

John Deere Classic

Thursday, July 8, 2021

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

Alex Smalley

Quick Quotes

Q. You Monday qualified, off to a great start this week. Just talk about your round a little bit today.

ALEX SMALLEY: I knew the first couple holes might take me a little while to settle in. Thankfully I've played in a couple of these already, so I kind of knew what the deal was. Got off to a good start, hit a poor second shot into my second hole, was in a bunker short-sided and made a good downhill breaking left-to-right putt, kind of kept the momentum going for me, and just played solid the rest of the back nine. Made a couple good putts on 13 and 17 for birdie, hit a lot of good shots, had a lot of good looks. So it was mostly stress free for the day.

Q. You must have come in here this week with a lot of confidence. You've had a couple top 5s on the Forme Tour the previous weeks. Talk about that a little bit and having the confidence coming into the tournament.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I played well the first two Forme events like you said. I actually did the Rocket Mortgage Monday between the two Forme events and missed the big playoff by a shot, so I knew I was playing well, and I just had to keep doing the things that I've been doing, and I knew I was going to play well. Like I said, I just needed a couple holes to settle in, and then after that I felt pretty relaxed out there.

Q. Did it just feel like a regular round of golf once you got settled in?

ALEX SMALLEY: You know, it's nice to have people, people watching. We don't have a whole lot of people watching usually on the Forme events. So it's a little different. That took a little getting used to my first couple TOUR starts.

Yeah, after the first two or three holes, like I said, I made a nice birdie putt on 13 that kind of settled me in a little bit more, and after that it was -- kept going through the process and missing where I wanted to miss and hit the ball where I wanted to hit it. I was good to go from there.



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Q. Clean card until you got to 6. What happened there? Looked like you went long on the approach.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I hit it in the fairway bunker. The pin was back left, kind of in between clubs, had 130 yards. Coming out of the sand, though, I needed to hit it a little further. For me the ball comes out a little shorter in the sand, so I went with a longer club and just drew it with the wind and it just went long, and actually had a pretty good lie, but it just came out a little hotter than I wanted to and went all the way down the ridge. I was just lucky to two-putt at that point. I had 45 or 50 feet.

Q. You talked about the feelings settling in, having this round under your belt. How do you think it's going to be for you out here tomorrow having such a good start today?

ALEX SMALLEY: We have to go into tomorrow like it's the first round. You can't go in thinking you had a great start and you want to keep it going. I just have to do the same thing that I did today. It'll probably take me a couple more holes to settle down again tomorrow and hopefully the weather cooperates a little bit, but we'll see.

Q. You were 4-under; Eric Cole, another Monday qualifier, 2-under. You guys are representing yourselves well out here. Talk about that.

ALEX SMALLEY: It's great to Monday into a tournament. That's almost the toughest part is getting here and then you're almost freed up when you get here and can kind of just go out and play. You don't -- at least I don't think that geez, I have to go play well to get here, I'm already here.

It kind of relaxes me a little bit knowing that I can just kind of go out and play. But I was happy to see Eric make it. Eric and I played all four rounds together earlier this year in Punta Cana in March, so it was nice to see him get in and nice to see that he put a good round together.

Q. You came out of the Monday spot with some confidence. Kind of nice to live up to that and prove to yourself that you can do that, that you can shoot well out here?

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, it is. It's nice to back up the good



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score on Monday with another solid score today and keep it going the rest of the week.

Q. How tough was it adjusting to not having mom caddie for you?

ALEX SMALLEY: Very different. She's been on the bag since the end of March, but Don is great. He flew up pretty late on Monday. I think he got into the hotel here around 3:30 in the morning on Tuesday morning. He's great for me, and I think we've got a good thing going.

Q. How much practice did you get in?

ALEX SMALLEY: I played 18 on Tuesday and didn't see the course on Wednesday just because of the pro-am. I didn't want to get up at 5:00 and try and beat the pro-am out.

Tuesday was my 15th straight day playing golf, so I needed a little break on Wednesday, so it was nice to have a little bit of a break.

Q. How much did Don's experience on this golf course help you?

ALEX SMALLEY: It helped quite a bit because he's seen all the winds out here, so there were a couple times where it was hard to feel where the wind was coming from in the trees, and he told me just to trust it, it's up there. You might not be able to feel it on the ground but it's up there. And he's got all of his notes from previous years and he's got a greens book and he knows which way the ball is going to break. So it's nice to have that kind of reinforcement and that experience of him on the bag.

Q. Given your experience in Walker Cups and big-time college golf, do you feel like you belong?

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I feel like I belong. I've seen a lot of the guys I've competed with who have done well out here. A couple guys in college, John Pak, Austin Eckroat, Davis Thompson, I've played with them quite a bit, and then Sahith Theegala is doing really well on the Korn Ferry TOUR and actually played a practice round with him this week, so it was nice to catch up with him at the Monday qualifier. There's a lot of young guns out there that are doing really well, and just hope to follow in their footsteps.

Q. What are your expectations? What are your hopes for the week?

ALEX SMALLEY: I said the toughest part was getting here. I don't know if I have a whole lot of expectations coming here. I like playing up north on this type of grass,

so just kind of a comforting feeling in that sort, I guess. Not a whole lot of expectations coming into today or tomorrow.

Q. And your mom said I had to ask you, who's a better caddie, her or you?

ALEX SMALLEY: I'll decline to comment.

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