

# American Century Championship

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

## Mardy Fish

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Mardy Fish, defending champion. Last year, second round, 37 points in the Stableford scoring system, an all-time tournament record. Pretty much knocked everybody out for the third round and that one was a cruiser for you.

You're going off this year -- I think they have Tony Romo favored. He's at 3-2, you're 2-1. Does that give you more incentive to defend the championship?

MARDY FISH: No, it doesn't. Last year I started 12-1. I like those odds more over at the casino. We made a lot more money doing that. So that was nice.

But it's good to be back, obviously. First and foremost, it feels a little bit more normal than last year, certainly. And it's nice to be up here as the defending champion for once here. And it feels like a couple of those second-place finishes were eventually going to happen for me to get one spot higher.

So it was nice. And obviously last year was obviously an odd year and playing at that time, just having something on TV, having sports on TV. It seemed fairly popular with most of my buddies at home and stuff. So it was nice to have them watch and everything and do it in front of all of them. Missed the family last year, which was tough because it's such a great trip and bringing everybody.

But we had a boat full of 13 people flying here. So we've got everybody coming and then some. So it will be a fun week, regardless.

THE MODERATOR: With fans this year, last year again that second round, I think it was ten birdies, if memory serves me correct. And this year you'll have some people cheering. It will be nice to hear some noise, especially along 17.

MARDY FISH: It will be nice to do it again. I certainly haven't done it since. So it will be nice to do it again. I



played well in Orlando and won there. So I feel like -- I don't play a whole ton of golf, but kind of coming in, almost on purpose, just to make sure I don't have anything in my head or anything like that.

I've played golf my whole life, but pretty sporadically for the most part. So it took a few months off to not play. Golf takes a long time to play. So five hours every day is tough to do for me with the kids at home and stuff and work and everything. So, yeah, it's just good to -- I come here and try to cram in as much as I can.

I was just practicing some putting, which I haven't done since Orlando. So nice to do that.

**Q. That tournament was in January. Here we are six months later. How are you feeling about your game, the time you've been able to practice, you feel efficient?**

MARDY FISH: Yes, feel fine. Played a scramble yesterday with four really fun guys in the Pro-Am. It's just about having fun, to be honest. The course is kind of what it is. It's pretty short because of the altitude. It's not necessarily easy. It's just pretty short.

So if you drive the ball straight, you wedge it pretty well, you can have a lot of chances. And last year, that Saturday, I took advantage of most of them.

So just looking to try and give myself as many opportunities as you can. Every year you come back, you get more and more familiar with the greens and the speed of the greens and stuff. That's really where they kind of kill you out here is those 3-putts and stuff.

I didn't have very many of those last year and hope to minimize those too this year.

**Q. You were knocking them in pretty well last year. Just from your practice round yesterday, how would they compare so far?**

MARDY FISH: Well, we made 15 birdies as a scramble team. So it's more than 10 by myself. But, yeah, it all feels



fine. Again, every time you come back, you get more and more familiar with everything and more and more comfortable. Last year I played the golf course much differently than I had in previous years. I was pretty passive with my tee shots in years prior and taking out driver and just understanding that I hit my driver as straight as I do my driving iron. Maybe even straighter at times.

So didn't make much sense to leave that in the bag. So I'll probably do that same thing. I kind of had the mindset last year of just trying to make a birdie on every hole. Just trying to give myself a chance to make a birdie on every hole. Obviously you don't do that. But if you can kind of have that mindset, maybe make a little bit more than you usually would.

**Q. Any nerves coming into this as far as defending champion? Do you feel any extra pressure from that standpoint?**

MARDY FISH: Not really. Not really. But it was really good to win -- it was really fun to win last year here. It's such a historic tournament. And I watched on TV before I was invited to play for years.

So it's fun to put my name on the trophy. And so no crazy pressure. But I certainly get nervous. I get nervous on the first tee for sure. And I got nervous coming down the wire kind of last year, even though I had a fairly sizable lead maybe going into 16, coming into like 13 and 14, with like a five- to six-point lead. That can get erased pretty quickly on the last couple of holes. You're never really super safe unless you're a bunch of points ahead. So I got nervous then, too.

I'm sure it would have been the same with fans as well. I don't think they -- I play golf -- when I play -- with music and stuff like that. There's not too many things that sort of get me riled up.

**Q. You've always handled it pretty well. When you take a look at Charles Barkley gets a little bit nervous it seems from the range to the first tee. But we hear this year he's going to be playing well. We understand he's got some great odds that came out Caesar's sports book by William Hill, putting him out 17-1 if he finishes in the top 70.**

MARDY FISH: 17-1 in the top 70?

**Q. That's down to about 8-1 now. You see where the money's gone on that one but a little different pressure there. Besides Charles, of course, finishing 70th, who are you looking at as your major competitors for this one?**

MARDY FISH: Same cast of characters, I think. We all know the names of those guys. I play a little bit of golf after Tahoe.

One of the cool things about these tournaments is just meeting some of your favorite athletes, too. And I'm a huge sports fan. Canelo Álvarez is somebody I got to know last year. I'm a big combat sports fan. I love boxing and mixed martial arts. It was cool to meet him, not only meet him but we've become good buddies. So he's been playing a lot and playing real well, not necessarily to challenge for the title, but someone who has gotten a lot better in the last 12 months and hasn't been playing golf all that long.

I look forward to watching some of those guys, Charles, with his new swing, or however he says his new swing. So we'll see. It will be fun.

**Q. You've come close. You finally got over the hump. I'm wondering how that affects how you feel about this whole tournament here.**

MARDY FISH: I mean, I think it kind of gets the monkey off your back a little bit. Certainly wanted to really play well here. And I did last year. I played great. For me, that was my low round of my life, a 63.

And to do it here was really special. So, yeah, it feels nice. If I was here not having won still and getting a little anxious, I think, to try and win. So, yeah, it was nice to take that pressure off.

**Q. Without the huge gallery, did that change your attitude, being more aggressive?**

MARDY FISH: It didn't. It didn't. I try and tell those guys on 17 to leave the music on and to yell and scream. That stuff doesn't really bother me all that much. I played a sport that you're supposed to be quiet in and played in lots of scenarios in Davis Cup matches in other countries they're not so quiet when you're playing. So, it's not something that I worry about too much.

**Q. Djokovic, anybody going to beat him?**

MARDY FISH: I don't think so. I mean, he's got to drill another line judge or something like that, I think, to lose this year. But he's on a heck of a run. I think by the time the U.S. Open comes around, Nadal will be healthy, Roger will have a few matches under his belt, and Novak will have the same amount of majors they both will, 20-20 and 20, it will be a pretty special U.S. Open.

**Q. Do you think that will motivate the other two --**

MARDY FISH: Oh, yeah.

**Q. Will it be different for him being chased by those two as opposed to --**

MARDY FISH: That's a good question. If you take the last five years, he's been chased by them for the last five years, that's for sure. He's certainly the best player in the world right now. Beating Rafa on play in the three out of five set matches and then to back it up, down two sets to 0 in the final. You sort of forget, it's like the U.S.A. beating Russia. You forget they had to beat Finland in the gold medal match. Tsitsipas has had an unbelievable clay-court season certainly could have won that tournament. He was playing well enough to win it. And for Novak to beat Rafa and come back and come back two sets to 0 like that, it kind of tells you who is going to beat him right now. He's going to have to beat himself.

**Q. And the Olympics is coming up. He's in that, right, the same mindset?**

MARDY FISH: He wins Wimbledon and you're starting to talk about the Golden Slam, which is done just by, I think, Steffi Graf. So one person. One other person. No male. Yeah, that's pretty special. You've got to be a lot better than everybody else to do that.

**Q. The year before you won, two years ago you shot a 57. 19 points better last year. You already mentioned some of the answer, but if you could wrap that up in a sentence or two as to why the big difference.**

MARDY FISH: Just why I stunk two years ago? (Laughter) Yeah, I did. I mean, I stunk last year, two years ago. And 57 points is -- you kind of have a number in your head that sort of puts you around -- you feel like it will put you around the lead at the end. It's kind of 23 to 26 points a day sort of thing. Maybe an average, get you around 75 and that will put you certainly in the position on the last couple of holes.

And that's kind of all you can ask for, I guess. You sort of look at that. And try not to get behind the 8-ball too much. I haven't had very many good first rounds in the past. Quite frankly, I played my worst golf in the first rounds of this event, which isn't the case in, like, Orlando, I've played some pretty solid first rounds there.

So we'll see. I guess I'm due for a good round one, but you try and stay above that, kind of above that 22 mark and probably put you in pretty good spot.

**Q. And I know you probably have a number of things that motivate you on the golf course with Annika Sorenstam playing this year, is that added to your --**

MARDY FISH: It's pretty special. I would love to be paired with her. Couple of weeks ago they were in Europe but I tried to set up a round of golf here with her. She declined, said I wasn't good enough to play. No. (Laughter).

They were doing something. But they couldn't do it. It didn't work out. Just wanted to pick her brain. I would be super annoying for her because I would just ask her a bunch of questions.

**Q. Good distracter.**

MARDY FISH: She'd get annoyed. It's really special. She's the greatest female player of all time. And it's awesome to have her in the tournament.

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