

U.S. Amateur Championship

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Bandon Dunes Golf Resort

Tyler Strafaci

Press Conference

TYLER STRAFACI: You kind of know the green is further right and that's where the practice rounds are kind of being delivered but your preparation really pays off because I knew that green was right. I hit it probably 10 yards right of my target and I kind of didn't rip it, so yeah, good thing. But I knew it was going to be pretty good, and everyone else thought it was way right, and it was good to kind of walk up there and Bones gave me a little wink and said, "You're five feet."

Q. Before you hit the shot into 18, you kind of closed your eyes, took a deep breath. Can you talk about what you were doing in that moment?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, I mean, that was the first time in my life where I told myself -- well, I've told myself that you're going to hit a winning shot, but I actually hit a winning golf shot when it mattered the most under the most pressure in amateur golf, because under those circumstances, it's foggy, it's different than how I was playing in the first 30 holes, so my distances were a little off. I had 225 to carry the bunkers, and my stock 4-iron is 225, like ripped 4-iron is 225, and it's thick air, and I was like, you're not going to hit this close with a 2-iron. You're going to hit it close by hitting the best 4-iron of your life, and I stepped back, and I closed my eyes and put my hands over my eyes like that, and I said, "This is your time to hit a winning shot. Go get it." I've done it a bunch of times back home, and I knew I could execute it, and I trusted myself, and I did it.

Q. Coming into that, 16 and 17, you had to pick up on both of them, and it was back even. Did you have any negative thoughts coming into 18?

TYLER STRAFACI: No, that was completely planned. (Laughter.)

Q. You had to get to 18 again, huh?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah. 16 I hit driver. Again, my



mindset in match play was to be aggressive, trust everything and put pressure on him. I did hit a really good tee shot. I hit it right where I wanted to, and if it the fog wasn't as heavy, it would have been perfect. It would have been just left of the green. And I hit a really good golf shot, and I can't plan it, and I forced him to hit a really good shot, and he did, and he executed. I almost pulled off the bunker shot. It was pretty close to being a really good golf shot.

And then 17, that's another one. I tried to -- my dad said, try to win it here. He kind of skanked a 4-iron right. I hit a really good 4-iron, knew it was going to be closer. And again, you can't see the flag. You couldn't see the flag. You mean, you kind of walked up and you saw where it was. I was like, I'm not going to hit 9-iron, because I heard people clapping. I knew he was within 10, 15 feet, and he's a great player. He's made it this far so he was bound to make a big putt. So I was like, I'm just going to hit this pitching wedge. I was still adjusting to the yardages with all the fog, and I just mis-hit it. I had good intentions, and sometimes that's what happens. You just don't hit a great shot.

I wasn't really nervous. I just didn't execute.

And then 18, Coach today after my first 18, he came up to me and pretty much told me, he's like, You know how to play 18. If it comes down to it, you've won it four times in a row; do it again. I did it.

I was confident. Just stuff like that from Coach Dev throughout the week was awesome. He was out there with my brother just being very positive and cheering me on, and for Coach to come all this way really shows how much he cares about people.

I mean, I don't know if I would travel across -- I'm not saying just like to go across the country, that's insane. That just shows what kind of a person he is. I gained a lot of respect for him. I don't know if I would have won if he wasn't here. Just that little bit of stuff that he told me before I went out for my second 18 was awesome, and I'll forever be thankful to him for coming and showing his support and being a badass out there.

But again, my dad was great this week. I've been bitching him out throughout every round, and he's stuck with me



and was very positive. He got in my face when I needed it and was very comforting when I needed it, and he was great.

Q. You said out there that your grandfather regretted not winning the U.S. Am. It was a hole in his history to some extent. How does it feel to kind of fill that gap in your resume?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, one of the things that really bugged my grandfather, and he told my dad it bugged him for the rest of his life, and the thing that's put a lot of pressure on me, my grandfather was born in America, and during the late '30s he was the best amateur golfer in the world, no ifs, ands or buts about it, and for him not to be selected on that Walker Cup team, it kind of hit home hard with him. It's a different day and age now, but he kind of held that deep inside him. That's why I always wanted to be the first Strafacci to make a Walker Cup. It's been a rough couple years because I've been pretty close to it, and now that I'm on that team, I feel like I've made him proud, and I feel like it's just unbelievable. I mean, it's something I've dreamt about and something that my father has told me, stories about my grandfather wanting to go there and stuff like that. So it's awesome.

Q. Somewhat fateful given the entire bulk of what's happened this year?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, a hundred percent. These are very trying times, tough for every -- there's not one person in this world that it hasn't affected negatively, and it's really tough. I wanted to be one of the people that got through this and approached it with a positive outlook, and it still has -- our college golf season got canceled. It sucked. It was one of the worst -- I remember going to Coach and I was bawling my eyes out. It affected everyone. But I tried to approach it with a positive outlook, like my dad said, he said, use this as a time to get better, and I did, and I capitalized, and right now I'm in a really good position to start my career.

Q. Can you compare your putting today to your putting yesterday and describe what work went into last night?

TYLER STRAFACI: I made so many putts. I putted so good. Pressure putting. I don't know how many putts I made, but I felt like I made a lot of putts.

I mean, I think the best putt, and Coach was right, I think the best putt I made was on 14. The match is even, he makes a 30-footer for birdie, and I've got seven, eight feet for eagle. I've got to step up and hit that sucker in the hole, and that gave me that little boost right there. Even though I

gave up the lead, but that was huge. Because you kind of leave that green after that high of emotion. I was screaming down the fairway hitting it five, seven feet, and then he does that, he clutches up, and to be able to clutch up on top of him was pretty cool.

Q. Can you talk about last night, just putting --

TYLER STRAFACI: Oh, yeah, so I -- it's funny, so my buddy Graham was watching the coverage, and I've played with Graham -- Graham Evans is his name. I've played thousands of rounds of golf with him at Grande Oaks, and he's like, you're not being aggressive, you're slowing your back stroke and you're just kind of hitting glancing blows. So I kind of worked on that, and Todd Anderson my coach called me, just very proud. He's like, Tyler, I want you to hit putts with your right hand, get used to that pop, get used to making putts and just have great speed tomorrow, and I putted for about I would say an hour, and I wanted to be ready. And I was ready. I felt really confident about my putting headed into today, which was good.

Q. Down 5 early on, you know it's 36 holes, did you think, I've got to get this thing turned around here pretty quick?

TYLER STRAFACI: Never a doubt. Coach sent me kind of a text from Kuch about the ups and downs throughout the match. You kind of know that -- you know everyone in a match is going to have those nine holes where they just kick your ass. It's just going to happen, whether that's one down, they just beat you, or five down. You just don't know when it's going to come. I've come back from that before, so I knew I was playing good enough. Ollie was playing great, and I don't think Ollie made a mistake coming down the last 18. I think he made one bogey, and that was on 15. You know, he played phenomenal. I think I had seven or eight birdies and an eagle on the last -- right, in the last 18? Six birdies and an eagle.

Q. What's that like when he comes out of the block like that, like he did this morning?

TYLER STRAFACI: It was fun to watch. I mean, it was like insane. I remember stepping up on 3 after -- or 4, and I'm 1-under through 4 and he's got a 15-footer for par, and I was like, all right, Dad, 3-down, but he missed it. And he just played great. He didn't miss a shot it felt like. The only different thing was he kept hitting it really good, and his putter cooled down, and I started hitting it better, and my putter heated up. That appeared to be the difference.

Again, that had to be the most competitive, best match I've ever played, and I executed shots coming down the stretch, and I just nipped him. It was fun. It was fun to be

out there.

I mean, I remember we were walking down 18, and we'd been back and forth and Ollie is a great kid, and we looked at each other and said this is what we dream of, and it was so cool. We were saying that from the start because no matter what happens, win or lose, we're a part of golf history and we're doing it at such a special place with all our friends and family here to support us.

Q. Can you point to a time where being a Strafaci was too much pressure?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah. I mean, probably I would say early -- later in my high school career when I started playing amateur events and started playing U.S. Amateurs and playing the North and South and I had 20 people, cameras following. I had no idea what to do. I wasn't ready to handle it. I don't think I was ready to handle it until about six months ago, to be honest. My mind was -- it was strong, but to be able to do what I did and kind of overcome all that pressure and stuff, I've grown up and kind of compartmentalized a lot of stuff, and I got it done.

Q. On 18, we saw you say, "Please be right." How long did that ball seem like it was in the air and your reaction when you finally saw it land?

TYLER STRAFACI: It felt like it was in the air for an eternity. I knew I'd put a perfect swing on it, and that's one of those things that you make once a year that just comes out exactly how you want it and you get a little extra out of it. I needed that little extra out of it to get it over the bunkers, and that was just -- I said that, and I was just watching that thing, and then watching the thing, and then I saw the ball go over the left center of the bunker and I saw it bounce, and I gave it a little fist pump, and I'm like, there you go, that's how you do it. It was so cool to watch. It was the coolest shaped shot I've ever seen, just straight with a little draw, just my typical shot. I don't have a cut in my arsenal right now, so it was cool to do that, but it was fun.

Q. What was it like to represent Georgia Tech, from Bobby Jones to Andy, your buddy, and to hold that thing right now for that school and what it means to the program?

TYLER STRAFACI: It's just validation for everything that Coach has put us through and kind of given us opportunities. There's no questions why he have success. It's pretty obvious; he puts us in a situation where to succeed you have to mature and you have to just grow up and do the right things and be a good person, be a good teammate, be a good family member. He's had three

champions. That's so cool, and I wouldn't be surprised if within the next couple years he gets another one.

Q. You've seen that trophy in Andy's possession plenty of times --

TYLER STRAFACI: I haven't touched it. I told him I didn't want to touch it because I was going to try to win it one time. Then I wanted to touch it again, but this is the first time touching it.

Q. When you're looking at that all year, how many times do you think I'm going to win this thing?

TYLER STRAFACI: Right after he won, I saw it, and I was like, I want to win this thing so bad. I'm not going to touch it, I'm going to do everything I can to win it. What it did for his life -- and he couldn't be a better person. He's just been so supportive and how it changed him is so cool. But I mean, I wanted to win it so bad after that.

But then again, there was a time where I said I was done playing amateur golf, kind of after college, and then we had -- me and Coach had a talk and stuff like that and readjusted my thoughts, and yeah, I wanted to win it after that. I never thought it would come, but it did, so it's pretty cool.

Q. Are you still roommates with Andy?

TYLER STRAFACI: No, he's obviously graduated and he's living with Ben Swaler (phonetic).

Q. Can you just talk about how that kind of period where you made your decision and then also how you kind of adjusted your schooling going into this coming season?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, so my main focus -- so on graduation day last year we had a meeting with Coach, some of our advisors, and I wanted to see what school would look like for me next year, and pretty much what came out of it was I had -- I wanted to be the best golfer I could and have the least amount of stress as possible in the spring so I could win a national championship. So I actually withdrew from a one-hour seminar class on graduation day so I didn't graduate.

So now I've got school, and then I have my one-hour class in the spring, and I'm ready to go. I'm ready to try to win a national for Coach. He hasn't had one as a head coach yet and he deserves one, so we're going to give it to him.

Q. Had you graduated could you do some sort of graduate program?

TYLER STRAFACI: Not really -- I would have had to start a major. It works out. It's an interesting scenario right now, but I'll be coming back -- I'm going to be there in the spring no matter what, and I'm going to kick butt for them. That's my main focus, win nationals at Grayhawk, and that's what we're doing.

Q. Of all the champions that are on that trophy, what's the one name that you're proudest to be on that trophy with?

TYLER STRAFACI: I would say Bobby Jones, because he's the greatest amateur ever. And this is the U.S. Amateur, so just kind of being on the trophy with him, I have not found his name yet --

Q. You will, a couple times.

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, I'm sure it's on there a bunch. I'm looking forward to representing Tech and everything that comes with it.

Q. You're in a position that a lot of kids and junior golfers want to be. If you could give one piece of advice to someone that wants to get that trophy soon, what would it be, and if you could also give one piece of advice to a parent who wants to help their kid to that dream, what would it be?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, that's a loaded question there. I like that. So for a kid, I would say just -- you have to know what kind of person you are to get the most out of your game, because like me and Andy Ogletree are two completely different golfers. We have different routines. We have different everything. But we both have found a way to kind of develop and work. He's very -- he plays a lot, and that's kind of his niche, and that's how he gets better and he gears his game around that, and I practice a lot and I gear my game plan towards getting ready for tournaments through that and I get my calms through it. He gets it through playing and having games and stuff like that. I'd say find yourself, and whatever self you are, just gear everything that you do towards that. If you really want it, you've got to go get it. There's no half-assing it here; you've got to come up with that plan, go get it and give it everything you've got and live with the results.

And parents, I would say don't tell your kids what to do, just guide them along, be supportive and know that they're trying their hardest, and if sometimes they don't play good, then let them not play good. Be there to be a shoulder to try on or whatever and just be their friend out there, not demanding a lot out of them.

Q. How far were you on 18?

TYLER STRAFACI: 18 I had about 18, maybe 15. It wasn't very long.

Q. You've been here for a week and a half. Can you talk about Bandon Dunes?

TYLER STRAFACI: It's the best, yeah. I mean, I've been going on walks pretty much every day, and just what you see out here is so cool. And the courses are so different than everything I've ever seen in the States.

Today we had four seasons, or three seasons. We teed off it was a little chilly and then it kind of got warm, and it got a little windy for a second and then it got to where it was like hitting into the mist. You had no idea where it was going. It's just so cool you get to see so much stuff. I mean, this place now is going to be very special to me. It's somewhere I'm going to hope to take my kids one day and reminisce on stuff. I love it. I think it's a great atmosphere. I'd love to come here not playing competitively just because I think there's so much fun stuff to do and we're in this bubble, which is fun, which is good, which is what we needed to do to have this tournament. But I would like to be able to play the four or five courses and go to the punch bowl, have a couple of brewskies.

Q. Can you talk about how fortunate you are to grow up around the course that you grew up, and you get to play with guys like Dan Marino and to have your father and grandfather so involved in golf, can you talk about how that's kind of made you into the champion that you are?

TYLER STRAFACI: Yeah, so I was very fortunate that both my parents worked really hard and made a great living, and it allowed me to play at courses that are phenomenal. Indian Creek, where my dad plays out a lot, that's his baby. I go out there and it's just playing out there, you kind of get used to all the stuff, meeting some very influential people, and they give you some good advice, and that plays into it as much as having a great course to practice on, just surrounding yourself with great people and influential people. It's pretty cool. Grande Oaks is awesome. I am very fortunate to be in a position financially that my parents, they never said no to anything that I really wanted to do, and they said whatever you do, you're going to have to earn it and you're going to have to push for it, but they never said no. They were always, if you want it and you get it, of course, bud, you've got it. And they've held me accountable. That's the main thing. If I wasn't doing anything, they'd let me have it. Not in a bad way, just my parents are very old-fashioned, and Coach knows this, my mom is a -- I'm scared of my mom.

Q. Did she ever pull you out of a tournament because you were in the penalty box?

TYLER STRAFACI: Oh, no, but I've gotten reamed out by my mom and dad for acting like a little -- you know. But no, I remember they're very finish what you started kind of people. I remember I broke my hand in an AJGA tournament, the fourth hole of the day, and I was whining and complaining to my dad, and he's like, Don't bitch, finish the round. That's something he said he withdrew from a tournament one day and it's on him for the rest of his life, just stuff like that. My dad is just the best.

Our relationship has gotten way better since I went away to college, and that's probably -- me and Coach were saying that's probably the best thing about this tournament is our relationship. That's something I'm never -- this is awesome, winning this tournament, and it's something I'm always going to relish or cherish and stuff like that, but that moment of seeing your pops and brother and mom and knowing that your relationship is strong and they love you to death, and you walk off that green into their arms, that's what I'm going to remember. That's just unbelievable, something that one day I'll share with my kids.

Q. How are you celebrating tonight?

TYLER STRAFACI: Well, once Coach gets out of the room I'll tell you. (Laughter.) It's going to be fun, I'll tell you that much. It's going to be late. Coach, I'll remember everything tomorrow, don't you worry. But I'm just looking forward to being around my family and friends and coaches. It'll be crazy, don't worry.

Q. Winning the Amateur obviously is special in its own right, but winning it the way you did, with everything always coming down to 18 at the end, what more does that add to it as far as you're concerned?

TYLER STRAFACI: I mean, it's crazy. I'm not going to lie; it's stressful. Winning the Am is amazing, but winning four matches in a row one 1 or three matches, that's something I'm always going to look back on if I'm in a major and I'm even going into the last hole with someone like Brooks Koepka or Tiger or someone like that down the road, I'm going to look back and say I've done this before, I've done it three times on the biggest stage in amateur golf, I should be ready for this. So that's cool, that's something I'll never forget, winning the last three matches 1-up or -- was it four matches? I think so, right? Yeah, I mean, I crapped my pants yesterday. I had to check my shorts after the round. You think I'm kidding. It was crazy. Four matches. It's insane. But I'm just so thankful to be surrounded by a bunch of people right now. It's so cool.

Q. Even by us?

TYLER STRAFACI: This is cool doing this. It's part of the duty. Love it.

Q. I don't know that everybody knows this, but Georgia Tech have the first collegiate program to have two different team members win the U.S. Amateur in consecutive years.

TYLER STRAFACI: Really?

Q. That's one thing. And the best research I can come up with is that Florida's Buster Bishop and Bruce Heppler are now the only coaches to have three who have coached three U.S. Amateur champions, three different ones.

TYLER STRAFACI: How about that, Coach?

Q. I spent a lot of time on that yesterday.

TYLER STRAFACI: That's crazy.

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