

American Century Championship

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Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Tony Romo

Press Conference



Q. Congratulations to our 2022 American Century Championship winner, Mr. Tony Romo.

TONY ROMO: Thank you.

Q. How are the nerves right now? What a day.

TONY ROMO: It was great. I was talking about it a little bit after the round when they were doing the interview, but you work so hard to get in position at the end to be in contention. And once you're there, it's actually -- that's kind of fun. That's what makes it enjoyable. The hard part is getting there.

But feels like once you're there, you really lock in on exactly what you're doing. You don't do a little bit of this or that, you're like a hundred percent, I call it. That's what I did on the back nine and in the playoff, and just try and do that every time. But it just narrows your focus a little bit more.

It was nice to see all the hard work and stuff pay off. I was able to hit a tee shot that I've struggled with over the years on 18 three times in a row right down the middle. And that was the difference, just ball striking around this golf course to get me in position.

Q. Pretty solid, consistent round. Four birdies, one bogey, 25 points, score of 69. And it looked like on a couple holes you did struggle with par-5s.

TONY ROMO: My par-5 scoring is -- needs to do a little better. I wish I'd say I just start to finish was amazing, but I had so many opportunities on putts that just skimmed by. And I hit a lot of good putts, it wasn't just that I was putting poorly, I just wasn't matching line and pace exactly.

And this course is difficult. It's tricky. Everyone knows that. That's why the scores -- it's hard to go low. But I was hitting the ball so good that I gave myself so many opportunities that the law of averages eventually took

place, I guess.

Q. Well, 18, birdie, birdie, birdie, and I think you had -- the longest second shot you had in was 150 maybe?

TONY ROMO: Yeah, that was -- that makes the hole a lot easier. That was one of the biggest things going into this tournament, there were two things, hitting some of these 30 to 60 yard shots close and taking advantage. And I hit a lot of good shots there, and I still have to work on that and some other areas.

But I didn't capitalize enough on those shots with the putter. But I improved there, which is what I want to ultimately do each year and each tournament. But the second one was 18. 18 is such a gettable hole and points, and I've just given away so many points through the years to the field on that hole.

And when I went back and looked at my scoring on 18, I'm losing nine points a year to people because I'm finishing with three, two, four, one, three. It's just -- that's a -- nine points should be a minimum there. Because you could make an eagle on that hole with the right pin position.

I played pretty smart on the second shot each time. And wind coming off the lake a little bit, pin is tucked, and I kept giving myself that look. And if it comes in, it does. I was glad just staying patient and smart with the conservative line, aggressive shot.

Q. The third stroke on the second playoff hole was how long? What distance?

TONY ROMO: The third --

Q. The eagle putt on the second playoff hole?

TONY ROMO: So the one that finished it.

Q. Not the winning putt, the winning putt was the birdie putt.

TONY ROMO: Yeah, but the last hole I played.



Q. Yeah.

TONY ROMO: I would say that was around 25 feet.

Q. And then the winning putt was?

TONY ROMO: Probably five.

Q. Five feet?

TONY ROMO: I always want to say it feels like three or four, and you're like 12 feet, but the truth is you're always further away than you think you are.

Q. Some of us were at Los Colinas, and on those 18th holes, the regulation and the playoff, I remember you saying you were happy with the swing, but the result of those shots into the green weren't what you wanted?

TONY ROMO: As you could tell, every time you play, the goal is to learn yourself, improve. But it's also about winning and you're trying to win. But the ultimate goal is truly to -- this week it's to win, right here today. But I want to improve, I want to get better.

And 18 at Los Colinas taught me the margin for error on that was a little bit out of your control. I hit what I thought was a perfect shot that ends up hitting the bank and going back into the water there. That means it was probably the wrong club selection if I have to do everything perfect for the outcome to be that. Sometimes you have to attack it because you're behind or situationally.

I was proud of the patience, and you could see those shots coming into the green, each one of those on 18, was an aggressive shot to a conservative line. And I never gave anything away. And you make people have to beat you, and it gives you a chance.

And if you have to make a putt -- and I thought I made the one in the first playoff hole, and I gave it a chance, and it was too firm. If it was a little softer. But when you have a chance to win a tournament, you go for it. But you have to still be smart with your approaches and things like that.

Q. Today your shot in on the winning playoff hole, you're comfortable, middle of the fairway, other guys were already not in great shape. Did you feel like you had things under control at that point?

TONY ROMO: Yeah, I mean, it's just once I hit, the biggest shot on that hole is the tee shot because it's a lot tighter than people -- like TV doesn't do it justice because you have trees on the left. So if you pull it a little bit, even

if you fade the ball, if you pull it five yards, you hit a tree 80 yards, 100 yards in front of you. And then if you come out of it, now you're over in all these trees and you have to punch back out. So either one is wrong.

You have to hit through a really narrow and tight window. You could hit a Rescue, you could lay back, but you're not gaining the advantage that it provides with a driver.

I'd always struggle with that, just from start lines and shaping the ball. But I started to drive the ball really good the last month and a half. That's allowed me to step up and trust it under pressure. And to be able to do it three times in a row on a hole that has not been some -- not a hole that I've actually done well on is rewarding in my brain.

Q. The difference in the feeling today versus the first couple?

TONY ROMO: Well, I made a couple more putts. And the thing that's crazy is I still had one, I missed it on 17. I had another putt on 14 that I missed. Putt on 12, a putt on 10. Putt on 9. 6. 6, oh. I mean, these are like 64s or 62s if you're making this. And each day was like that. It was like I'm hitting the ball close enough.

The number of times I was inside of 10, 12 feet for birdie, each day was -- it's frustrating because I'm just playing even par-ish, whatever, couple under, 1-over golf, but I'm hitting the ball in positions to where you should have six to eight birdies or nine on any other course that I would play. But it just wasn't happening.

So I just had to keep the patience, just stay -- just a matter of time before it happens. Then once all of a sudden I made the putt on 11, that was the first one today where it was like -- it's not even a hard putt, it's like seven feet, left edge.

But when it went in, it was like, whoa, they can go in. I hit the same putt five times today, they just didn't go in. But then it made me feel like I could do that. Then I made the putt big on 12, and then obviously 18 just making the comeback for birdie was big in the first playoff hole.

Q. And the personal satisfaction versus 2017 and '18?

TONY ROMO: I think they're all special. I think one of the things I would say that's a little bit more special about this one is my boys, too, that are older. Jones is four, so he'll have glimpses and memories of this a little bit, but the 10 and 8-year-old, Hawk and Riv, they were just so into it.

They were so nervous. They were following me around,



and they were like, Let's go, Dad. Come on. If you do this, we have a chance. He's like, You could finish third if you keep playing good, Dad.

And I was like -- because we're going to the back nine, I was like, Well, I'm still trying to do better than that, son. I've played this game long enough to know it's not over yet. He's like, Okay.

Afterwards he's like, I did not think you could do better than third. This is crazy. I was like, I know. You don't get to eat ice cream tonight out of the trophy then, son.

Q. When you first won, did that feel kind of like vindication for you, okay, I got over the top, it's been a couple years, I've been in the hunt, now I finally did it.

TONY ROMO: Yeah.

Q. The second year was like you were closing the door on everybody. Your game had really progressed, you had retired.

TONY ROMO: That was the year that probably made the biggest leap. I made some changes since then, and it's taken till now. But even the second year I was starting to progress where I was better and I was getting to the point where I could hit a lot of shots close. And just even if you putt average, you're going to be in contention at the end.

But I was making putts. And that kind of was the difference there. But I still wasn't driving the ball good enough to compete consistently.

And that's what I was excited about this week, I'm like, well, I hit driver on holes I never hit driver before this week. 8, I hit driver every day. Hit two right in front of the green. Today off to the right, but it was fine, made par. 10 today, these are very tight holes. You've got trees in the middle of the fairway, and I'm just hitting driver because I've worked really hard at that.

And it was nice to see, you know, that kind of show up in a tournament under real pressure. That's the enjoyable part of sports.

Q. I looked over the stats, and 33 years, only five -- no more than five winners have not been -- five winners have not been either a major league pitcher, an NFL quarterback or a hockey player. A lot of times from the podium in past years, when those positions won, they said for quarterback it's game management, for a pitcher it's game management, for hockey players it's eye-hand coordination. Subconsciously, does your game management skills, as being an NFL

quarterback, come into play consciously or subconsciously as you're thinking about the next shot?

TONY ROMO: Well, it's almost like when somebody says they're going to specialize in one sport in high school. Well, these other sports also help you, like you talk about. Every time you're in a difficult situation, a pressure situation, when your teammates depend on you, when you fail big, when you succeed, all these things help grow you and help you to learn yourself and how to be better the next time.

It's not -- doesn't mean that you're going to be better as far as the outcome, but it does show you that you can always just continue to improve and be a better version next time.

And when you talk about those guys who win, I mean, the game management side of it is correct, but you almost can't do it unless you can control your ball. And through the years I hadn't been able to control the golf ball as well.

I'd have good runs, I'd have good weeks through the years, I'd have a good month here and there, but truly being able to step up and be like, I'm going to drive the ball pretty good today, might miss a couple drives, everyone does, but I also know more than likely I'm not losing a golf ball. And if I want to eliminate a side of the course, I can eliminate it now.

Whereas that helps the game management side. I can make sure I'm not going in the water on 18 on the second shot, and I'm not worried about going in the water. Whereas before you might be kind of in between hitting here, and then you'd be off the green. It's like, no, I'm aiming eight yards, ten yards to the right, and I'm going to draw a yard. And if I pulled it two yards, it's next to the flag. If not, I'm right there with a 15, 20, 25-footer over and over again.

And that's where I always felt like, well, it's easy to be mentally strong when you can control the ball. The hard part is to get to that point. And to get there requires you to think about your own flaws, where your weaknesses are and go to work on them.

Who likes to go do something you're terrible at? Who wants to go out here and chip when you're a terrible chipper and put them in really bad lies with everyone around watching? No, you'd rather have it in fluffy and you'd feel good about yourself.

But the guys who improve the most, they do it, they look silly, you're embarrassed, But you also are learning data so that way, when the time comes, you can actually do it.

Q. Mardy Fish is in that group with tennis players and game management and eye-hand coordination?

TONY ROMO: I feel like each one of those guys you talk about, though, I call it like it's a right-sided sport. In other words, they have a ball. They have racquets. Mardy is a lefty, so it would be left-sided. But in other words, it's a one side that's coming through.

And so each one of those guys is taking something from their right side and they're actually bringing it that way and they're sending it that way. So tennis, it's going that way. Pitching, it's going that way. Throwing a football, that way.

So it makes it easier than being a cornerback or a receiver because we're so used to sequencing the body that direction.

Q. Two months out from the NFL season, my first question is: What are you looking forward to next season? Josh Allen, Patrick Mahomes, volume 2. And my second question is: Any more golf from now until September?

TONY ROMO: Yeah, I actually have the U.S. Am qualifier tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock in Texas. Not in Dallas either. So I get back here late tonight and then get up pretty early tomorrow morning, get the back ready and get over there. So that will be a 36 hole in some heat.

But at least I won't be exhausted. That's a joke. And then -- I'm very good at sarcasm. My wife loves that too.

I'm going to play in the Wisconsin State Am, go back and see my dad and everybody back there. And then I've got the Texas State Open the week after that. I got a few in the next couple weeks, and then a little break, and then one more in August.

As far as football season, I think it's going to be a great year. I look forward to hanging out with CBS, our family there. That's one of the most enjoyable things, getting to see them, have some dinners, and then do some good football games.

Q. What are your emotions after winning such an epic playoff?

TONY ROMO: Well, I feel -- I mean, this one -- coming from behind is a great feeling. It's hard to do because you have to -- you feel like you can't miss a putt. You feel like you can't miss a shot. Every shot is huge because one mistake makes you feel like you're going to lose.

And just hitting shot after shot, I mean, I probably hit -- I think I hit one poor shot in the last 11 holes. Like each shot was like where I wanted it, where I'm looking, pin-high, or if I got the wind wrong, it was short, but it was dead on line. Really good golf for me to be able to do that.

And that's what it felt like. To be able to do it under pressure and come back, that's just a special day. And it's just really fun. And once you get in contention, though, nothing matters before. It's almost like you've just got to get yourself into where you are actually are within a couple holes hole or a hole. Then it's like, Boom.

And that's what happened as the day was going on, it started to feel. And then you're so locked in with trying to make this thing happen that sometimes it just does.

Q. On the second playoff hole, you said your first putt left about five feet for the tournament-winning putt. How confident were you that you could make that?

TONY ROMO: Well, I was pretty confident. I mean, for me, I knew because the first playoff hole I had to make, what, a 10-footer, 12-footer? That was a lot further than I wanted, I'll say that.

And so the next one, you know, it's to win. And so I know that you're supposed to be nervous and all those things, but this is what you want. If you have a putt to win, it's not like you're going to be passive with it. You're going to put a stroke on it.

What you do is you go with what you know. I always tell -- someone's like, well, what do you think about your play? I'm like, well, I'm probably the wrong guy to ask, first off. Second off, I've had really good putting stretches in my career, and then I've had a lot of really bad tournaments and bad stretches with it.

But the one thing I know is if I have a 10-footer for my life on the line, I know what technique I'm going to go with. Now, you practiced a lot to get the right roll, get your alignment, do these things so that it's more consistent over time, but if you have to make one putt, one putt with everything on the line, I have one little move that I do, and I make sure this putt does this a hundred percent. And that's held up time and time again. For me on those, I'm pretty confident when it comes to that.

Q. With this win, you join Mark Mulder with three victories here, and I think that ties for third among three guys over all the years, Rhoden with seven and Quinn with five. Any thoughts to that when you were on with Mulder going back to the 18th tee on the playoff? You're thinking this guy has won this thing



three times? Any additional pressure? You're playing with guys that are pros, been under fire and know how to play under pressure.

TONY ROMO: It's a good question. I think -- I wouldn't say I thought of it that way. For me, it just felt like once you get there, I don't know why, it just feels like I'm just going to go win the tournament. That's the feeling you have. It's like now it's time to just go ahead and do it.

And I don't know how else to explain it other than you're chasing and the shots -- this just turns into match play. It's like if I go out here and hit a drive right down the middle, I have a better chance of winning.

I know how good I've been driving the golf ball, I know how good I'm striking it. So I'm confident. If someone goes out there and beats you, they beat you. But you don't want to beat yourself. And the only way to do that when you get there is to not, like, guide it.

Way back in the day, I'd done that before, and I learned, if you lose, you lose going. I mean, your body, the club head, you go. That's why people talk about hitting the ball, not taking some off under pressure. It's like take the lesser club and hit it. Because ultimately, in those moments, the more that everything is going, it's going to be in sequence, and it's easier to control.

And I just think it's fun, like when you get there. When you get in a playoff, this is what's enjoyable. Watch my kids live and die with each shot and putt? This is like, boy, this is what you practice for. I like that situation.

Q. What does this mean to win the whole thing? You've done it before, but what does this one mean?

TONY ROMO: Well, like I said a little bit earlier, they're each different. All three are meaningful. The first one felt like I could do it finally. It's like getting to that point where you actually had been knocking on the door over and over again, and then you finally actually do it and it's like yes, I knew I could, and I kind of expected it, but it's been taking a long time.

Then the next year you're kind of expecting to do it, and then I played really well, and it kind of coincided. Then I had a wrist injury where I had hook of the hamate, and I broke my wrist, so that definitely didn't help during this tournament, so I had to bail out.

And then Mardy shoots 63 two years ago? And that was as good a round as anyone is going to play here. You're not winning that tournament when someone does that. If someone beats you, that's just great playing.

I was also in that phase of adjusting from that swing and that time period of my golf game to where it is now. The last three months, two months, I'm getting to where I'm going lower a lot more often. I'm getting to numbers I've never gotten to, and I'm more consistent.

So hopefully this will continue, and just need to obviously make a few more putts going forward.

Q. Pretty soon I'll be writing about the South Tahoe football team, the Truckee football team. I'm sure you have fond memories of high school football. What do you say to those kids who are gearing up for the football season?

TONY ROMO: What a special time in your life. It's almost like this. One day I'm going to be really old. Kind of am already. But I'll be way too old to win this. I mean, that will be like 84. At 70 I should still have a chance.

High school goes by quick. College goes by quick. Playing in the NFL for me went by fast. It's a special time. Enjoy it. Don't take it for granted. Just give it everything you got. Enjoy the people you're with.

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