

U.S. Amateur Championship

Friday, August 18, 2023

Cherry Hills Village, Colorado, USA

Cherry Hills Country Club

Parker Bell

Quick Quotes

Q. You get Ben James in the quarterfinals. You have a guy who's probably going to be on the Walker Cup team. Just talk about 18, and you probably thought your championship was over, and then to regroup and get yourself in a good spot on 1.

PARKER BELL: For sure. He hits the fairway, and I figured I probably had to put one in the fairway, too, and when I missed it, I tried to lay up, and kind of pulled it a little bit, got really lucky it actually didn't go in the water, and I had at least a chance. Still in the rough, and I just hit it up there as far as I could, and he was 25 feet for par.

I figured all he was going to do was just try and two-putt it and I was going to have to make mine to advance, and when he blew it -- he didn't really blow it by, but it was a good four feet by, so not a gimme for sure. I missed mine. I really thought it was over. He was steady all day putting.

When he missed it, it felt like new life, and I'm sure he was pretty boggled by that. The momentum kind of swung to my side, and when I hit the 5-wood on No. 1, I was telling it to be good. Obviously it just barely missed the green, but once he was where he was and I was where my shot was, I knew I had a good chance, and I just had to get up-and-down.

I didn't really want it to go any further. When you get a chance like that to win it, you never know if you're going to get another opportunity, so you've got to take advantage.

Q. What's the emotion like when that birdie putt goes in on the 19th hole?

PARKER BELL: Probably unlike anything I've ever felt. Just where I was 15 minutes before then, like head in my hands, thinking my tournament is over, to all of a sudden I have a chance to win tomorrow and play in the Masters.

Just a huge, huge emotion, and I kind of let it all out with the fist pump. But I had to.



Q. How much has your confidence grown this week, as a guy who made the starting lineup just once this year, I think 85 in the first round at Ridgewood. How much has your confidence grown since Monday?

PARKER BELL: So much. I knew I had the game coming into this. I always felt like I was maybe a little bit overlooked before going into this tournament. I knew I had the game to make the match play. That was my goal going in was just get to the match play because I know that anything can happen.

Just the way I've been driving the golf ball, especially out here. It's a pretty short course. I mean, it's 7300 but it's at altitude, and if you're hitting drivers, you're going to have wedges into most holes, and I'm hitting it pretty straight and putting a lot of pressure on my opponents.

Like you said, confidence has never been higher, but I've kind of been confident all summer. Haven't had the best results this summer, but it's been a step in the right direction. Yeah, a step in the right direction.

It's always been something that's held me back. It's been either the putter or I make a double here or a double there. I'm glad this week it's kind of all come together.

Q. When was the last qualifier you played this spring for Florida? Do you remember it? Would it have been maybe -- it wouldn't have been for conference, right?

PARKER BELL: No, no. I actually wasn't playing in our qualifier for our last event of the spring.

Q. How come?

PARKER BELL: My game just wasn't in a great spot. Coach told me this is going to be your last qualifier of the year. We just need you to get better and whatever. I was just like, it's time. I went and saw my coach, Jeff Smith, out in Tennessee, and we kind of worked things out.

I'll send him videos here and there when I'm working on stuff, but right now I'm not really focused too much on swing fundamentals or anything, I'm just stepping up there and just sending it.



Q. What's it like to hear you're not qualifying anymore?

PARKER BELL: Yeah, it was definitely very humbling. But I kind of deserved it. Like I played bad -- my spring was really, really disappointing. In the fall I ended up qualifying for like our third event of the year, and I thought that freshman year was going to be maybe -- definitely a lot better than it was.

The game just didn't improve from there. It was kind of just -- maybe just a lucky qualifier where I ended up winning.

I went to the tournament and I was not ready. Hadn't played in a lot of big tournaments until then, and my nerves just got the best of me, and I guess ever since then, the rest of the season, it just never really got any better.

This summer I've played in some bigger events and put myself in positions where you've just got to step up there and hit it. You can't let the nerves get in the way.

Q. Going back to the match, you took the 2-up lead at 11. Talk about that hole a little bit.

PARKER BELL: Yeah. That hole all week I have swung about as hard as I can at my drive. Yesterday I probably hit the furthest drive I've ever hit in my life on that hole. I had 195 yards into that hole yesterday, and today I had 295 yards.

The driver yesterday was insane. The wind was pumping. But yeah, today I hit a good drive down the right side and had a good number. It was 295, but I hit 4-iron, and all I'm trying to do is really carry the bunker and just let it go, and I did, I hit a good one and was on a pretty good line. I didn't know how close it was until I got up there and I see there's one ball six feet, another ball just short of the green. So I checked it, and I ended up being the close one. That was a point in the match where I needed to make that putt to go ahead and get that 2-up lead because we know 1-up anything can happen, and to be 2-up, to get that lead there, I knew coming in if I just put the pressure on him the rest of the way, it would probably work out in my favor.

Q. You get to 16 and 17 and he drains a pair of bombs on you.

PARKER BELL: Yeah.

Q. What are you thinking at that point? Now you're tied.

PARKER BELL: Yeah, when he drained the one, I didn't really expect him to make the one on 16. I'm not going to

lie. I still had a little bit of work for par, but when he made it, it was just like, okay, still 1-up, and I hit a bomb on 17 right down the middle. I thought I striped it right at the pin, and I thought -- when the ball was in the air, I thought the match was over. I thought it was going to be a tap-in eagle, but I think it landed just over the water and I guess rolled back in.

So he made the putt. He was probably going to win the hole anyway, so he probably only had to two-putt it.

But yeah, going into 18 tied, I hadn't played 18 yet this week in match play, so definitely a little new hitting that tee shot.

Q. What do you think of 18 now that you've played it?

PARKER BELL: It's a hard hole. I may hit a little more club next time. I hit 4-iron. I was planning on laying pretty far back. Even he had probably 250 in, which is just hard to make par when there's -- you've got to go uphill and it's a tough green to hold even with a long iron. But if I have to play that hole again, I'll probably hit a little more club and probably try and push it a little further down there because at least if I do hit it in the rough, I'll be able to get it to where I can get it back in the fairway easier.

Yeah, it's a really hard hole. It's super intimidating when you're tied going into that hole, especially after the guy has just made two 30-footers on you.

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