

The American Express

Thursday, January 18, 2024

La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Tom Whitney

Quick Quotes

Q. Tom, nice start, 6-under, 66 at the Stadium Course. Got to be pretty happy with that, I'm sure.

TOM WHITNEY: Yeah, I was actually really excited to start with this rotation. Although Stadium can bite you, it's pretty generous off the tee. I go into La Quinta tomorrow, after getting the nerves out of the first 18 holes, play a little tighter golf course, but it's also very gettable. Then get to finish on Nicklaus, which is probably the easiest. So, yeah, all in all, very happy, one bogey, seven birdies, I'll take it.

Q. What did you do particularly well out there today and were there any challenges that you kind of had that stood out to you?

TOM WHITNEY: Yeah, fortunately, the holes were wide out there. I didn't drive it that well. But there wasn't a putt that I hit that I was disappointed with. Hit a handful of good pitch shots. I played the par-5s very strategically, and birdied three out of those four. And then, oh, man, had that near ace on 17. That would have been fun for the hometown crowd. Yeah, to steal a birdie there -- and had a really good look on 18 that almost dropped as well. Yeah, just looking forward to tightening things up for tomorrow.

Q. Can you talk about that, on 17, what club did you hit and how close did you hit it?

TOM WHITNEY: So, adjusted I think it was 168. After the slope down. I just put a 160 feel with my 9-iron. Some of these greens are bouncy, some aren't. I didn't want to risk flying it too far and going over. Pitched it within a couple of my goal and rolled up just short.

Q. Did it feel different today playing as a full member in your first start, and were there any nerves on the first tee?

TOM WHITNEY: Yeah there were a couple nerves, but, honestly, I think that's more just my last competitive round was in October. So, just getting back into it feels really good. There's a lot less pressure on myself this year than

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when I was invited to play here. Any time you come out as a sponsor invite, you really want to perform. I've kind of made it here on my own merit and, of course, I would love to play well in front of all these people that know me and I grew up with, but at the same time there's a long season ahead and I'm just grateful to be out here.

Q. You mentioned that support. What sort of numbers do you estimate were out there following you that you knew, people that you knew?

TOM WHITNEY: Man, I was pretty zoned in there today. My parents are here. Had an old teacher friend. I saw a couple Air Force Academy logos out there. I know, come the weekend, I'll have some good numbers.

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