

U.S. Open Championship 2021

Thursday, June 17, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

Matthew Wolff

Flash Interview



Q. Describe your round today.

MATTHEW WOLFF: A lot of good, a lot of bad. I started off really strong and made quite a few putts at the start of my round and stumbled a little bit. But it's the U.S. Open, everyone's going to stumble. And like I said in the last interview I gave, I think that I would be very impressed if someone went 72 holes without a double bogey, even just a double bogey, because that would be really good, in my opinion, just with how fast the greens are and how thick the rougher is and just stuff's going to happen and things aren't always going to go your way and I think I handled it pretty well today and a lot better than I have in the past.

Q. How did the course play compared to your expectations?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I didn't really have any expectations, so I thought that the course played really hard and exactly like a U.S. Open should. The rough was really thick and around the greens was probably even thicker than off the fairways. The way I describe a U.S. Open is you hit a drive and even if you hit the fairway you're not done with the hole. And it's like every shot out there, no matter what putt you're hitting, you're going to have an 8-footer down the hill and it's like you could have 7 feet coming back. So I just think every shot you really have to focus on and commit and prepare and I felt like I did that really well today. And like I said, there was a lot of good and a lot of bad, but I enjoyed myself which was most important.

Q. What was your feeling after the hot start and then what was your feeling a few holes later when things kind of went the other direction?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, the hot start was obviously great. I mean, I wasn't expecting it. It's my first tournament back and it's the hardest tournament that golf provides us. So it was really nice to start the way I did. And I turned to my caddie after I birdied the par-5 13th, and I was like, Dude, I'm 3-under right now. And he's like, I know. And I just didn't even realize it.

And then I started to fall back a little bit, but that's kind of

when I realized like all right, well, I fell back a little bit and things weren't always going good, but I'm still enjoying myself and having fun and being happy and in my opinion right now that's kind of what I'm working on and the most important thing for me regardless of how it goes out there I just want to make sure that I'm enjoying myself and enjoying my time out here because it's awesome to be out there.

Q. Was there a shot that righted the ship, like maybe 18, making birdie there or was it always pretty steady still?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, there were times -- obviously the double bogey with the missed like 1-footer on 16 probably shook me up a little bit. But my caddie and I have been working really hard about just staying in the level head space and focusing on the shot ahead of you and not the shot behind you. I'm probably going to be struggling with that and learning how to handle bad shots for the rest of my career, but I'm young and I'm learning and I'm just trying to enjoy it.

Q. How difficult was the decision to walk away for a little bit and why do you think you needed it?

MATTHEW WOLFF: It was really hard. Like I said, I love the fans, I love being out here and I want to play golf for everyone and I just, I think I just put too much pressure on myself. And it was a hard decision because I'm so new on the TOUR and it's my first or second year and I didn't want to walk away, I didn't think it was, you know -- I don't even think I could, to be honest, and then when I finally started to get to a bad enough spot, honestly I was like, you know what, I need some time. And I just, I think the biggest thing right now that I'm trying to do is enjoy myself again and just take care of myself really. I mean, I love these fans and I want to play well for them, but right now I'm just really trying to be happy and I, like I said, I live a great life and I want to enjoy it.

Q. How much golf did you play when you were away?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I took a good amount of time off. I've been playing for the last month, month and a half, but even



then the last month and a half has just been really just trying to get myself to enjoy myself again and be happy. Like it's awesome that I played well, I mean, I'm thrilled, but no matter what happened today the score that I shot I, like I said, I just have been having fun and I haven't had fun out here in quite awhile.

Q. Why come back for this one, the toughest one?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Well I figure if I shoot 78 there's going to be a lot of people that do it as well, so it won't look, I won't stand out quite as much. But, I mean, no, I just felt like this was a good time to be back, this course sets up really good for me and I think the U.S. Open is the hardest test in golf and I'm, I feel like I hit the ball pretty far and I can get it out of thick rough. And I feel like there's a lot of people that get to this event and they already feel like they're starting from a disadvantage and I don't feel that way.

So it was -- I mean, not an easy decision to come back at this time, but I thought it was the best thing, I talked with my team and I'm glad that I did.

Q. Are you aware that mental health and the mental attitude of athletes has been a pretty hot topic in the last couple months?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Huge, yeah.

Q. And has that been part of what you've gone through to decide to come to play in this tournament?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I think it's more it led me to taking time off. I think like seeing that all these other athletes coming out and being like mental health is such an important thing and whether it's something that's going on personally or you're not playing well or you're not enjoying it or family or anything, it's just like, in this life, it's just so important to be happy and I live an amazing life. So many millions and millions and millions of people would trade me in a heartbeat. And I needed to just kind of get back and be like, Dude, you live an unbelievable life, like you don't always have to play good. I know I want to, I want to always play good, I want to always please the fans, but I just kind of realized that the more I've been taking a little bit of time off, the more I just realized I was like, I just need to enjoy myself and be happy.

And mental health is a really big problem and we play a lot of golf and/or we play a lot of golf, play -- a lot of games -- any professional athlete has to deal with a lot more stress and pressure than most people and it's, it just kind of got to me. But I've been working on it, I've been learning and I think that's all I can do.

Q. You talked about kind of the bad head space you were in. What did today do for that and what were your expectations and did you have some butterflies a little bit maybe more than normal on the first tee having been away from it for a little bit?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, absolutely. The first tee ball I was like, I blocked it like 40 yards right of the fairway. And I was just like, you know what, I just need to start the round, I just need to get those butterflies away. And it's, I, after coming off of a break like this when you're struggling this much mentally I don't know if there's ever a right time to come back and maybe that right time is way down the road, but I kind of told myself I'm like, Dude, I've been making progress on enjoying myself and lightening up a little bit and accepting the bad shots, because everyone hits them, and, I don't know, I just, I just want to be happy, man, that's pretty much all it is.

Q. I know you just walked off the course and it's one round, but how therapeutic was this today if you step back a little bit just to be back and you talked about the fans and just being, doing what you do.

MATTHEW WOLFF: They were awesome. The fans were awesome. It is therapeutic. I definitely -- my confidence has gone up. I didn't really have any confidence before I started today. Maybe just because I was so anxious or nervous or scared, but it's just awesome being out there having my buddy Nick on the bag, I went to college with him and he's really helped me a lot through this and, yeah, I'm -- I just can't emphasize it enough, more than the score that I shot I was just happy to actually be smiling and laughing out there because, like I said, I haven't done it in a long time and it's hard to do when there's this much pressure and people and eyes watching you and stuff.

So I made a huge step in the right direction and I have a heck of a long way to go, but I'm working my way towards it.

Q. Over the last two months who did you talk to or how did you get into a better head space than you were?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I just, I think I just talked to the people that were close with me. I kind of -- I didn't block anyone out, I wasn't like, oh, I need to close my circle, but I reached out to the people that I've always reached out to. And my agency, the people that work there, they have been unbelievably supportive, and not only that, but my family and my girlfriend Kim, she's been -- I mean, obviously it's hard, I come back from the golf course and I'm in a just shitty mood and she's just trying to make, put a

smile on my face and I don't want to deal with it. And it's been hard for her, hard for me, hard for everyone around me, but I mean, the strength that everyone has on my team and the, not only the strength, but the confidence that they have in me is, I couldn't even ask for a better team and like to keep it small and they have been great.

Q. Secondly, does it help to be in this sort of arena, to let your guard down, be vulnerable and talk about what you're going through, does it help at all?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Absolutely. I think the hardest part is people, fans and stuff or anyone, unless you're actually a professional athlete or playing a sport, you just don't know the emotions that come along with it and how much you want to please everyone and play for your fans and on top of that make money and, like it's a living. And it's like, you know, in college golf, if you shot 78, you go back and your coach would pay for your food and you would be chilling, because you were on a full-ride scholarship or whatever, you know what I mean? But you come out here, you miss five cuts in a row and you're like, Damn, I haven't made a paycheck. And it's just a lot. And it's really hard. And like I said, I'm really young, even though I feel like I've been out here for awhile, I haven't even played all of the courses that the PGA TOUR runs through. So really just trying to learn and build and really mature. I mean, I'm only 22. Don't they say like the brain evolves at like 25 or something like that? It's like, I don't know, but...

Q. You and Collin and Viktor had so much success so fast and so much attention was thrown on you. Did that have anything to do with it and what maybe was the low point where you said, I got to stop?

MATTHEW WOLFF: I mean, I think it had a little bit to do with it. I wish all the success for Collin and Viktor and every young guy that makes it out here, I think it's awesome. But you know, it's competition, it's like you want to beat them. And I think -- not so much the young guys, but just everyone. And I go to an event, show up and just, first round I'm out of it already and I would just really in a bad spot.

And at the Masters I think that was pretty much the turning point is like, the entire time my head was down and I hated it. I mean, I just, I didn't love being out there and like I didn't enjoy it and it was hard for me. I mean, I want to try to be strong for all the fans, but I guess I just am not that strong yet, but I'm trying my hardest and I'm getting there.

Q. Curious how much golf you watched on TV the last two months?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Pretty much none. Actually, it's

funny you say that because I was talking to Bubba Watson earlier on the range this week and he told me he stopped watching golf, he only watches LPGA because they're so positive. He goes, LPGA is like the commentators, like everyone is just so positive, like every shot they hit is the best shot ever. And I think that -- and I'm not, I'm not like hating on the LPGA, I think it's awesome, because like these shots are hard out here and it's like, you know, sometimes they're describing a shot and they make it sound easy and it's not. And it's just, I'm only trying to have positive thoughts in my head and be positive. And I mean, kudos to pretty much every professional athlete out there, it's, I haven't been in this world for a long time, but it's fucking hard.

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