

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Friday, March 8, 2024

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Will Zalatoris

Quick Quotes



Q. Can you talk about the overall difficulty out there.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, Bay Hill every day always gets harder, no matter what year. I saw the rain's going away on Sunday, so we're going to expect it to get firmer and faster. The last couple holes I blew putts from about 30 to 40 feet about six, seven feet by. That's just the adjustments you have to make out here. When you're below the hole try and take advantage, and when you're above the hole just be patient. Did a really good job of staying patient today. I had a bunch of really good shots that just ended up in fringes. A couple shots that I thought were flagged that I ended up to about 30 feet just behind the hole. They're just getting firm and bouncy. There's some shots out there right now that I was very happy with walking out of there with par.

Q. Can you talk about playing boring golf sometimes and the need to do that. What kind of discipline does that take?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, a lot. Especially if you make a couple bogeys early you want to try to press, and you just can't do that out here. I had a couple balls in the middle of the fairway where I had a couple mud balls on my second shots, and just kind of one on the par-5 on the back, on 12. Just had to find a way to get it up around the hole and give myself the best look at trying to make birdie. When you're hitting irons off of some holes and you're expecting normally to hit wedges in and you're wanting to have maybe a birdie look, just take what you can get, whether it's 20 feet or whatever it is, and maybe make a couple bonus putts coming in.

Q. When you review the round, how do you balance remarkably going bogey-free on a day like this with maybe not taking advantage of the par-5s like you want to?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think I feel like I didn't really hit any bad shots on those par-5s, they just kind of didn't add up to birdies. Obviously, it could have been something pretty low and special, but I did plenty on some of the other

harder holes that I got no complaints.

Q. Camera showed you at least a couple times kind of with a half smile on your face, shaking your head, probably in disbelief. Does one stand out above the others?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, the wind switching around a little bit, it's getting warmer. You know, on 15 I hit a 180-yard 9-iron. On 16 I hit a 225 yard 6-iron. Then on 18 I think I hit a, kind of like a sawed off wedge like 160. It's just all of those are in different directions, but the wind's just kind of varying off the side. So, I think that kind of goes to the boring golf side, is I'm just picking some very conservative targets, and the ones that happen to get pushed over to the hole, you just take 'em.

Q. What do you love about this kind of golf, assuming you do?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, no, I do. They're long weeks, for sure. I think the patience aspect of it. I've always been known for my ball striking, which obviously helps when you're playing a really tough golf course. Just hit it to 30 feet all day, try to maybe get a couple that get in there closer, maybe make a bonus putt or something like that, and try to take advantage of the par-5s. You're going to make mistakes, that's just the reality of a hard golf course like this, so if you make bogeys, don't try to press.

Q. When you go out for your weekend rounds, what's the mindset? You can't fire at flags all the time as we've been talking about, so how do you go about the task?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I've had years here where I shot 150 on the weekend and I moved up. So it's just staying patient. It's a grind. A lot of times on regular TOUR events you maybe have four, five birdie holes, and really out here it's just the par-5s. With the pins tucked on some holes, if you happen to push one or pull one over towards where the flag is, you just take it when you get it.

Q. Quantify the difference between when you first came back at Bahamas to where you are now. Can



you quantify the progress you've made, is it faster?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think Bahamas we really were just trying to see if we were on the right page. I knew that I was, despite the scores. Now, I'm comfortable with what I'm doing. I think, like I said yesterday, simplified is basically kind of the word that I'm using with everything. The putting's very simple, the ball striking's very simple. I'm not trying to time things up with my hands. I'm doing a lot of kind of big muscle, using my big muscles as opposed to timing it up. Everything feels really good.

Yeah, Bahamas, yeah, I always tell people it was fun getting my first top 20 back in my first event, but, yeah, no, it's been a nice trend, obviously, so far. But more importantly, regardless of the result, I feel more comfortable every week.

Q. You got to start somewhere.

WILL ZALATORIS: Exactly.

Q. So, does the game, probably never feels simple, but fairly uncomplicated?

WILL ZALATORIS: Well, the game, once you think it's simple, you're wrong. I would say what I'm working on is very simple. I would say that the things that I'm doing are very -- I know when I mishit a shot or mishit a putt or a chip, I know exactly what I'm doing. Whereas, before I maybe could have gotten away with being off and having a mishit turn out great. Now, I know exactly -- I just know more about my body, know more about my game now, and that's just part of having eight months off and not having any tournament golf to go out and test it.

Q. Where and when did you embrace difficult golf?

WILL ZALATORIS: I have no idea. 2020, during COVID, I got a spot in the U.S. Open. They took the top 10 guys off of Korn Ferry Tour. I ended up finishing sixth. I've had a pretty good run in the majors ever since. I have no idea, but I think it's partially just how my game works, and just being a ball-striker, and I'm just going to have more looks than everybody, which is going to lead to less mistakes.

Q. Given Riviera and the chance you gave yourself, was your excitement level any different coming here?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think I'm just -- I told Joel on 18, it's nice for this to feel normal again. Riviera was kind of like getting my feet wet again. This, I'm more comfortable being uncomfortable, if that makes any sense. Being under pressure, being up and around the lead. So, it's been a process, but I think the more I play, the more

comfortable I'm going to get with what I'm doing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

