-hole lead or co-lead. You are going to travel down that same road. The last time you did it was only a 54-hole event. How do you anticipate tonight and then...**

AUSTIN ERNST: I think I've had two 54-hole leads actually. I think.

**Q. Yeah. Last time was the Walmart when you won.**

AUSTIN ERNST: I think I had one in Alabama in '15 and I think I had another one somewhere else, I can't remember. Mexico, I think.

**Q. Yeah, okay.**

AUSTIN ERNST: But it'll be the same thing. I know I need to go play well. I can't not play well and win, so it's going to be the same type stuff. Obviously sleeping on the lead the last two days I know what to expect. I've slept really well.

So I'm not too concerned about it. But yeah, it will just be the same thing. The biggest thing for me will be staying aggressive and committed to what I'm doing, which I thought I did a very good job of today.

**Q. Absolutely. What is your routine at night and in the morning when you're sleeping on the lead and you have a late tee time?**

AUSTIN ERNST: I will just stay up a little bit later and I will wake up at like 8:30. We're the at hotel where we can make breakfast, so I'll have breakfast at the hotel. It's kind of the time we're playing at 12:20 is kind of awkward to eat lunch, so I will just pack a sandwich and just eat a little something right before i go tee off.

**Q. Are you watching anything in particular right now or reading anything interesting?**

AUSTIN ERNST: Watching Brooklyn Nine-Nine and The Crown.

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