

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

Thursday, July 8, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Omaha Country Club

## Billy Andrade

### Quick Quotes

**THE MODERATOR:** It's my pleasure to welcome Billy Andrade into the interview room. 5-under 65, tied for the lead. Bogey free round. Maybe talk about some of the birdies you made.

**BILLY ANDRADE:** Today started off on 10, which is obviously, as everybody knows, a very difficult hole, especially starting there. I hit a 4-iron left of the hole, pin high in the rough, very difficult chip shot, and I left that about 20 feet short. Ken Tanigawa had a birdie putt from a little further back from me, so I got a great read off of his, and he made his, and I made mine.

I can't remember starting off a tournament where I had a 20-footer for par that I've made. Most of the time, you start off, you're already 1-over after one, here we go. What kind of day are we going to have today? It was really kind of a bonus to make that putt, and off I went.

I birdied 13. I hit a sand wedge in there about five feet, made that. I birdied 16, and I hit a 46-degree wedge into the wind to about 15 feet and made that. 17, I hit a 52-degree sand wedge there to three feet and made birdie there. 2, I was just in front of the green, off the front of the green, I putted it up to about six feet short, and I made that. Then I two-putted on the next par-5. I hit a driver and a 4-iron about 20 feet below the shelf and putted it up for a tap-in. So those are my five birdies.

It was kind of stress free. I hit the ball fairly solid today, kept it in play, didn't have too many hiccups, didn't miss too many fairways. Missed a couple, but overall ecstatic with my start. I love this golf course. It reminds me a bit of Old Town in Winston Salem, where I played my college golf at Wake Forest, Perry Maxwell. Only difference is Old Town is a little hilly, not extremely hilly. This golf course, I feel like I'm in pretty good shape, so I'm looking forward to the next three days.

And my goal today, honestly, when you tee off late, it's to make sure you can keep the press around and try to ruin



their dinners.

**Q. Billy, you mentioned that you are using a new putter now. Could you kind of give the background on that.**

**BILLY ANDRADE:** It's the same Scottie Cameron putter that I've been using. It's just a little -- the bend is a little different in the neck, and then I added some weight to it, which I haven't done in forever. I put some weight in it to see if that would get me a little more consistent with my roll, and I putted decent last week at Dick's, finished 13th, and I kind of was on to something here. My feel is very good. Today it was exceptional. To be able to win and to be able to compete, you have to have good touch and you have to obviously putt well.

I think that's the biggest thing kind of that holds all of us back when we don't play great is that we're not making enough birdies, and out here on the Champions Tour, the play is so amazing, you have to play great every day. These guys are so good. Somebody's going to get it going. Somebody's going to run the tables. We're all looking to putt better, I think, so I tried this, and I like the way it's coming off.

**Q. Just to be clear, it's the same putter; you just made some adjustments to it?**

**BILLY ANDRADE:** Different putter. It's the same make of the putter, yeah. It's the same putter. It's got a little newer grip on it. I like that. The other one's a little older. I didn't want to mess with the old one, putting weights in the bottom. You can screw weights in it or take the weights off. For years and years, I had weights out. I like light putters. Old school, the Ping putters back in the day were all very light, and over the years, the evolution of putters have gotten heavier and heavier and heavier, and I just haven't caught up to it.

The putter I'm using is a little heavier, not much. It seems like the neck of it is just a little more of a neck than the other one. It looks a little different, but like that look. It was great. It's been great.

**Q. Billy, talk about the hilly course. How many uneven lies did you have today?**

BILLY ANDRADE: I grew up in Rhode Island. I grew up on a Seth Raynor, on the side of the mountain, going to the Narragansett Bay. I grew up on this stuff. For me, it doesn't bother me. I won at Westchester. It was a hilly course, blind shots. I grew up kind of playing golf like this. So it doesn't bother me at all.

I had a few, sure. You're going to have a few here, but you have to -- your creativity has to come out, and you have to accept it and go on and try to keep it in the short stuff.

**Q. How did you feel about your game coming into this?**

BILLY ANDRADE: I shot 18-over at Akron. I didn't feel too marvelous when I left there, but Akron's just a brutal golf course. It's just so hard. It wasn't that I was that far off, but I had a lot of texts from a lot of concerned friends, like, you know, what's wrong with you? It's like, Go to Akron; just go play it and see how you do. It's just -- Stricker made it look easy, but it's not an easy place.

Then I went to Dick's, where I've had success. I haven't won there, but I've had a lot of success there and played there because it's in the northeast. I shot 1-under, I finished 13th. I was really close to being right there. 12-under won, so when you lose by five, you think about, hey, just two putts a day. Two, four, six, I win in three rounds. When you're only five back after the tournament's over, you know you've actually played pretty well.

Coming into here, I feel like my game is good. I feel like it's been building all summer and all spring. I played terrible last year. I had no energy with the pandemic and playing in front of nobody. I just didn't -- coming off a great year that I had in '19. I don't know, I finished 11th on the money list.

I didn't win, but I had a lot, a lot of great events, a lot of top 10s. Then I come out after the pandemic, and I don't think I finished, I don't know, maybe 30th was the best I did, which was terrible.

So going into this year, a big concern, okay, we've got to get this thing back. It's a wraparound season. You still have a lot of tournaments left. I'm not happy where I am on the money list. I'm not happy that I haven't won in a long time. So this build-up has been happening, and I'm seeing a lot of good things, progress. Finished top 10 at the Tradition, Alabama, I was really close at Mitsubishi in Atlanta. Dicky Pride ended up winning. So I had some good finishes, but maybe this is the build-up that I needed to have those to come here and contend.

**Q. Billy, on the last hole, you had about a 20 -- looked**

**like about 20 feet for birdie downhill. Looked pretty good off the putter. Did you think you had that one?**

BILLY ANDRADE: I did. I thought it was in. I looked at it from above the hole. It was a big breaker. The other side, I said to Ziggy, my caddie, it doesn't look like it's going to break as much, and my intuition was correct. It came down, and then it kind of straightened out. It just missed. You can't complain about hitting putts that go online and go where you're aiming. When you do that, it's good, and then you've got to get lucky. I'm just very happy with the round today.

**Q. When you used the phrase, because of the COVID times, playing in front of nobody. Obviously, there were some people out there today.**

BILLY ANDRADE: Oh, yeah.

**Q. It was crazy out here on 13. What was the atmosphere like out there?**

BILLY ANDRADE: It's just so great to see smiles on people's faces, not wearing masks, and the energy level. Even if it's a few people, it's better than none. You go play a pickup basketball game in an arena downtown here in Omaha, and there's nobody there. We have a pickup game. How are you feeling as you play? Well, you don't care. It's no big deal. You can turn the ball over. You can air ball it. No one's going to say anything.

Now let's throw 15,000 people out in the seats. It's a different game. It's a different animal, and that's what playing in front of people and playing competitive golf is.

Last year it didn't seem like it was even competitive -- not that it wasn't competitive golf, because it was, but it was just so different to not have grandstands and have people and have the energy and the buzz. We had none of that. You had to create it on your own. You make a 30-foot putt for birdie, and your caddie doesn't even clap for you. You just give the putter back. That's a lot of fun. Where you make a putt where it matters in a tournament and the crowd goes crazy and you get an adrenaline rush, that's what we were born to do. We've been doing it our whole lives.

So, yeah, it wasn't great. I'm not complaining about it. It was awesome that we had the opportunity to play. You've got to thank the PGA TOUR for that, but it just wasn't the same animal as playing in front of people and seeing the energy, seeing kids out here smiling. You're flipping the kids balls. That's what it's all about, growing the game and having fun. I think, if you polled every Tour player out here, they'd say the same thing. It's just great to have fans

back.

**Q. When you post a score late in the day like this, how well does that set you up for the championship when you're going out early tomorrow?**

BILLY ANDRADE: It's great. It's nice to be able to go and start right back up versus the opposite where you got all day tomorrow to wait to play. A golf course can change. Maybe it's not going to change as much.

I was a little concerned driving the course, and they said it's going to start blowing 20 miles an hour at 3:00. This morning the guys didn't have any wind. But over the course of 72 holes, it fluctuates, and there's nothing you can do about it, yeah. So I look forward to going out early tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports