

TOUR Championship

Saturday, August 31, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Sahith Theegala

Quick Quotes

Q. Great back nine. What went well for you there?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, I've been hitting my short irons and wedges really nice this week. It's been a big emphasis of mine the latter part of the year. I've really struggled weirdly in that distance. Putting a lot of work the last month or so, and I feel like I've hit a lot of those 120 to 170 shots really close, which has been awesome.

I've just had a bunch of opportunities, and my driver hasn't been super straight, but the putter has been great from that length, and I've made a lot of putts from that distance, which was big. Just some momentum putts that kind of kept the birdies going. Yeah, it just felt like a lot of my game is really feeling good right now.

Q. No. 3, what's the final verdict?

SAHITH THEEGALA: It was a two-shot penalty. Unfortunately they couldn't come up with the clearest evidence. It was a zoomed out kind of -- the camera angle they had was pretty far behind the ball and it was kind of zoomed out. It was really tough to see.

So my version of it was I was in the bunker, took my backswing, and to give context, I through it in the bunker right on the lip; ball rolled up the lip and came back right on top of where it pitched. So it was a very unusual lie. It was teed up in the sand. It was a really nice lie.

So it was an unusual lie, and I usually pick up the club and take it back, but because of the lie, right on my backswing I felt like I moved a few grains of sand for sure. In my peripheral, I thought I saw some of the sand move as I took my backswing.

Immediately after I hit it -- I hit it, great contact, great shot, talked to Xander about it. I was like, hey, dude, I think I moved some sand while I hit that shot, and we thought that it was no big deal because there was no intent, didn't feel like -- it didn't actually change the lie at all.

But unfortunately the rule is it doesn't matter the intent. If



you change the lie in the direct area around the ball that could affect your swing, it is a two-shot penalty.

At the end of the day, I've played so much golf. You kind of just trust your intuition and gut, and right away I thought I moved some sand there. I'm in the 90s percent that I thought I moved some sand. I'd sleep a lot better if I saw some clear image of me moving the sand.

I really think I did move the sand. It's just an unfortunate rule. But what are you going to do, take the two shots on the chin and just roll with it.

But yeah, it was just unfortunate. But I did -- pretty sure I breached the rules, so I'm paying the price for it, and I feel good about it. Like I said, I'm not 100 percent sure. But I'd say I'm 98, 99 percent sure that some sand was moved.

I've just played so much golf. You spend so much time of your life staring down at the lie you have, the ball you have, and it just did not feel like a normal fairway bunker shot. It felt like some of the sand moved. At the end of the day I'm good with the ruling, and I think it's very fair that I was assessed two shots.

Q. It happened on your backswing taking the shot?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Correct.

Q. Feels like all this happens in a millisecond as you...

SAHITH THEEGALA: Correct, and it was so insignificant. If you think about it, if you hit something on your backswing and you feel anything, you're going to stop and reset. Imagine being into -- having a downgrain lie and you just clip a piece of grass, like that's stopping your club a little bit. The amount of sand that was behind this ball, like if I hit significant amount of, like I would have stopped and I would have thought it wasn't a penalty and I wouldn't have gotten penalized. Just the same except my ball is still there.

So it was a very little amount of sand. I can say that with full honesty and clarity. It was not a very large amount of sand. I don't think it improved the lie at all. I shouldn't say that. Some of the sand moved; maybe it did improve it. But it was on the backswing.



Yeah, if you notice my iron shots when I hit a cut, I kind of pick up the club and kind of like sweep it back low, and that was what I did there. I was trying to hit a cut and ended up sweeping it too low.

It's too hard to tell because of the shadows and my club. You couldn't see any sand come up. That's how little sand we're talking about. I think it literally just brushed down the hill about that much. But yeah, I wish I could see it on video. I'm still going to sleep great. Whatever, two shots, I feel good about it. I think it was a penalty. I think I moved sand. Just a weird situation.

Q. Would you sleep badly if you hadn't called it on yourself?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Oh, I wouldn't be able to sleep. I was describing the situation -- no matter what the outcome was, I needed to know what the actual rule was. Even though me and Xander thought it's just whatever, it's fine, you touched a grain of sand, didn't mean to move it, you're good.

I decided to call the rules official right away on that green. But either way, I would have asked the rules officials after the round, too, or somehow found out what the rule was, and if I didn't ask a rules official and I went back home and looked up the rule -- it was sitting in my mind.

Again, intuition, it felt like I moved the sand. It was sitting in my mind. If I went back after the round, looked that up and found out that it was a two-shot penalty, I would be DQ'd right now. So I am glad I brought it up right away. I know the rules of golf a little bit better now. There is a lot of silly stuff you can do in the bunker. You can chuck a club in the bunker, you can literally stand -- you can use your golf club as a stand in the bunker. As long as it's not right next to your ball.

There's a lot of things you can do. But unfortunately if it's in the area affecting the lie and the swing of your shot, regardless of intent, it's a two-shot penalty.

Q. How easy or difficult was it for you mentally to move on on the fourth hole?

SAHITH THEEGALA: It was tough. I got very upset. I don't know if the cameras saw that, but I chucked my water bottle. Just in the moment. I wear my emotions on my sleeve. Tough to not get upset about that. I made a huge par on 4. Thought that saved my round.

It was a pretty wild -- yeah, I'm just really happy I made that putt because if I didn't make that putt I would have been really hot walking to hole 5. Yeah, just gave a little bit

more fuel to the fire, I guess. Just tried to use that positively. My caddie, Carl, kept telling me that I've been playing awesome. Just keep doing your thing. Two shots is a lot, but at the end of the day you've got a lot more golf to play. Tried to use it as a positive.

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