

U.S. Open Championship 2024

Monday, June 10, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 2)

Wyndham Clark

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the interview area. We are joined by our defending champion, Wyndham Clark.

Played a few holes today what is the biggest difference you're seeing in the golf course this year?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Well, in a month, the course has changed quite a bit. The greens are extremely fast and penal. You hit it on the green, the hole is not done. I was just amazed how fast the greens are.

But the course is in great shape. It was very fun and delightful to be out there on the back nine today.

THE MODERATOR: First time defending a major championship. What is your mindset?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I haven't been playing my best golf. It's been kind of a tough stretch these last few weeks. Really I'm trying to gain some momentum for the rest of the season. I know that maybe sounds like low expectations for the week, but honestly I'd love to just gain some momentum.

I'd really like to hit some good shots, have some really good up and downs, make some key putts throughout the week, and play four solid rounds. That's really what I'd love to do.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. What has kept you from playing your best golf the last few weeks? What level of frustration have you reached?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I mean, I honestly don't know. You look at the stats and things look bad, but yet in practice, it's good. It's been really puzzling to me because I'll hit great shots or I'll play 13 really good holes, but I'm not getting much out of 'em.

I kind of have four or five not-so-good holes. I end up shooting 1- or 2-over. I do that two rounds and you miss

the cut. So that's been really frustrating.

Yeah, my frustration level is definitely higher than it's been in a long time. So yeah, it's kind of a bummer. It's the great thing about golf: there's always another week. I got to believe that good golf is around the corner.

I'm hitting a lot of good shots in practice. I got to be able to take it to the course. I'm hoping it's this week and it starts a good run of playing good golf the rest of the year.

Q. Expectations; do you think that word is an overrated talking point for people who cover the game? We don't know what your expectations are. Is it a fair talking point for somebody who's in a different place now than a year ago?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I mean, I would just say my expectations are probably higher than anyone else has for me in this room. I have to work on my expectations, just not putting so much pressure on myself.

It is tough. I mean, it's obviously challenging being one of the top players, especially doing it as quickly as I did. There's ebbs and flows in the game of golf. Guys like Scottie right now are making it look real easy. There's a lot of other guys that struggle a lot of the weeks of the year and play good maybe just a few events.

It's definitely challenging. It's obviously frustrating for me that I'm not as consistent right now. Yeah, I mean, I've been kind of bummed as of late with my game. I'm always reminded when I get on these practice tees and hit good shots, I'm still doing a lot of good things in practice, makes me feel like I'm not far. It's just bringing it to competition.

Q. There's been a lot of talk these past few weeks about the pressures of life on tour, the toll it can take from a mental health perspective. I was hoping for your thoughts on how difficult it can be to adjust to those pressures, whether you think there's enough resources for players who are struggling with that?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I mean, I assume you're alluding to some recent events. That's obviously a very



sad and tragic situation that happened. The unfortunate thing for what we do is it is so lonely and it's very difficult.

Too often I think players, including myself, get tied up so much in score and outcome, and the game of golf is so frustrating and so hard. There are those really lonely times when you miss the cut, you throw your clubs in the car, you drive off, and you're very pissed off.

So, yeah, I mean, obviously on TV they typically show the guy's playing great, the game seems awesome. In reality I'd say 80% of the field storms off pretty pissed off after a lot of the rounds.

That's just the nature of our game. That's why it is such a mental game. As I've played it more and more, I've learned that there's so many different skill levels out here, and the difference I think between the guys that really make it and enjoy the game, have a long career, they're just better mentally than everyone.

As far as the amount of help and stuff that guys have out here, I mean, we have unlimited resources, to be honest. I just think it's more of maybe the caddies and the players maybe checking in on each player. Being like, Hey, man, how are you doing? Not just, How are you playing golf? That's more maybe on the players to take initiative to do that.

Like I said, it's lonely. I've been in many low spots where you have some negative thoughts which you don't ever want to have. Golf can do that to you. You got to do your best to not let it do that.

Q. Everyone is talking about the greens, them being very fast, very challenging. Is there anything that you are focusing on in particular or a drill that you like to use to get used to the speed and undulation of the green?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I mean, they are extremely fast. If they get any firmer and faster, the greens, I mean, they'd be borderline. They already are borderline.

But yeah, as far as practicing, I mean, the biggest thing is where you leave yourself on the greens. Today I went with my caddie and we just were really charting to certain pins, like we'd rather be here than there. Sometimes that almost could mean, not that you're trying to miss a green, but you're erring towards the easier up and down.

You have to play a lot of break on these greens. When we're hitting lag putts and short putts, you have a 10-footer downhill, down-grain. Normally you're not more than four or five inches outside the cup on most greens.

Here you're maybe playing 10 to 12 inches just so that you're not getting below the hole and having it run away.

It's really a lot of practice. That's what we're going to focus on a lot. We did today, and these next few days, to get ready.

Q. How much do you think the grain will impact some of these putts for you? Is there a percentage that you like to play to? I heard them talk about how much they were cutting the greens.

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I mean, the grain, I don't know if it affects maybe the break of the putts as much on these greens because they are cut so tight that the green is not grabbing it. It's more the speed. When it looks really shiny and it's down-grain, let's say the grains are a 13, I think down-grain they're 15 or 16. They're like significantly faster.

And then into the grain, it's not affecting it that much. It goes from a 13 on the stimp to maybe only a 12 in my mind. So every putt is fast. I find myself hitting uphill putts six feet by, six, seven feet by.

Common theme in our group. I mean, multiple guys putts off the green. Multiple guys hit putts, they're like, oh, my gosh. It's definitely the defense right now is the greens.

Q. During the past few weeks, anything you've done to unplug to get away? You like to fish and things like that. Have you had any of that time to reset?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I didn't touch the clubs for -- right before Memorial. I took one week where I didn't touch the clubs and then practiced all the next week.

But, no, unfortunately I haven't fished. After Travelers, I'm doing two or three fishing days. I'm really hoping that is a great release and escape from golf.

Q. Where at?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Most likely Colorado. I'll go home.

Q. Last year you talked about your goal, the goal Julie had for you, three things, have fun. What is the motto this week?

WYNDHAM CLARK: We haven't gotten there. We're meeting probably today to work on those, so... Maybe I'll let you know when we have those (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Best of luck this week.



WYNDHAM CLARK: Thanks, guys.

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