

# Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship

Thursday, 19 January, 2023

Abu Dhabi, UAE

Yas Links

## Tommy Fleetwood

### Quick Quotes

#### Q. First thing's first: Happy birthday!

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Thank you.

#### Q. How does it feel to go out on your birthday and shoot 4-under par 68?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I was trying to keep it quiet. But yeah best birthday present was playing with Shane; so happy with that.

#### Q. He showed you around Dublin recently. Tell us about that, just before Christmas. King of Ireland, how was that?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, sat there with Irish royalty. That was nice over Christmas. We are obviously very close, and today was just another treat for me.

#### Q. Tell us about the way the golf course played today. Give us an insight into the challenge it represents.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I felt like it was very scorable early on, particularly if you hit it well sort of off the tee, which I did for the majority of the day.

Felt like early doors, I would say for the first, 10, 11 holes, I had a few wedges. Greens are perfect, and I didn't -- as well as I played, I didn't really make the most of how I thought; the score didn't quite reflect how I was playing, and stayed really patient.

Then it got tricky at the end. It got tricky to get it close. I feel like 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 sort of played pretty good but couldn't get the ball sort of anywhere near. I was happy to hole a couple of the putts on the last. Because after you play so well, all of a sudden, you miss one of those 6- or 7-footers on the last two, you definitely let a day get away from you. So I was happy with that at the end.

#### Q. Thoughts after that this morning to kick off your year in stroke-play terms?



TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I think overall very happy with how I played. Had a lot of control of my golf ball and the swing felt really well. Timing was in. Felt like I rolled the ball well on the greens. Didn't make the most of my chances, but overall can't complain at all about a 4-under round.

I think the most encouraging thing was how I played and the fact that I gave myself the opportunity to have a really good score today. Can't win it the first round, but played well.

#### Q. It's not blowing a hooley, but it's not straightforward out there, is it?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: No. Early doors was the time for scoring. It was blowing when we actually turned up for breakfast, and by the time we teed off, it was perfect conditions. It was the right amount of breeze where you could use it.

So I felt like for the first 10, 11 holes, there was a really good scoring opportunity and I played really well here, so well off the tee, and just couldn't quite capitalise on that.

Then definitely by the end, I think the wind, a lot of crosswinds. Greens are not firm but they are not soft; then it became harder to get it close to the hole. So could have been horrid to give one of them shots away, from not hitting bad shots on the last couple of holes, so they were two important putts. But it definitely got trickier the last hour or so.

#### Q. You've given yourself springboards into years on a couple of occasions in this part of the world, but obviously at a different course. How significant are these sort of couple of weeks in the Middle East?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I mean, they are and they aren't. If you can get off to a fast start to the year, obviously it's very encouraging, and it propels you forward for the year and gives you a lot of confidence.

At the same time, put too much pressure on them, and it's



still the first event of the year, second event of the year; there's a long way to go. If you don't play quite at well, don't put too much emphasis on it. It could go either way, really.

But I definitely think I think if you get off to a fast start of the year, you've seen it in the past that guys that win this event or win Dubai. You've seen guys end up winning a major a lot. I'm not one of them unfortunately but it definitely propels you forward, and gives you a lot of confidence and freedom going into the rest of the year.

**Q. How are you spending the rest of the day?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Probably some practice and training, and then I get to have dinner with my family and friends, which is lovely really, so I'll look forward to that.

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