

American Century Championship

Saturday, July 10, 2021

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Vinny Del Negro

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Vinny, great round today. You played solid.

VINNY DEL NEGRO: I played really well on the front. My caddie did a great job, and we just kind of had the lines right, made some putts and got it going early. And made a good birdie on 2. Birdied 3 and 4. Made it happen.

Just making putts. On the backside, got tentative, didn't hit some good iron shots. Got out of place a little bit off the tee. Grinded my way around the backside a bit. Birdied 18, which was helpful. But I hit some solid shots. Backside not so good. It was a good learning experience and looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. 26 points today. I think you and John Smoltz tied for the most in today's round. So pretty solid. Looked like there were a couple of short putts on the back that got away from you.

VINNY DEL NEGRO: Yes, I 3-putted a couple off the back. Came out of it. Was a little aggressive on 1 and 14. That one got way from me. Didn't hit a good putt on the second putt. But that's just golf. You've just got to keep the mindset down, just trying to hit my lines, trying to hit my spots.

And it's going to be fun tomorrow. Played a lot of golf with Jack, a lot of golf with Smoltzy. So it should be fun.

Q. Your game's improved quite a bit. This is your 19th American Century Championship. So you've been one of the guys out here for a long time, having a lot of fun. You've always been kind of in the hunt, just in that just a little bit below the top tier. What's it feel like to be in that rarefied air?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: Like John said, staying in the moment. When you make a bogey, not getting too down, just grinding through the round and hitting some solid shots. Trying to put the ball in places where you can be



aggressive on the greens and have some uphill putts, because when you get a ball above the hole here, you can be pretty quick.

Then on the backside it can get a little windy, too. Managing that I thought we did a good job today with that.

So just trying to stay in the mindset of just one shot at a time, staying focused on each shot. Trying to hit my mark and rolling in some good putts. In order to roll them, you have to be in the right spots on the greens. I did a good job on the front side, not so well on the backside.

Q. You've been in pressure situations throughout your career. This is a different sport for you. How does it feel?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: There's always pressure, but that's what it's all about. We love the competition. We're competition junkies. That's what we love. We want to be under the heat. We've been under it our whole life in some capacity, whether baseball, football, basketball, whatever. But golf is a difficult sport. We know that. Every round is a little bit different: weather, greens, pin placements, things like that, your swing, mental approach. I'll just stay in the moment, hit my shots, play my game, and hopefully put the ball in good spots where I can be aggressive on the greens.

Q. Nerves at all?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: Yes. Of course there's nerves. That's what makes it fun, though. I'm still alive. I've got nerves. If anybody says they're not nervous, then they're not telling you the truth. That's what it's all about, though. You want to be put in those situations. That's what it's all about. So I love it. That's what I enjoy the competition of it.

So is there pressure? Of course. But there's pressure because you want to play well. But we're going to go out there and have fun and hopefully -- in the Stableford, there's so many people that can make an eagle, get on a roll or whatever. I got on a roll on the front side. There's a lot of good players not only in the last group but obviously



right behind us.

Q. Was today your best round out here stroke-wise, do you think, over the years?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: No, I've had a few other ones in the 28s, 29s, I did. But I think over the years, for whatever reason, the course has gotten a little tougher, you don't see the scores being quite as good. But I don't know if it's the greens, I don't know if we're just getting older and it becomes harder, I don't know.

But golf is difficult, we know that. But we love the competition. I look forward to tomorrow.

Q. Prep tonight? Is it karaoke night or quiet night?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: I'll have some dinner, relax, make some phone calls, talk to my wife and relax with my caddie and some friends that are out here from Paradise Valley, Arizona, Phoenix, Scottsdale area. Same thing, just get some rest and prepare the right way like I have the last couple of days and go out there and try to hit good shots.

Q. Basketball, NBA Finals going on right now. Obviously 2-0 lead. What are your thoughts?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: I live in Phoenix. Worked for the Suns for years. Obviously Monty Williams was a teammate of mine in San Antonio. And I coached Chris Paul with the Clippers. They've been playing fantastic.

I played for Milwaukee for a couple of years at the end of my career. So Milwaukee has got to go home and take care of business. But Phoenix is playing fantastic. They're moving their ball. They have home court advantage. But as the series goes on, we'll see who makes the adjustments and see who steps up and makes the plays.

Q. And Milwaukee came back from a 2-0 deficit earlier. Do you think that's another possibility?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: For sure, because with Giannis and Middleton and Holiday and their team, they've been in this situation before. Nothing's going to be given to you. They'll have to earn everything. And hopefully they'll play well at home.

But I expect Phoenix has played well on the road all year. They have a great back court. Their chemistry, their ball movement has been fantastic. Ayton's played well for them. They're going to go on the road with confidence, they're going to try to steal a game, and take full control of the series.

Q. Your best finishes were 8th in 2015 and tied for 7th last year. Now you're so far ahead of those scores. What's the difference this year?

VINNY DEL NEGRO: I'm not sure. Just probably my mindset, just kind of just feeling good over the golf ball and my caddie's lining me up well. And kind of preparing for the tournament the last week or so but I really wasn't playing a lot, hitting a bunch of balls, not playing a lot of rounds.

I play a little bit at Whisper Rock where I'm a member in Scottsdale, Arizona. Just feel good. We'll see what happens tomorrow. It's golf, so anything can happen.

Q. And it's Tahoe, the wind could pick up.

VINNY DEL NEGRO: Yes, a little lower ball. We'll see how it goes tomorrow. Hopefully hit them in good spots and roll some putts.

Q. Are you surprised by how well you're doing right now? Like he said, 7th and 8th, and working on your game.

VINNY DEL NEGRO: I think the guys said it well earlier. You tend to put so much pressure on yourself because it's such a fun event. We've played in it for so many years. We all play in different tournaments together. We've competed against each other at our home courses or theirs in tournaments or whatever.

I think it's just we're all just so competitive, we just want to win. And I think it puts a little bit of extra pressure on you. I think I've done a good job of just relaxing, enjoying the moment, hitting good shots. When I didn't hit good shots, okay, focus in on the next one. I've been able to do that the last couple of days. So hopefully that will continue.

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