

The American Express

Friday, January 21, 2022

La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Will Zalatoris

Quick Quotes

Q. 61, 11-under par today, 12-under for the tournament, did you see it coming?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yes and no. I mean I thought I was playing some really good golf at home over the last month, I really worked hard on my wedges and my putting and I think it's really paid off.

I think today I just gave myself chances, I hit a lot close and made a couple 20, 30 footers to keep the round going and obviously, like I said, making birdie on 9 from the wrong fairway is kind of the icing on the cake.

Q. I didn't see it, what happened off the tee that I think you wound up there and then your thought after you hit the second shot?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, no, I slipped a little bit. I was trying to hit a hard cut and I kind of got underneath it and my foot slipped and blocked it way out right. I was just hoping it wasn't in the bushes and I ended up having a pretty decent angle and a great lie and I just, my caddie gave me a good number and he said, Hey, let's hit a golf shot and let's try and get out of here with a 4 and the putt lipped in.

Q. What was the number?

WILL ZALATORIS: 212.

Q. 6-iron?

WILL ZALATORIS: 6-iron.

Q. It looks like the wind is picking up now and is going to blow again tomorrow, are you pretty happy to get out of there with your 61?

WILL ZALATORIS: No, definitely, but I love wind too. I know tomorrow it's supposed to pick up, I live in Texas so I'm used to it. Really, playing golf the last few days without a lot of wind has been a little strange for me, so I'm looking forward to the challenge tomorrow.

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Q. What was the mindset starting the day nine back?

WILL ZALATORIS: I was frustrated with my attitude yesterday, I thought that I was trying to shoot a number on a golf course that I knew I could eat up with my distance, and shooting 1-under, two birdies was pretty disappointing. I hit bad drives on all the par-5s and I hit 10 greens yesterday on a 7000-yard golf course and with my distance, I mean, I never do that.

So I knew that was a little bit of mental rust of making sure that I wasn't short sided and veering away from some flags that normally I would be taking on and today just I had a lot of great numbers and I picked the line that Josh Gregory told me that I love, he said, If you want to shoot 64 you got to be willing to shoot 74 and obviously I clipped it today. (Laughing).

Q. Given that you've, you know the courses around here and 61 is a possibility, was that a number that was in your mind or were you just saying, let's get back to making birdies?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, no, if anything it was just try to right the ship for the start of the year. The attitude that I had yesterday was a little bit of the attitude I carried over the last three months of the season where I was really forcing things and trying to do things when in reality the first six months of last year I was just playing golf and it added up to some great golf. So I had a great call with Dr. Lardon, had a great call with Josh and we really just said, Hey, your job today's to go hit golf shots and see what it adds up to and trust your process that we've been working on for a few months.

Q. What was the best read from your caddie today?

WILL ZALATORIS: Probably No. 6, about a 25-footer that had about four feet of break in there that I was looking at about two and a half, so buried it in the middle of the heart, so thanks Ryan (laughing).

Q. What is forcing it in that second half of last year kind of look like and then what, how do you get out of that and what does that look like and how is it different?

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WILL ZALATORIS: No, I think just trying to shoot numbers every single day, trying to force birdies in there when in reality I didn't have to. The other part too is that I've been wanting to win so bad that if anything I was making mistakes on Thursday, Friday of trying not to make mistakes and then making mistakes because I was doing that.

The example I could give you yesterday was I didn't really have a good number on 12, on a par-3, the pin was tucked on the left corner with wind blowing 10 miles an hour off the left and I hit it in the right bunker and hit it to eight feet and missed it. The reality is if I went after that flag and I pulled it in the left bunker, I was making 4 anyway, so you might as well give yourself a chance at it. So that's really been the big difference over the last two days.

Q. Was it just expectations, I think, kind of when you come off the Korn Ferry, you get on this run and just keep rolling and now all of a sudden there's all these expectations whether from yourself or outside?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, a little bit. I think it was, after Augusta I thought my expectations and my mindset changed a little bit. Like I said, that was really where I was trying to win tournaments, I was working honestly too hard, worked myself all the way into an injury and I knew that that was kind of where I needed to take a step back. So I thought that really the first six months was incredible, it was, I learned a lot from it playing that well and being in contention, but the last six months I really gained a lot more out of it of just not forcing it and shooting rounds. And this is my second 61 now in the last five or six events I've played, so it's there, so I just need to keep this attitude going in the future.

Q. What was the call with Dr. Lardon and Josh like, what were some of the things from that?

WILL ZALATORIS: It was the same thing. Like I told you that Josh said, Hey if you want to go out and shoot a low number and win a golf tournament and shoot 64 you got to be willing to shoot 74. You got to go take chances. If you're going to go fire and be aggressive on par-5s, you got to be willing to, like today, hitting one in the water, that stuff happens.

Dr. Lardon, we just talked very briefly about really just trying to get back to the mindset of house money. Just playing with house money every week and that was something I told him before Augusta, going out and having fun.

And yesterday shooting 71 that looked like I was shooting

85 and today shooting 61 it looked like I shot a low round. So carrying that mindset no matter what I'm shooting and carrying that attitude is something I need to have every day I play.

Q. Thoughts on fans back here at the American Express, didn't have them last year, sure looked nice on that putt on 18, just talk about that experience having the fans back.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it's been fun. It's fun hearing the cheers, it's fun hearing people calling me Happy Gilmore's caddie, all of that stuff is a lot of fun to be out there playing. So it's pretty cool.

And then obviously people, you got probably almost a thousand people around here right now, obviously Phil's signing autographs, it's normal, so it's kind of nice to have this when really the last two years have been anything but normal.

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