

PGA Championship

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

San Francisco, California, USA

Harding Park Golf Club

Tiger Woods

Press Conference

JOHN DEVER: Welcome everybody to the 2020 PGA Championship here at TPC Harding Park in San Francisco. We're pleased to be joined by four-time champion Tiger Woods.

Welcome, Tiger. This is your 21st PGA Championship, and you have a little bit of history at this golf course, winning in 2005, of course, and going undefeated in The Presidents Cup. Is it safe to say you have a good vibe with the course but also golf in northern California back to your college days?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I mean, I played it before the redo. They have come a long way since then, made it a championship site. I was fortunate enough to beat John in a playoff and then had a great Presidents Cup under Captain Freddie. This brings back great memories of coming up here playing, whether it's here at Harding or SF Club, Olympic or Lake Merced. We used to come up here and do qualifiers all the time.

Q. Four rounds since the restart. How do you feel coming in here?

TIGER WOODS: I feel good. Obviously I haven't played much competitively, but I've been playing a lot at home. So I've been getting plenty of reps that way. Just trying to get my way back into this part of the season. This is what I've been gearing up for. We've got a lot of big events starting from here, so looking forward to it. This is going to be a fun test for all of us. The rough is up. Fairways are much more narrow than they were here in 2009. Don't ask me for the routing because I'm still getting a little confused on the routing. Still trying to learn that part.

Q. So many of your major championship wins were defined by just the energy of the crowd. Can you just talk about how weird it's going to be playing a major without a crowd and how it will impact you coming down the stretch given that you're someone who feeds off of that crowd energy?

TIGER WOODS: Well, that's an unknown. I don't know if



anyone in our generation has ever played without fans in a major championship. It's going to be very different. But it's still a major championship. It's still the best players in the world. We all understand that going into it, so there's going to be plenty of energy from the competitive side.

But as far as the energy outside the ropes, that is an unknown. And hopefully I can put myself in a position where I can be in that position where I can feel what it feels like to have no fans and also coming down the stretch with a chance to win.

Q. A lot different feeling going into the PGA this year compared to after winning the Masters last year. Can you sort of compare and contrast? I mean, is your game actually maybe in better shape now than it would have been then after all you went through winning the Masters?

TIGER WOODS: Well, after I won the Masters, it was a bit of a whirlwind. We got a chance to go to the White House, my family, and meet with our President. I celebrated winning the Masters for quite some time.

Came to Bethpage and played awful, and felt like, what, Brooks beat me by like 30 shots in two days. My game is better than it was going into that PGA and hopefully I can put it together this week.

Q. You said last year that you were working on a book. I understand you're working with the same writer who helped Andre Agassi and Phil Knight with their books. What's the process like for you, and do you take any inspiration from what Michael Jordan did in "The Last Dance"?

TIGER WOODS: Well, it's been insightful and one that I've enjoyed the process of looking back on some of the stories and been a lot of fun.

Q. You talked about the crowd and the noise. When you played here in 2005, you described it as one ear was half deaf as you went back to the tee for the playoff. It was "electric" was I think the word you used. The contrast of no fans here at a public course where you've played two times and it's been very loud; and my second question is just the Sandy Tatum statue and what you think of his legacy given your



Stanford ties?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I knew Sandy before I even entered college because I played a U.S. Junior here up at Lake Merced when I was 14. Got a chance to meet Sandy then and knew the process when I was in college of what he was trying to do here. He is the one who single-handedly turned this golf course into what it is now.

What's the other part of your question?

Q. The noise.

TIGER WOODS: Well, considering that, one, it was a team event, where it was very bipartisan. It's us against the Internationals, and you couldn't have put two of the more, I guess, crowd-drawing people together in a playoff, myself and John Daly. So it was loud. The people were into it. It was a lot of fun. I still look back on it. I just didn't want it to end the way it ended in that playoff; I think the way we were playing, we should have continued. It was just an unfortunate way to end it.

Q. Obviously the weather forecast for this week, temperatures are cool. How does that impact you in terms of swing preparations and so forth, and just dealing with that in general versus normal weather?

TIGER WOODS: I think that for me when it's cooler like this, it's just make sure that my core stays warm, layering up properly. I know I won't have the same range of motion as I would back home in Florida where it's 95 every day. That's just the way it is.

Talking to some of the guys yesterday, they were laughing at their TrackMan numbers already. They don't have the swing speed or ball speed they did last week. It's just the way it is. It's going to be playing longer. It's heavy air whether the wind blows or not, but it's still going to be heavy. The ball doesn't fly very far here. I've known that from all the years and times I've had to qualify up in this area. It's always 20 degrees cooler here than it is down there in Palo Alto. We knew that coming in. I think the weather forecast is supposed to be like this all week: Marine layer, cool, windy, and we are all going to have to deal with it.

Q. If you are concerned, what are you most concerned about your form coming into Thursday, and what are you happiest about heading into Thursday?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think that more than anything, it's just competitively, I haven't played that much, but I am -- the results that I've seen at home, very enthusiastic about some of the changes I've made and so that's been positive.

Keep building. Keep getting ready and be ready come Thursday.

Q. What changes have you made?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I'm not going to tell you that.

Q. Okay, I took a shot.

TIGER WOODS: (Laughing.)

Q. Every week right now there seems to be a new record on sports betting in golf. There's more and more money going in every week. Do you ever hear stories from people about betting on you, and is it weird there's this kind of money being thrown around now legally?

TIGER WOODS: Yes, the word you put up at the very end is different, "legally." Sports betting has always been around. It's been around, I remember players and coaches placing bets on players, whether the matchups they had or not.

But now, you can do it instantaneous and shot-for-shot. It's very different. But that's just the way the world has changed, and it's more accepting now.

Q. Throughout your career, you've made a science of peaking for the four majors every single year. Given how different this year has been, have you changed anything about how you've tried to build up and prepare for this one major this season?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I've been trying to prepare for the three. You know, trying to figure out my schedule and training programs and playing prep and the things I need to work on for each major venue. It's just in a different calendar order and different time of year.

But this is a big run for us coming up here. I've been gearing up for this, and looking forward to the challenges of not only this week, but obviously the Playoffs and a U.S. Open and then the Masters.

Q. Some players have talked about, I think Rory has mentioned it, that it's been sometimes hard to keep your focus with no crowds around when you're so used to having a different environment at your tournaments, especially in majors. Have you found that to be the case, and do you maybe have to keep reminding yourself this week that this is the PGA Championship; it's a major and it's not just the Memorial or another Tour event?



TIGER WOODS: Well, Rory has more experience than I do in that regard because he's played more often in this part of the season. I've only played one time. And those four days at Muirfield was a bit different. It reminded me of sometimes on the weekend, you'd tee off Saturday morning and you'd just barely make the cut and you're first off and there's no one out there, but generally by the time you make the back nine, there's thousands of people out there on the golf course waiting for the leaders to tee off. But that never happened. So that's the new world we live in. We just have to get used to it.

As far as the focus part of it, I haven't had a problem with that. Those four rounds, I was pretty into it. It's different than most of the times when you go from green-to-tee, people yelling or trying to touch you. That part is different.

As far as energy while I'm competing and playing, no, that's the same. I'm pretty intense when I play and pretty into what I'm doing.

Q. Just two-part thing. What did you get out of those four rounds positive at Memorial? What kinds of things did you take back to Florida out of that?

TIGER WOODS: More than anything, I had not had the competitive flow. I've been competing at home and we've been playing for a few dollars here and there at home, but that's so different than it is out here playing competitively in a tournament environment.

I had not played since, what, L.A., so it was a long time for me, and making sure that I felt the feel of the round and getting my feels organized early, and I got off to just a beautiful start. I birdied two of the first three. So I got into the flow of competing very quickly.

It didn't help that the wind howled on my first day back and then Sunday it was brutally hard. Being patient is one of the things that I was real proud of out there, you know, fighting hard as I did to make the cut. I birdied two of the last three holes and made a huge par putt on nine. Those are all positive things I look back on. I didn't quite feel my best on Friday and it showed, and the weekend was tough.

Q. At a major championship week, when you look back at the Masters in 2019, did you know that week; is there a feel you have that week before, like, I got it, that kind of thing, and you know, how difficult might that be to manufacture this week with so much time in between playing?

TIGER WOODS: Well, there's probably only been, what, two -- maybe three times where I knew that all I had to do

was keep my heartbeat going and I was going to win the tournament. '97, I felt pretty good at Augusta and then Pebble Beach in 2000, and then obviously at St. Andrews the same year.

My game was clicking on all cylinders for maybe the week prior. The week of it got a little bit better and just had to maintain it the rest of the week. Those were rare exceptions. It hasn't happened to me that often in my career, non-major or major, but those three weeks in particular, I just felt really good and had control of every single shot shape, distance, feels around the greens, putter. I had everything rolling.

Q. Back in 2000, I don't know if you said it in jest or not, you said one of your biggest regrets was leaving Stanford a year early, and obviously you have a lot of memories and nostalgia in the San Francisco Bay area, but what is it that makes this region so special to you personally?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I lived up here for two years. It's the first time I ever lived away from home. And coming up here to Palo Alto and being in that environment, being around so many intellectually curious people and unbelievable athletes, and we're all in the same bubble together trying to figure this all out for the first time, it was a very unique experience and one that I thoroughly miss.

And then coming up here, all the qualifiers that we had to play up here, whether it's here at Harding or it's Lake Merced or SF or Olympic, those were some great qualifying rounds. Coach would make us play in all different types of weather; if it was raining or not, go qualify and we had to qualify in our sport.

Those were great memories and great times, and ones that I thoroughly miss.

Q. You mentioned how the course is different from when you played previously. Can you give us your impressions? It seems like not a typical major setup, old school with the trees and maybe not as long as some courses?

TIGER WOODS: It's not as long. It's a par-70; it's not as long numbers-wise, but the ball never goes very far here. It plays very long, even though it's short on numbers.

This golf course in particular, the big holes are big and the shorter holes are small. It can be misleading. They have; pinched in the fairways a little bit and the rough is thick; it's lush. With this marine layer here and the way it's going to be the rest of the week, the rough is only going to get thicker, so it's going to put a premium on getting the ball in

play.

I'm still a bit surprised that the surrounds are not as fast as they are and they're not cut short and tight, but they are grainy. Into-the-grain shots, where the balls are popping in and rolling out. Downgrain you can spin pretty easily and you can spin it either way. It's going to be a test, with the overhang of these cypress trees and the ball -- there may be a couple lost balls here; cut a corner and ball hangs up there, that could happen very easily here and has happened and I'm sure will this week as well.

Q. Have you had a ball in a tree here?

TIGER WOODS: Well, not here.

Q. Any memorable moments?

TIGER WOODS: I've had a few at Lake Merced. That's one of the tightest golf courses and most claustrophobic places that I've ever played. Yeah, I've lost a few there.

Q. What chances do you give yourself this week? Can you win this week?

TIGER WOODS: Of course. (Smiling.)

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