

John Deere Classic

Tuesday, July 2, 2024

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

Neal Shipley

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, like to welcome Neal Shipley to the interview room here at the John Deere Classic.

Neal, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. Making your fourth career start on the PGA TOUR and second as a professional coming off top 20 finish last week at Rocket Mortgage.

Looked at few things and noticed your finishes are getting progressively better from the Masters, U.S. Open, and last week with the top 20.

That said, just some thoughts on being here this week and how you're feeling going into the week.

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, great opportunities here in the Quad Cities. It's another opportunity to finish high and work maybe towards special temporary membership or whatever one of those categories are.

And, yeah, just really excited. Great golf course. Enjoyed my time here to far.

Q. How much have you seen of the golf course? Have you had any history here prior to this week at TPC Deere Run?

NEAL SHIPLEY: First week here. I got 18 in yesterday and 18 in today, so seen the golf course twice. Feel pretty comfortable. I'm not playing tomorrow. Get a rest day and get after it on Thursday.

Q. You're obviously a very recognizable figure between your internet sensation stuff and the majors and so forth now here this week. Have you got used to that rock star lifestyle you got going on?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun. We had a lot of people following us at Rocket and that was a lot of fun. Although it was a lot of Michigan fans there. Got a lot of the, Go Blue going on and being tossed around.

Great to have the fans' support to and excited about what's



to come with that.

Q. Talk about the exemptions that you're getting and the opportunities that those present. How important are those for you at this stage?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, they're massive. I wouldn't have those opportunities if it wasn't for the tournament directors giving me some exemptions. It's been awesome to take advantage of my first one. Really excited to hopefully take advantage of this opportunity this week.

Just really thankful for the opportunity because this is something that maybe six months ago didn't seem possible to me.

Q. Luke Clanton was in here a few minutes ago. He suggested 20 guys could win out of the college ranks on the PGA TOUR. Seems like a brash statement. More and more the evidence is trending that you guys come out really, really well.

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, I think we have guys that are ready to compete out here. You know, maybe not 20 guys winning. I mean, obviously I think there is more than 20 really quality players in the college ranks. If they have a week like Nick Dunlap did where he played phenomenal golf at the AMEX, it's certainly possible.

Luke showed last week that a college player, he is, what, going to be a junior; plays really well. He was in in contention going into Sunday.

So, yeah, college golf is a great proving ground. I think PGA TOUR U is giving guys a lot of opportunities. You'll see in the PGA TOUR U ranks, some of the guys highly touted don't always pan out.

It's kind of an adjustment to be out here. It's different than college golf, that's for sure.

Q. (Indiscernible.) Does this feel different? Are the nerves a little more tested?

NEAL SHIPLEY: You know, we're not really thinking about that too much. Trying not to. I mean, you certainly could and I could probably think about a bunch of putts that would cost me money. That's not a good way or a healthy



way to think about things in the long term.

At the end of the day, just trying to play really good golf. Good golf travels whether you're on PGA Tour America or up here. Just focusing on those things and letting the rest take care of it.

Obviously there are nerves competing here, especially if it's your first time. I felt pretty comfortable with that experience at Augusta and at U.S. Open. Coming into Rocket Mortgage I felt pretty settled and felt like I knew a lot of guys out here and had a lot of the familiar faces in the locker room.

Q. Low am, two majors. Did teeing it up with professionals feel different at all from Augusta, from The Open?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Not really. You know, I still feel like I'm as an amateur you're obviously playing for the joy of the game and all that stuff. I feel like I'm trying to keep it that way and not get wrapped up in the business side of things that comes with being a professional golfer.

Keep it fun. I started playing golf competitively because I love the game and I still do. Just trying to continue to enjoy it and enjoy being out here. Especially with these starts. I don't know how many I'm going to get, so just trying to take in it the experience and soak it all in.

Q. Where were you in 2013 when Jordan Spieth holed a bunker shot here and became the first teen to win in 81 years?

NEAL SHIPLEY: I was 12 years old. (Laughter.) I think, yeah. So I don't -- couldn't tell you where I was.

I certainly remember that and I think at the time, too, Jordan winning at 19 was great, but he wasn't -- went on to do those great things a few years later, and that's when I think I started to take notice of him.

Q. Just wanted to ask you, you mentioned keeping the love of the game. Has your mindset shifted now with being pro? Is it different being out here? I know a lot of college guys come out here and try to soak up the experience and learn as much as they can. Do you feel like you have anything to accomplish this week now, or do you just try to ride the wave?

NEAL SHIPLEY: I just kind of try to continue to do the work we been doing each week. I've been treating these starts that I'm getting like it's a major in terms of preparation and learning the golf course and all those things, making sure we don't have any stone unturned.

Because I just want to make sure when I tee it up on Thursday I've given it my all. You know, if we miss a cut this week, then I know I've given it everything I can. That's just kind of the goal for what's going on this week and next couple.

Q. You mentioned playing 18 the last couple days. What did you like about the course? Anything here that fits you that you saw?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, it's in great shape. Longer golf course. Puts a big emphasis on hitting fairways and greens out here. Feel like short game a slightly de-emphasized out here because a lot of the up and downs are really difficult.

So kind of I think it suits my game because of that. I hit the ball relatively long with the driver, pretty straight I feel like. Feel like I'm one of the better iron players out here right now.

Q. You mentioned Jordan and special temporary. I'm impressed that you know that. A lot of different ways to get in events. How nice is it, John Deere, what they do? They've really carefully handpicked guys like yourself over the years? How much does it mean to have gotten a sponsorship to play here this week?

NEAL SHIPLEY: It's awesome, because so many guys have come through here and seems like it's a launchpad for a lot of guys' careers. Excited to use this one as is launchpad like many other guys have in the past.

Q. Do you find yourself measuring yourself against the Nick Dunlaps and the Lukes and the guys you've been playing junior golf with more a number of years? Is there some level of staying in front?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Not really. You know, I'm just kind of trying to do my own thing. To be honest, I really wasn't a super competitive junior golfer or a really competitive amateur golfer until the last year and a half. I was -- I mean, when I transferred into Ohio State I was like 1300 in the World Amateur Rankings, and that was about two years ago now, which is pretty wild to think about.

Around this time last summer I was probably still around 600 in the World Amateur Rankings, so come a long way in the last year. Just trying to keep progressing like I have been and if I keep on this trajectory we'll be doing pretty good.

Q. What did you think has led to the growth? Is that an Ohio State thing or something you found in your



game?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Definitely being at Ohio State around some great teammates. I've always had a great work ethic and things are clicking a little bit more as of late and learned a lot about myself in the last two, three years playing.

You know, I think my game -- I started as a junior golfer, no Power 5 offers, and kind of working consistently for the last five years towards this. I feel like that we been working on all the right things for a lot of time and a lot of credit to the team around me. Both at James Madison, my personal swing coach and the people at Ohio State have been a huge support for me.

Q. Is that low am status at those two majors, does that give you more confidence, better feeling about what you're capable of out here?

NEAL SHIPLEY: I guess less so being low amateur there, but more so the finishes. Making the cut at Augusta when the conditions were really brutal on Thursday and Friday. I played great golf. I think I was only 1-over or 2- or something -- I don't know. I can't remember now.

My memory doesn't work that far back. Yeah, that was great playing. I mean, 30 mile an hour winds.

Then Pinehurst really grinded to make the cut. Made a few birdies coming in late to make it safely, and then played well on the weekend. T26 at U.S. Open is really, really good finish practice.

So I think where I finished and the quality of golf during those events is really what's giving me more confidence on this stage.

Q. You mentioned couple of answers ago that you learned a lot about yourself in the last couple years. What have you learned about yourself in the last couple years?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, I feel like I've learned that I'm not afraid of those big moments, that I can compete with anyone if I'm playing well. I think I've also learned that I don't have to play my best golf to make cuts. I don't have to play flawless golf to finish top 50 in a PGA TOUR event.

Obviously got to play good, but I don't have to be -- don't have to have my A++ game. That's a big confidence boost for me. I know I don't have to be perfect out here.

Q. I know you talked a little bit about expectations this week. Is there anything you have set as your goal for

this week, what you want to get done? Special exemption, you must be thinking, hey, there is something big out there for me.

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, I mean, obviously we've thought about that and run the numbers and kind of know the points and what we need to get.

At the end of the day, I'm just trying to enjoy the moment, have fun with it, and be prepared. I like to be process oriented and make sure I'm focusing on that part.

I feel like if I take care of my process throughout the week the result will follow.

Q. Do you know your schedule going forward?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Like next two weeks?

Q. Next two weeks, next month.

NEAL SHIPLEY: I will be next week at ISCO. Not sure about the next two. I don't know what has been announced or whatnot.

And then probably back on PGA TOUR Canada after that, unless we do something pretty fun here in the next couple weeks.

THE MODERATOR: One last one. Obviously everybody knows you from the golf course. Just a little bit about you, what you enjoy, some of the hobbies, things you enjoy doing. Favorite music to get you know a little bit better as a person. What do you enjoy?

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, did a lot of fly fishing back in Virginia in college at James Madison. Really enjoyed a lot of that. Like being outdoors and kind of enjoying nature. I think it's really restorative.

I love Pittsburgh Steelers football. Nothing else I'll do on a Sunday afternoon than watch the Pittsburgh Steelers. Yeah, I used to play baseball, so I really enjoy baseball. Last week in Detroit got to see a Tigers game. Sitting in a ballpark and enjoying a game is something I really like to do.

Q. You're a professional. You're supposed to work on Sundays.

NEAL SHIPLEY: I know.

THE MODERATOR: Hopefully this Sunday it's a different story.

NEAL SHIPLEY: If you play well enough you don't have to play in the FedEx fall, so I think that's a goal moving forward.

So we get to enjoy our Pittsburgh Steelers games, or hopefully they're playing on Sunday Night Football a lot.

Q. Russell Wilson or Justin Fields?

NEAL SHIPLEY: That's a great question. I think Russ is probably the guy that's going to start.

Q. How about none the above.

NEAL SHIPLEY: We've only gotten better. I love Kenny Pickett. I think he's a great guy. Everything I've heard. But I think we've gotten a better guy in that position. Mike Tomlin, we're going to win nine football games, so that's just what he does.

Q. (Regarding Fields being a Buckeye.)

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah, he is a Buckeye, but Russ had a good season last year sneaky. I think he's a little underrated. The fact that he's getting paid to play against us is pretty awesome, play against Denver I guess. Getting paid to play against Denver.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

NEAL SHIPLEY: No, I mean, he hasn't had a snap in the NFL yet. You never know. Got drafted to the Bears, so I guess, yeah, you guys are bears fans here.

Q. Be careful.

NEAL SHIPLEY: Yeah.

Q. On that note.

THE MODERATOR: Walk out of here in one piece. We do appreciate your time coming in and best of luck to you this week.

NEAL SHIPLEY: Thank you. Appreciate it.

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