

AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am

Friday, February 12, 2021

Pebble Beach, California, USA

Pebble Beach Golf Links

Paul Casey

Quick Quotes



Q. Pretty impressive round of golf out there today. How would you rate that round of golf in your career?

PAUL CASEY: Well, the first time I've ever chipped in more times than Phil Mickelson when I've played with him, so I'm taking that one as -- I'm ticking that box. I've never done that before.

It was really solid. It was good stuff. I hit some great shots. Second shot into 8, which was over the green even though it was a phenomenal shot, which led to a chip-in birdie. Some very good stuff on what was a very difficult Pebble Beach. But it's soft. You got to remember that. This is not the fierce Pebble Beach I've seen time and time again. I think the rain really softened the golf course. So I can't put it up there with the great rounds because I just think it was a little bit more receptive today.

Q. Obviously this year because of the COVID restrictions no amateurs. How different was it out there and was the golf course different in that way as well?

PAUL CASEY: Well, I'm a champion of the pro-am format having won it with Don Colleran a couple of years ago, and he's gutted not to be here. The AT&T pro-am is Don Colleran's Super Bowl for him, it's what he kind of lives for, obviously apart from looking after FedEx Corporation.

But from that aspect it's sad not to stroll the fairways with Don and all the other amateurs. It's one of, to me, we play, obviously we got our majors and everything else, but this is for me one of the highlights of the year to be able to stroll these links side by side with him.

In terms of setup, I think it allows the TOUR to be maybe a little bit more aggressive with things. Some pin positions we have not seen before. Some tees have been pushed back a little bit. Obviously with the lack of crowds as well, not just the lack of amateur partners, but the lack of crowds, again, you can use tees that you wouldn't always use before because traffic flow becomes a little easier. So it's kind of technical but, yeah, it's a different setup than we

have typically seen at AT&T.

Q. You mentioned the two chip-ins at 8 and 11. Which was tougher?

PAUL CASEY: 8 because it's downhill. I mean, you know anything downhill at Pebble Beach scares you slightly.

11's straightforward. It's the only place to be. In fairness, I had an easier, a much easier look at birdie than Phil or Max Homa -- and Max was about 4 feet, Phil was about 15 feet, and I'm at the front of the green and it was the easiest spot to be.

8 is just brutal. I was cursing because I hit a glorious 6-iron from about 200 yards straight over the flag and I thought it was going to be perfect and it wasn't. And anytime you leave yourself anything downhill around here it can kind of put the fear of God into you. So luckily got away with it, but that's not always the case. Really happy with how it turned out.

Q. Is your solid play a continuance of your win two weeks ago in Dubai? And congratulations, by the way, on that. It that just a continuation of that?

PAUL CASEY: I think so. I feel I'm in a really good place. I spoke to a couple of, a few people so far this season, and I just feel like, look, we're clearly still in the middle of a pandemic and it seems more complicated than ever, travel restrictions are getting tougher, all sorts of things that kind of worse than ever, but in a weird way I felt like putting the calendar year of 2020 behind me was, I felt like there's light at the end of the tunnel. There's a vaccine. There are multiple vaccines. People are getting vaccinated. And I'm no different from anybody else, it kind of beats on you after awhile, and I came out this year thinking and feeling a little bit more optimistic and I think that's reflective in my golf.

No question the golf I'm playing today is just a continuation of a couple of weeks ago and that win in Dubai, which was fabulous. My 15th win on the European Tour and that event in Dubai is one of the classic events on TOUR, that classic coffee pot that we have seen the greats lift. Some of my heroes, like Severiano Ballesteros, have won that

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title.

So yeah, I'm feeling very, very good about my golf game and I'm just trying to ride the wave as long as I can.

Q. Let's start with that chipping, as you said. A nice layup at 11 and you were mad about your second at 8.

PAUL CASEY: I was joking about the layup. It was a bad second shot. I said yesterday I didn't putt very well, so we'll just bypass it by chipping in.

Look, it was a great day. I played well. Tricky winds starting out, so really, really happy to move up that leaderboard.

Q. How much was the wind a factor throughout the course of the day?

PAUL CASEY: It always is on any of these courses, none more so than obviously Pebble Beach. The tricky bit is when it doesn't settle down, and early in the round it was -- I don't know if the tide was changing or something was going on and it wasn't quite consistent. But it kind of bedded in for the back nine which, although coming back home into that wind always sounds like it's more difficult, in some respects it's a little easier because the golf ball holds a little better. You can use it to your advantage in terms of spin and holding greens and it made it play tough but fair.

Q. We talked earlier this week about your quick start to 2021, a winner in the Middle East, some good reps on the PGA TOUR as well. What does that confidence do in terms of building itself up while you've backed it up with two good ones here this week as well?

PAUL CASEY: If anything, I mean, to me it makes me feel like my goals are attainable, in a weird way. 2020 was disastrous in terms of my golf, apart from really one week where I played well. The goals are always lofty and I've got a lot of them this year, internationally and obviously here in the States.

But when you start off poorly you're kind of scrambling and working hard on the game to try and regain form. I feel like I got form already and then I can zero in on those goals and continue the hard work. The hard work never stops, but it still feels like it's attainable and you suddenly have kind of a little bit of weight lifted off the shoulders and a little less pressure.

Q. How does the win come into this week for you?

PAUL CASEY: Look, anytime you win you feel great. I think the big thing about the win is that it's a win early and

to win in my -- sorry, not second place, 8th place at American Express in the desert was a great way to start the season. That kind of validated that I'm doing the right work or signalled to me I'm doing the right work and the game's going the right direction.

Then to win in Dubai validates all that hard work. And as I just said to the guys on the telecast, I feel like the goals that I've set are now kind of attainable and I'm on the right trajectory to start ticking those off. So I feel great. The energy's good because of that. I'm excited. I'm loving my golf. And even though it's a long journey all the way back here to Pebble from the Middle East, the legs feel pretty fresh, but that's obviously because I got a trophy. A lot of guys don't.

Q. Take us through traveling back from the Middle East to California. How are you feeling?

PAUL CASEY: I'm sleeping good. I went to bed at 7:30 last night. I'm proud to say that. I managed to sleep through until about 5:30 in the morning. So I've done it so many years, the international travel, it doesn't get any easier and it's a little bit more complicated now obviously with the pandemic. But I feel good. I'll be stateside now for quite awhile until, I think, beginning of June when I go off and defend my Porsche title, and I can focus on stuff over here. But the schedule's busy. It's still complicated. It's still sort of -- as Doug knows, pieces are still moving, tournaments are still in limbo, and like I'm looking forward to Concession, which I've never played before, but everybody I've ever talked to just says it's brutally difficult. So I'm looking forward to that. That will be my next event after this. Yeah, I'm clearly just rambling because I'm confused and tired.

Q. A couple years ago you won the amateur portion here, did that give you motivation to come back and play here?

PAUL CASEY: In a weird way, yes, Don Colleran who is my typically my amateur partner when I come here, is gutted he's not here this week. For him it's like his Super Bowl he always says. And his name and mine are on the plaques up by the first tee there, which he's very proud of, as am I.

And Phil playing brilliant golf that he did a couple of years ago and clipping me for the title, yeah, if anything just adds fuel to the fact that I would love to win at Pebble Beach. It's one of those iconic places to be a champion. Everybody would love to hoist a trophy here.

So, without question, I mean, it's like -- I think it's maybe the most beautiful golf course in the world. And so an

opportunity to play this is always welcomed. In a weird way -- I can't say this to Don -- but I kind of thought it would really be kind of cool to not play with the amateurs one year and just see how it is. And that's very selfish, but I'm -- why not? Three rounds of golf at Pebble? Not going to turn that down. So multiple reasons to be here, just don't tell Don (laughing).

Q. The Rules Committee without having the amateurs took advantage of some tee boxes, some pin locations. What are you seeing out there from a golf course perspective the changes that were made without amateurs?

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, the other thing is, because we got no fans as well you can push some of those tee boxes back. And there's some tee boxes which are behind pathways and roads, which also would be problematic from a logistics point of view. Tee boxes they use at the U.S. Open, for example.

So it's kind of fun. Stuff we don't typically see during the AT&T. They have been good. I think the scores are a little bit skewing that setup, just because of the rain last night. Cantlay's 10-under was brilliant here yesterday in any conditions. But it's all because of the softness of the greens.

I'll be interested to see how it plays out this weekend and what the Rules guys have in store for us because it won't be the typical AT&T easy -- I don't want to say easy pins, they're never easy pins at Pebble Beach, but there are, there are difficult pins and then there's the almost impossible pins at Pebble. So we'll see how nice they are to us.

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