

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Will Zalatoris

Quick Quotes



Q. How did you feel about your round today?

WILL ZALATORIS: I played pretty solid. Made a couple of putts in the middle of the round. Drove it pretty well. I was able to save par. I think that saving par on 1 was kind of the epitome of the day, where 200 out of the rough and I could barely even get a wedge out of it. Then end up saving par from 65 yards.

You've got to give yourself chances out here. You've got to keep it in the fairway as much as you possibly can. Even on 8, I didn't really hit that bad of a shot, and I've got 80 feet to try to make a two-putt for par. Even though you see the scores, Rory obviously went low, and you see a bunch of guys kind of shooting 4, 3, 2-under, this is as easy as you're going to see this place. No wind. This is the softest you're going to see it.

They're already baking out. Scottie and I were joking about how we were having a tough time getting our putter heads solid on the green because there's so much grain and so glassy. This is the best I've ever seen it too.

It's going to be fun. This weekend's going to be tough. Obviously, if the wind stays down, you won't be seeing any guys shooting even par and moving up 15 places like I did last year.

Q. Can you give us some examples where the ball released more than you thought it was going to?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, 5. I had 163 into the wind, and I was trying to hit a 9-iron that landed really 25 feet short. Landed about 15, and it was a solid three feet into the rough. Normally when I hit 9-irons anywhere else on this TOUR, I'm basically sticking or possibly spinning them back and getting 20 feet of roll. You just don't see that, really just in majors.

I love it. I love playing firm, fast, hard, rough is up. This is probably the closest to a U.S. Open, especially for a regular TOUR event.

Q. You seem to like the tougher setups. As we kind of came from the West Coast, where there was a lot of low scores. Are you liking with Honda was last week and what's going on already this week?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think that's why everyone kind of says I'm a major specialist is just because with my ball striking, I'm always going to give myself more opportunities in people. Out here, this is where a little miscue here or there and you're scrambling to save par.

Long, tough golf courses is basically the difference. Torrey is a tough one even though we kind of chewed it up for there. Like I said, playing places like that is absolutely perfect for my game.

Q. Playing off that, what does it require iron-wise out here? It seems like you've got to hit maybe some longer irons in a lot of TOUR venues.

WILL ZALATORIS: There's a lot of different ways to play this place. You can be hitting driver on 10 or 11 or laying up and hitting basically 7 or 6-irons, which is not really kind of how you want to start off your day.

You just have to be just really precise on where you miss your shots around here because even on 9 today, I was back into the wind and hitting a 9-iron. At one point I was thinking 8. If I hit 8, it's probably going to land 20 feet long and roll out to 60 feet.

So you just have to be really precise. Honestly, there's a few times where playing towards the front edge as opposed to playing -- assuming that there's no trouble in front of you. Playing towards the front edge as opposed to trying to land one on the green, you just have to do it around this place.

Q. Also playing off what you said to start, was this a wave, I guess, morning wave you had to take advantage of if you're going to have a chance?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it's good to get off to a good start, especially because you're going to be behind the 8 ball. This is the softest you're going to see it all week.



These greens are already baking out. They're starting to get brown. Like I said, it's only going to get firmer and firmer as the week goes on.

Q. You talked about how hard it is to win out here. You must feel pretty ready to do it, I would think.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah. When it happens, it happens. Obviously, just keep working towards it.

Q. And that nice run you had to finish the round. When you make a save on 1, what does it do momentum-wise?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it just keeps it going. I made nice up and downs on 1 and 2. Coming out of there 4-under with a couple of par-5s coming up and couple holes where you basically have to flip wedges in, you can really keep the round going. When you're standing at 3 tee 4-under as opposed to 2-under, like I said, that's where you keep the momentum going.

Q. Can you talk about the rough that's been growing up in place of runoff areas on some of these holes, and why do you think TOUR players like it? I always thought that having runoff areas separates the great chippers from the good chippers.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, so 14 and 15, in my opinion, actually makes those holes a lot easier. I think that the main reason why is because you get a ball that runs off the green, it's just going to go a few yards into the rough. You're going to have a chip back uphill that you can kind of dump the face underneath it. But if you're on fairway, that ball is going to roll another 15 yards.

6 actually, in my opinion, is a lot harder mainly because you used to be able to hit a spinny shot basically off of the fairway. Today I had nothing. Everyone walks out that way too. So the grain's going back into you. Honestly, in future years, if they keep that rough, back pins, I don't think I'll ever go for it. Even if I got 210 yards, I don't think it's worth it.

Q. So it's about give and take?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it is. Like I said, 14 and 15 are definitely, in my opinion, probably a quarter of a shot easier around the greens, just having those there. But 6, I think, makes up for it.

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