

American Century Championship

Friday, July 9, 2021

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Mike Modano

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have co-leader Mike Modano, with 25 points, and second place Joe Pavelski, with 24. One hell of a shot on 18.

MIKE MODANO: I can't believe it. I can't believe it. We were struggling between the 6 and 7. I was, like, I just want to try to ride the wind and just avoid Laimbeer's Lake there and get on the putting surface. It came off good. My eyesight is shot at 51. So I'm, like, I can't see things halfway off the club. TJ went crazy. And some people over by the side went nuts. I was like, man, that may have went in. So pretty cool.

Q. 32 years in this tournament, first albatross we've ever had.

MIKE MODANO: That's hard to believe off 18. Most guys hit it so good and so long, hitting 9s and 8s in there, you'd think someone is going to snake one in some day. I can't believe it. I can't believe it.

Q. Joe, what were you thinking when you saw that shot?

JOE PAVELSKI: I saw it in the air. I saw it coming in off the lake. I saw it start moving across the green. And I actually thought I might have saw it cross for a second.

Then you heard the screams over on the side, and Oshie was coming across the fairway. It was pretty cool. Definitely some good fireworks there.

Q. There was some great footage of you guys out there jumping. Congratulations. That was a lot of fun. How about the rest of your round? 15 points up until then.

MIKE MODANO: It was just kind of -- it wasn't really exciting up until the last three holes, I guess, to be honest with you. I was excited for Joe. He played solid. He played a great round today. He's hitting it so good. All



parts of his game are really rock solid since he's been playing up here.

We were kind of rooting him on. He had a good round going. He hung in there. And a couple of lucky shots here and there, you make some birdies, you never know, you're never out of this deal. We're excited for Joe. He played really good today.

Q. The last time -- you weren't here last year, but the year before I think you finished top 3, I think, third, if memory serves.

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, a couple times ago. It was right there.

Q. How much golf have you been playing?

JOE PAVELSKI: I've gotten to play a little bit. Playing two, three times a week. We've got a good group back home, Wisconsin. Get some cash games, try to prepare for that first tee ball and tournament golf, and that group back home, they get us going a little bit. So it's fun. But out here it's special to come out and it's fun to -- you roll a few birdies in and eagle, double eagle, it's enjoyable, that's for sure.

Q. That would be fun. The three hockey guys paired together today. We talked about the three Currys playing together, but three NHL guys starting off in the first round together. That must have been be pretty comfortable.

MIKE MODANO: It's nice playing with these guys. We're comfortable. We've played together a few times here. We're the only three guys out here left. So I think we figured, round one we'd be together, and just see where it goes from there. But it's relaxing. We're comfortable with one another. So it was a nice easy -- stress-free round, for the most part.

Q. It was fun because Annika was here being interviewed and everybody was yelling and screaming. She looked up. She goes that's so fantastic. It was great. She was fired up. She said I've never seen one



before.

MIKE MODANO: She came out to the putting green, said congrats. She was pretty excited. We couldn't believe it. Just everyone went crazy. Like I said, I wish I would have saw it.

Q. What's the beverage of choice tonight?

MIKE MODANO: I don't know. A lot to choose from.

Q. I think you mentioned it earlier. Can you remind me the club you used and distance out?

MIKE MODANO: I think around 200, 205, just a little bit helping wind. Kind of blows off right to the hard. My line was right edge of the green. If it moved left, great. If not, I'm still kind of putting. But it just shot off, started floating left. And then I was like -- I said, when it first came off, I flushed that pretty good. So it's there. But bounced a couple times. And some guys on the ropes on the right went crazy. And then T.J. went crazy.

Q. And I think you mentioned quietly before this started, you were thinking about, let's go ahead and go home, let's get out of here after 15. Do you now think, gosh, you've got a chance to win it?

MIKE MODANO: I might stick around for another day.

Q. Do you think you might have a chance to win this?

MIKE MODANO: Things change so fast here with the swing. Guys can hit it so good. Make an eagle. Handful of birdies, you're back in it. So they make it really, to the point where you could be aggressive and a little risk/reward thing out here.

Man, you never know out here. Just a couple of consistent swings, you're right in it. I hadn't played good all day. I made some good swings and had some good putts at it but I was never close. Then the last three holes I just kind of hit a couple of good wedges, a 9, and got a nice kick off the tee on 18 and who knows.

Q. Joe, I'm sure you're thinking that you can push to win this from your previous results. Are you looking at that this year?

JOE PAVELSKI: The game feels good coming in. There were moments coming down the stretch, as hot as he got, I was trying to hold onto the swing at times. I was hitting the ball good. I putted really well today, I think. Speed control was good. And that's a big part of it for me out here. And I could have hit a few shots better but made a few putts,

made up for it. My highlight, I made an eagle 11. That's my first eagle out here. That got trumped in a hurry. (Laughter). So no problems.

It was fun being out there today. We get along great with Osh and Mo, and we'll go from there, see what happens.

Q. Is this the definition of the stars aligning?

MIKE MODANO: Day one, maybe. That could change tomorrow morning.

Q. Three NHLers, not just three NHLers, three American-born NHLers, and the highest scoring American NHLer.

MIKE MODANO: I guess you hang around long enough, some good things happen. I've always been fortunate to be on good teams, good players and play a long time and stay healthy. And Joe's been a great captain in San Jose. Excited to see him come to Dallas be with the Stars. And Oshie, his record speaks for itself. Olympics, Stanley Cup. Resumés are pretty good.

Q. Last year everyone missed it because of the bubble and playoffs and whatever, but bringing you back into some history. Mike, you were eight points better than 2019 on the first day. And Joe, you were nine points better. 15 of 24 and Mike you were 17 of 25 points. The albatross obviously helped as an understatement. But what do you feel was the difference, do you think some of these guys are -- I don't know. Explain to me what you think the difference is, please.

MIKE MODANO: Boy, I don't know. It's hard to say. You put one good swing on a ball and things can change. But trying to be consistent as much as we try to do and give ourselves chances and good looks on the putts. And I think from the most part we had a lot of good looks, birdie putts in today. And didn't have many fireworks. Joe had, like I said, Joe had a great eagle on 12 -- 11. Drove a great 10-footer right in the bowl there. And Osh made a couple of great birdies. There's bits and pieces of our game, all three, that made us realize that we kind of might enjoy the game a little bit once in a while.

Q. Joe, what do you think is the biggest difference for you from 2019?

JOE PAVELSKI: I've gotten to play more this summer. That's a big part of it. You play a couple times a week, you get out there, you're trying to get your feels back. Being able to play a little bit more is part of it. I've putted much better than I did that last time I was here. Feel more comfortable there. And that's a big part of it.



You make a few putts. You see an extra three points go on the board. You just keep that fire and get that extra point. It's big along the way for the confidence. And I mean, we don't do this for a living; you get out here, get a little pressure, get that tournament golf, it's a longer, hotter day out there, where you're trying to piece together swings at time and figure it out.

Q. Playing together and being closer or pretty close together with scores, did it help push you a little bit more, both of you?

MIKE MODANO: A little bit. We were chasing Joe all day. And he was just playing really steady, hitting it good, putting it good. His game's solid. Really solid. Like he's very consistent. You just try to not overdo it. Not try to get everything back in one shot, one hole, but just staying within an arm length of him. He started running the board, playing well. We were just hanging on for dear life at the end, see if we can kind of put something together.

Last three holes are usually exciting, 16, 17, 18 are really good holes where you can kind of make a few points here and there.

Q. Joe, obviously you were one of the more popular Sharks players for a long time. How does it feel to be back in this neck of the woods?

JOE PAVELSKI: It was great. Come out here -- the fans have been great. They've treated me so well. And I'm sure that organization -- it's pretty exciting to come back. There's a lot of fans. A lot of miss yous, want you back. I enjoyed my time when I was in the Bay, and the 13 years were there. It's great to see some of them. You see a lot of the same faces that have been here in the past. And so we enjoy coming out here.

Q. Mike, will birdie ever be the same?

MIKE MODANO: No. Your expectation level has gone up now. Anything less on 18 is like a disappointment.

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