

American Century Championship

Friday, July 8, 2022

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Mark Mulder

Press Conference

Q. T2 with 20 points. You had a very up-and-down back nine. No pars on the back nine. But you are still T2. Walk through your round. Smooth front nine. Walk through the back nine?

MARK MULDER: First ten holes I felt like I played like an idiot. But just hit a few good shots. But as Tony and Annika both just said, I had a few lip-outs, couldn't get anything go in. Made a couple of bogeys, hit a terrible approach on 10 that cost me a double bogey.

But after that I kind of got it going. Birdied 11, 13, 14, 16 and 18.

A lot of good shots. Some good putts. The greens were just incredibly difficult. They really were, especially with the wind. A lot of times I second-guessed myself, looked for a break that maybe wasn't there, especially on the first ten holes.

Vinny and Adam, my two playing partners, we were joking because we couldn't get the lid off the hole until I birdied 11.

It was just really difficult and the greens are incredibly quick. And as they both just said, you putted very defensive. And that was kind of how it is. But I made the par putts and some of the balls I hit close.

I made the putts I needed to make. Some of my bogeys I didn't hit very good shots so I deserved bogey on some of those holes. But some of those were actually decent bogeys. So you've got to go with what you get.

Q. Making a birdie on 18, you had an eagle putt, but you made a birdie. Does that give you, okay, I finished with a birdie, and I've got kind of good momentum going into tomorrow?

MARK MULDER: Sure, because the 18 tee shot doesn't fit my eye at all. You have to turn the ball. You have to hit a



straight one or turn it left to right. I cut it with my driver. In the years past I hit Rescue or 3-wood. I was hitting my driver, went with it, hit a good one down the middle. Had a nice short wedge into the green, didn't hit it as close as I would like. But anytime you can finish with a birdie or something like that, gives you a little momentum towards tomorrow because I feel like many years in this tournament I've kind of eased myself into it. I've never gotten off to some hot start or anything like that. I've never had mid-20s, I don't think, in round one.

So anything over 18 to me on day one is good. And we'll go into tomorrow and try to make a few more.

Q. Playing with Adam and Vinny today, did you guys -- was it kind of just a fun day, or was it, all right, let's get after it and just try and get as many points as we can?

MARK MULDER: No, it was a very fun day. 90 percent of the time when the groups I have here are really fun days. That's how they should be.

There's very few of us, I think, that take this that serious when we're out there. We're all very serious when it's time to hit your shot. But at the end of the day I'm playing with Adam and with Vinny, who won it last year.

And Adam was -- I could tell he was incredibly nervous, being his first year. So I was just trying to talk him through some of the stuff and trying to share some of my nervous energy, experiences the first few years. Just trying to calm him down because you could tell for the first four or five holes he was a little uncomfortable. And I could tell he was not playing -- he wasn't hitting the ball the way he was capable of hitting it.

And I just wanted to see him try to get the most out of his round. And Vinny, we live near each other in Arizona, and I've heard enough about him winning last year. So I wasn't as worried about Vinny. We were ribbing on each other a little bit. But Adam, I wanted to make sure he had a great round today.

Q. Talk about the atmosphere. This is year one of the fans really being back. So the fans were out in full



force. Talk about that today.

MARK MULDER: To me, I feed off of it a little, to be honest. Two years ago I thought was -- it sucked here. It was awful. Not having anybody here, there was no vibe. That's what creates this tournament, is that vibe from all the fans that are out there every day.

And I live for that. I think a lot of us athletes, at least with my career, or the ones whose careers are done, you don't get to play in front of people anymore.

When I get to play these tournaments, something like this in front of people, I live for that. I love that atmosphere. I love that vibe. And the last few years, last years it hasn't been the same.

And so all those people out there today, while it was a little calmer, I guess, maybe, on 17 than it will be tomorrow, it was awesome.

I still stood on that tee and still took one less club, just for the adrenaline alone. Whatever club I hit on 17, I hit further than anytime over the next 12 months because of the adrenaline. It's hard to describe to people. You can't explain it. But it's there and it's real.

Q. As you go into tomorrow, what do you look to focus on when you get on the range tomorrow morning?

MARK MULDER: Probably just get off to a little better start. I mean, like I said, I've never gotten off to great starts. But today it wasn't good at all. I didn't hit a ton of terrible shots. They just weren't good. I didn't hit any close. I hit a few bad tee shots that I had to kind of make up for.

But I feel really good about my game. And the hard part was the first ten holes I guess didn't dictate how I felt. It didn't show how I felt and the way I'm swinging it.

So to walk away with 20 points where I'm at, I'm very happy with that. But it could have been a whole lot more.

Q. This is one of your best rounds in a while. You have finished with more than 20 points on several occasions early on when -- I don't think when you were winning, but how does this round feel compared to the years that you won on the first day?

MARK MULDER: To me, anything over 20, 20 or higher on day one is a win. This happens once a year. So a lot of us, this is a very uncomfortable feeling when you're out there. To get off to just a decent start on round one is a

nice feeling.

The fact it's over 18, I'm completely happy with. To be fair, the way I feel out on the course, tomorrow if I don't get somewhere around 25, I honestly feel like I'd be slightly disappointed.

I know it's out there. I know I can do it. I think, what, five birdies on the back. If I just throw in a couple on the front, it's a big improvement.

So the back's very gettable at times. You just gotta hit some golf shots. Some of the pin positions on the front nine were kind of tricky, which got me a few times. But I honestly feel I'll be in a better position tomorrow.

Q. Last year you were five points down on your day two from the 19 on day one. Not to remind you of a bad memory.

MARK MULDER: I have a short memory, trust me. I couldn't have told you how many points I had last year.

Q. You mentioned before you started this week that you were really feeling good. Now the last couple of years it hasn't been the typical Mark Mulder performance after winning three here in a row. What's the difference, more practice?

MARK MULDER: Not more practice. Less practice. My kids are way busier. My oldest son has way more stuff going on. We're way busier.

In recent years I came in not feeling very good with the putter. And this year I feel very good with it. That's the difference maker. This course plays short enough for all of us, even Annika from the tees she's from. This course is very short. It's a putting contest in my opinion. We all have wedges, 54 degrees, 60 degree, into a lot of these holes.

We're all going to hit them somewhat close. I get it. Her short game is ten times mine. But the point is you still have to go make those 10-, 15-, 20-footers if you're not hitting them to three feet.

But that's what it all comes down to. And my putting has been very iffy over the last handful of years. That's the main reason why I feel confident right now.

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