

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Saturday, March 5, 2022

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Gary Woodland

Quick Quotes



Q. Gary, you've played this golf course a lot. I'm sure you've seen it more difficult than this, but where would you rank it, kind of degree of difficulty?

GARY WOODLAND: It's tough. Yesterday afternoon I thought it was as tough as I've seen it. There's not much grass on the greens, and the wind starts blowing like it did, you just get -- you're just playing defense out there. You're putting so defensively.

Finally on 17 I told Butch I think that's the first time I had a putt into the wind all day. It seems like you're putting across the green, it's downhill, and there's no grass. If it gets past the hole, it's gone.

Today was tough. Maybe a little slower on the greens, which helped, but the golf course is brutal hard.

Q. What kind of bonus is it to make 2 at 17?

GARY WOODLAND: Big. I saw Jon hit a shot in front of me perfect, and it rolled to the back of the green. I tried to get a little fancy, and I got away with it. It was the first putt I had uphill into the wind all day, and it allowed me to finally be aggressive. That's definitely a bonus to make 2 there.

Q. What were you hitting in there?

GARY WOODLAND: 6-iron. Jon hit, and I tried to cut it and came up short.

Q. What about the eagle at 6?

GARY WOODLAND: That was nice. Really a lucky break. Where Jon and I were hitting the ball, it's hard to keep it in the fairway. You can only cover so far, and then the fairway just gets pretty narrow there. So I got lucky the ball stayed in the first cut. I had a perfect number for a 6-iron, holding it back up against the wind there and knocked it in there.

Nice to see the ball go in there for eagle there too, which is good.

Q. The tee shot?

GARY WOODLAND: The tee shot is so left to right, and then it's an in between for me because I probably should have hit driver today. I hit 3-wood and laid a little far back. The tee shot, you can't miss the fairway obviously. You're trying to needle it up there.

Then the second shot, the green is not very big and it's downwind, and it's hard to stop with the greens this firm. It's hard to stop it on the green. So you kind of got to get lucky. The way the wind was today and yesterday downwind, it's going to be hard to stop it on the green.

Q. This was always home to you. This was a local game, and you played it quite a bit. Now that you don't live here, because of the degree of difficulty, would you consider skipping it, or is it always going to be on the schedule?

GARY WOODLAND: When I lived here, I played. Then when I moved down south, I just always added Honda, and I haven't played here. I'm in a position now where I needed reps, so I wanted to play.

I don't miss too much. It's hard. Playing last week and then this week, the mental grind -- we were talking. Tampa is going to feel like a cake walk playing the last two weeks. Obviously next week is tough as well.

We've got a great stretch of golf courses here in Florida. All four of these are amazing. It's nice for me to come back. I had a lot of good memories here. I played well here in the past. Any time you get scores that aren't 20-under for me is usually a good thing.

Q. How does tomorrow shape up? It can get pretty wild out here.

GARY WOODLAND: The key is to get the golf ball on the fairway because you're trying to control it, and the rough is U.S. Open rough out here. It's brutal. I'm sure the wind is supposed to be the same tomorrow. I don't see anybody running away with it too low unless Viktor continues to do

what he's doing. Par is always a good score out here.

Hopefully, you can make a couple birdies on the par-5s and sneak one in somewhere else. You're not going to have to do anything fancy. You're just going to have to control your golf ball all day.

Q. Assuming Viktor stays at 9 and you're five back, do you at some point have to do something a little bit different?

GARY WOODLAND: Yeah, you probably need a little bit of help, but you don't have to do too much. This golf course can jump up and get you in a hurry. Obviously, sleeping on the lead is not as easy, especially on this golf course when you know it's going to come out and it's going to be tough.

For me, it's coming out and keep plotting along, hopefully make a couple birdies on the par-5s, sneak another one in, and post a number and let him look at it.

Q. When you get courses like last week and this week, do they set up as being easier to chase on because so much can happen?

GARY WOODLAND: It is. It's definitely easier to come from behind. Viktor hits it so stinking good. Ball striking, he's one of the best in the world. So that sets up great for him.

Even last week and this week, you've got to control the golf ball. It's two of the more visually demanding golf courses we see all year. For that part, it's a mental grind. But you can see why Viktor's up. The ball striking out here is premium.

Q. I'm not sure how the fan in you is going to react to this, but will you watch the Duke game tonight?

GARY WOODLAND: I will. I'm going to run right now because KU's playing right now, then I'll watch Duke. Coach K, what he's done is being one of the best coaches in all the world, in all the of sports. It's fascinating. I know J.T. is at the game, I believe. Hopefully I see him. It's special, watching him do what he's done for so long. I'm glad he's leaving though because as a KU fan, I'm tired of losing to them.

Q. You said at the beginning of the week you felt like you played well in Honda, you just needed reps. Do you still feel like your game is progressing in that direction?

GARY WOODLAND: It continues to get better. Today was

great. I didn't play perfectly, but the short game allows me to be a little more forgiving with everything else. I put so much pressure on my ball striking for so long. I've hit it so poorly the last couple years, I've had a lot of practice with the short game. I'm putting it great. Chipping is coming along. That frees up the ball striking a little bit, and I don't have to put that much pressure on it.

And it's starting to show. Last week was great. I'm getting a little more confidence. I'm starting to walk with a little more swagger. It's nice though. I needed reps more than anything, and that's why I'm playing.

Q. Can you talk about the sand save on 18?

GARY WOODLAND: That just goes back -- it proves -- I wouldn't have had that. I got up and down on the par-5, 13 or 12, whatever hole -- 12. Butch, my caddie, is like we didn't have that shot three years ago from the lie that I was in. Just shows the hard work pays off.

I didn't get to -- obviously, it was a great shot on the last hole. I was trying to land it on the fringe, which it did. A couple years ago I probably would have been a little more upset about the second shot not knowing I could get it up and down. A lot more confidence now knowing I can get it up and down from tough spots.

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