

Shriners Children's Open

Saturday, October 14, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

TPC Summerlin

Lanto Griffin

Quick Quotes

Q. Probably not the exact round you wanted, but you go into the final round tied for the lead. What was working out there for you today? Describe the round.

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah, hit the irons a lot better today, especially on the front. Just made nothing. I know we've been talking the last few days about making everything. That's kind of how it goes. A little regression today. Nothing too bad with the putter. I felt like I hit a lot of good putts, they just didn't drop. We'll clean that up a little bit.

But not making a birdie until 13 is kind of -- on a course that everybody is going low and making birdies on, it's nice to get a couple early, kind of settle yourself down, feel like you have a little bit of wiggle room, and that didn't happen today.

But making only pars isn't the end of the world, either.

We stuck to our game plan, played pretty conservative off the tee, and I told Billy walking on the range, I was like, let's just give ourselves as many looks as possible, the way we were putting it. So it was kind of ironic, after the round he was like, you gave yourself a lot of looks but you didn't make any of them.

I don't think I made I putt outside three feet all day. If somebody had told me that, I wouldn't have expected 68, so very happy with it.

Q. With where you've been injury-wise over the last couple years, what does it mean to you to be right in the thick of contention on a weekend?

LANTO GRIFFIN: I mean, I've worked really hard the last year. A lot of my sponsors and friends and family, it's like, I haven't played well, but I've put in a lot of hours, probably more than I did before the injury, just because a lot of therapy, a lot of time in the gym, practicing, trying to get the feels back to what it felt like before, but the body is different.

It's kind of a new normal I've had to try and get used to.



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Not as much flexibility.

Just looking at swing videos from now versus 2018 and 2019 and before, my body is just not moving like it did before, so trying to figure out how to get around that.

But it's starting to click, starting to feel better, so to be in the final group on Sunday is kind of where I want to be, and it's where I expected to be. I'm glad I'm here.

Q. There's 17 people right now within three shots of the lead, so quite tight up top. How does that affect your mindset going into a final round when it's that bunched?

LANTO GRIFFIN: I mean, I wish there was none. I wish I had an eight-shot lead. But that's Vegas. That's this golf course.

It's going to take, I would imagine, 20- to 21-under tomorrow. I'm going to have to go shoot 5-, 6-under to have a chance. Someone could run out and get way ahead of that. But it'll probably be around 20.

The goal is just going to be to have a chance on the back nine, and whether I win or finish 20th, there's going to be a lot of positives from this week to build off of. I was thinking about that today when things weren't going well. It already feels like a win from putting, from some of the work we did on the swing this week. I'm excited to get back home next week and kind of build off this. That's kind of how golf works.

Regardless of what happens tomorrow, momentum is -- I feel like I've already won momentum this week, and hopefully tomorrow the putts drop.

Q. You talked about conservative approach today off the tee. With such a packed leaderboard, is that the same game plan tomorrow?

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah, just because for me to win tomorrow, it's going to be making putts. The way I'm swinging it right now, I'm not going to be -- I don't see it changing from today to tomorrow to where I'm just flagging

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everything and feeling completely comfortable with my irons and wedges.

But I also think that's the way to play this golf course. I've had three drivers every day on the three par-5s. I haven't hit driver on any par-4 this week, but I've hit a lot of fairways with a 2-iron, and at elevation on a shorter course and firm, there's really no need to try and fit driver into these tight windows and be 40, 50 yards.

I know I can make birdies from where I'm hitting 2-iron and 3-wood, and we'll just have to go make putts.

Q. Does that change depending on the situation, if you make some early birdies?

LANTO GRIFFIN: There's really only three or four holes out there that I could hit driver on, and like I said, I feel just as good from 150 at elevation as I do from 80. So there's not a whole lot of reward to hit driver when the ball is going far, it's warm. The front nine today I hit probably six or seven iron shots inside 20, 25 feet, and none of them went in.

But no, I don't see us changing our game plan. We'll be aggressive on the par-5s, like we were today on 16, going for it there, but you can shoot 62 out here being conservative off the tee. You never make a birdie unless it's a drivable hole by hitting driver. It's hitting it close and making putts.

Yeah, I'm going to stick to the game game plan regardless.

Q. We've talked to a lot of people this week about feeding off each other when you're in a good group. Was the opposite true today after the third hole when Cam made that triple --

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah.

Q. The banter ended, the talk ended --

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah, Cam is fun to play with. I've always enjoyed being around him and watching him hit it. He was still great all day even after that. But I was hoping -- I heard him a couple times say, it's one of those days. Like I don't think he was hitting it that bad, he just got a couple bad breaks, one or two bad swings and it compounded. He hit some great putts, so yeah, I was -- it's weird, when you kind of want to cheer for your guys, you want to beat them but you also want them to play well because you can feed off that positive energy, and we had none of it. Through 12 holes, I can't believe that -- there wasn't a huge crowd, but I can't believe they stuck around to watch pars all day.

They were loyal, and we did make some birdies coming in, which helped. But no, it is nice when the guy in your group is making putts and hitting it nice and you're not getting warned by slow play.

Yeah, it's definitely nice when you can feed off your playing partner.

Q. If we start with the positives, a bogey-free round but one that had to have been testing with your patience. How were you able to remain patient through that stretch?

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah, I was telling myself all day, the first eight holes are -- I wouldn't say really tough, but there's not a ton of birdie chances out there. The problem is I hit a lot of good iron shots on the front and a lot of looks that I've been making the last six years, first two here and the last four last week, that was frustrating. I was hitting good putts but they weren't quite right, so it wasn't one of those where nothing is dropping because I didn't feel like -- they were just all on the edges.

Knowing that there was some good looks on the back, 13, 15, 16, just tried to hang in there. Both of us, Cam and I both, were a little bit off today. Couldn't really feed off each other.

But I'm pretty proud of myself for hanging in there on the back and giving myself a shot tomorrow.

Q. What did you show yourself the last six holes, showed some resilience given that it seemed like that final group nothing could drop.

LANTO GRIFFIN: Nothing, and Cam got some really bad breaks. This isn't the course where you can kind of make pars on. It doesn't matter how big your lead is. With that finish, 13 through 16, anything can happen, so you don't want to be too far back. But at the same time, tomorrow if you're within striking distance, you've got a shot going into the back nine.

Go clean a few things up and get some treatment and get some rest for tomorrow.

Q. 16 out of 18 greens and then 90th in strokes gained putting. Do you chalk it up as a fluke day with the putting?

LANTO GRIFFIN: If someone told me I was going to be negative strokes gained putting today I would not have thought I'd shoot bogey-free 68 today. I'm going to take that as a positive, go get on my mirror, clean it up a little

bit. The speed was really good, though, which is really important to be able to read putts and not leave yourself four- or five-footers, especially in the last group, and they were a little chewed up. It's not far off. I haven't been in this situation in a long time, feeling nerves. Hitting balls back home in Jacksonville Beach, you don't feel the nerves like you do in the final group on the PGA TOUR. It was a great experience for me not being in that spot in about two years. So hopefully tomorrow a little bit more focused.

I did a good job of that today, honestly. But hopefully tomorrow I can kind of build off today and hopefully make some putts.

Q. You begin the day tied for the lead, you end the day tied for the lead, but what a job you did getting there. How were you able to maintain your patience out there?

LANTO GRIFFIN: Because I haven't been hitting my irons real great pretty much all year, and I started putting really well last week and made everything the first two days. I hit a lot of good iron shots on the front. A lot of them to 10 to 20 feet. Didn't get any tap-ins or anything like that. The fact that I was hitting my irons well and I felt like my swing was better than yesterday kind of helped the putter being cold.

I didn't feel like I was hitting bad putts. They just weren't quite right.

Knowing I haven't been in this situation in a year or two, I didn't want to -- it's all about perspective. I know there's a lot of things going on in the world right now that -- golf is not that big of a deal, so I tried telling myself that. Just trying to kind of trick your brain into being calm, especially when I haven't really felt these nerves in a while.

I knew all I needed was one birdie, and if I could get that one out, I could roll off a couple more coming in and have a chance. I was really excited about the last six holes.

Q. You've played a limited schedule coming off of back surgery, and here you are in the heat of things. Let's talk about one specific shot, your second into the 16th hole. You were hitting into the sun. You have 150 yards of water to cover. It's not that hard an up-and-down left of the flagstick. You go right at it to within 11 feet, and the speed of the putt was good. That was a gutsy play to go at the flagstick.

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah, that was kind of a no-brainer for me just because the lie was -- I didn't think it was going to come out dead, and if it jumped it was going to be long and I'd have a chance to get up-and-down.

It was a pretty good number. Opened up a 7-iron and just kind of prayed because I couldn't really see the flag. Like you said, the sun was in my eyes. So when that came off, I thought it was going to be perfect, but I was just hoping I didn't see a splash, and it landed three, four paces short. That putt was tough to read because the strip was to the right. That has a real effect out here. But it was in the shadows, so it was tough to see all that break.

We played it just outside right, and it broke about a cup, cup and a half left, and I told Billy, not in a million years would I have ever read that to break that much. I was okay with that miss.

Q. It's been a few years since your Texas Children's Houston Open, but you do have a tournament win. You'll have to bring up those feelings as you play the final round.

LANTO GRIFFIN: Yeah, I was looking through my notes last night on that week and I remember sleeping nine hours on Saturday night before the Sunday round, and I actually made myself nervous on Sunday because I wasn't nervous. I was extremely calm. Something about when you're playing well and being in the spotlight, you get more nerve-racking when you're in 15th and if you make a bogey you're in 25th. I try and trick my brain into, you're near the lead, you're leading, if you make a bogey, you're still in it. With the right mindset you can kind of trick your mind into being a little bit more calm.

I'll look back on more notes from that stretch in 2019 and try and have fun tomorrow.

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