

The 150th Open

Mixed Zone

Sunday, 17 July 2022

Sahith Theegala



Q. Just sum up the week. The rest of the cuts we've seen from you in the early days, so summing up the week, how do you think it went?

SAHITH THEEGALA: It was a great week. I took it -- like I said, it took a couple of days just to kind of settle in that I'm here in the field and all that. And once I got that out of the way, it was incredible.

Just kind of did my own thing. Just stuck to the process and kind of tried to treat it like any other tournament as possible. But it was tough. It was really tough because it was my first one and all of that included in there. I tried my hardest to focus and all. I think I did a pretty good job.

But first two days I played really well, had my game. Last two days didn't have my game at all. But honestly, like, played really smart and didn't make any big mistakes or anything like that. Ended up scoring better than I played for sure the last two days.

But still incredible week. I'll never forget it. Having my parents and brother and some family. It means a lot, too, that they came out last minute. Definitely one of the most special weeks of my life.

Q. How do you explain the weekend after that kind of a start, what would you put it down to?

SAHITH THEEGALA: It's funny. It's my first weekend at a major, period. I didn't even sniff making a cut as an amateur. And then last year at the U.S. Open, I played well. My game's progressed a lot even since last year. I can't describe it. There's no feeling like it.

Yesterday I was saying you just feel in your body, like you feel the nerves. I think I was maybe fourth or fifth to last group yesterday.

Really close to the leaders. You see the leaders two, three groups behind you. It's a great feeling. That's what you work hard for. And today was a little more chill because I was middle of the pack. You could tell the difference. I think I started the day 25th or something. Even then, it's like you're kind of -- you're still trying to shoot a low score but you're not really in it

to win it. Different vibes for sure. But still being in contention there for a little bit, it was so cool.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the support system that you have? That's probably the most incredible group of people that follow you.

SAHITH THEEGALA: It's incredible. They take time out of their busy schedules too to come watch me. That's the thing. You see them on the golf course. Pretty much they're off the golf course on these trips they're working, on phone calls, trying to catch up on stuff. The fact that they would do that means the world to me. And hopefully they know I would do the same, if it was something that was possible for me to do. It's been really great.

Hopefully they don't burn themselves too much because I would like them to be consistently at a lot of tournaments. But it means the world to me. Even my mom flying from India. My mom and brother are flying back to India tomorrow. Just having them here for the week is awesome.

Q. I believe they're already planning a big birthday bash for you.

SAHITH THEEGALA: Probably Monte's house. That will be fun. It will be nice to get to offseason and have no golf talk, no golf, anything.

Q. Talk about what's next for you and I know you are flying off for the 3M. But how are you looking at the season now, with the FedEx Cup and everything looming right after?

SAHITH THEEGALA: My big goal, I haven't looked at the leaderboard but I assume I'm somewhere in the mid-30s, probably not going to get many points. But top 30 now really is the main goal. I never thought of it until the last couple of weeks prior, jumped from -- I was just really focused on top 70 because I was around 70th going into Travelers. But after those weeks, and even this week I'll probably be around 40th in FedEx. I'll have a good chance, maybe a little bit higher. I'll be in the 40, low 40s range. I'll have a chance to get close to that top 30, if I'm inside the top 30, I'm playing the next two events. Taking Wyndham off.

That will be awesome. That week off will be big. I'm not going



to touch a club and reset for the playoffs. Because I know it's going to feel probably close -- it's not going to feel like a major but close in terms of intensity. Especially the second event where it's just down to 70 guys. So I'm really looking forward to the playoffs. Just the fact that I have a chance to get in that top 30 and secured the top 70 is really big.

Q. The excitement of getting into the 150th Open, the first two days were absolutely stunning.

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, because it couldn't have been a better scenario. First time as a cardholding professional because last year I had no status. Just a one-off event. But now it means a lot.

For it to be my first Open, my first major weekend. My first -- everything at St Andrews, 150th.

Q. And the 150th.

SAHITH THEEGALA: Seems like a very important crux in golf right now, everything kind of being more important. And Rory leading at the top right now. And then Tiger coming back. I don't think it's his last time here. But just everything culminating this week, it's really special.

Q. And the weekend. So you're happy and you're disappointed?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, I'm not -- I hate losing more than anything. Everyone who knows me I'm super, super competitive. Even yesterday after the round, my parents were in dining, keep your head up. No, just let me be angry for a little bit. It was better today but still definitely disappointing because I know I'm playing really well right now and had a really good opportunity this weekend. But still just so many positives. And I'm just happy that I was even here. I didn't even expect to play here.

Q. I have to ask the obvious question, wanting to play in India, when you get back, when were you last there?

SAHITH THEEGALA: I haven't been back in four years since the wedding. I really want to go back. I'm jealous that my brother is going tomorrow. I don't think he knew like until two weeks ago. But I can't wait to play golf in India. It's definitely going to happen soon.

Hopefully I play well enough the next few years where my schedule's a little more flexible and I can take a few weeks off and go over there and do some stuff, maybe. But for now I'm obviously very focused on the PGA TOUR and points.

Q. India, if you get invited --

SAHITH THEEGALA: For DP World event, here, Indian Open, I'd love to go play as long as it's not conflicting. I don't know how the FedEx, the restructured and all that.

Q. Usually comes around the time of (indiscernible).

SAHITH THEEGALA: It's definitely something I would love to do at some point soon. Hopefully sooner than later.

Q. Farmers or Dubai Desert Classic?

SAHITH THEEGALA: I don't know. I don't want to make these decisions. I want someone else to make them.

Q. If you were, I gather a lot of support for that.

SAHITH THEEGALA: Hopefully. We'll see. Definitely see. But regardless, I would love to just go to India and see the rest of my family. I haven't seen them in a while. Play some golf courses -- I've never even played a course with my own clubs in India.

Q. You're an Indian, by race, you hold an American passport. You were born and brought up there. There's a few of people like you there. I'm sure you know of Bhatia, who plays on the Korn Ferry Tour. There's Daniel Chopra. There's a few others. How much Indian do you think you feel?

SAHITH THEEGALA: I've always felt very Indian since I was young because my grandma on my mom's side pretty much lived with us at our home. I would go to India a lot. I went nearly every year when I was young and nearly every other year even through elementary and middle school.

Once golf got more serious, summer events were the most important. That's when I would go to India. And I couldn't do it. Couldn't go. I only went maybe once in high school and once in college. But I've always felt -- that's something I've definitely thought about a lot. And sometimes struggled, with like how much Indian and how much American because I was born here, first generation. I don't speak Hindi. I speak Telugu.

And I used to speak it perfectly. But now I would not even feel comfortable going there. It's fighting a lot of stuff. But I feel at heart 100 percent comfortable being both, and I'm very proud of my Indian heritage and culture.

Q. What's the longest period you've spent in India?

SAHITH THEEGALA: I spent a long time when I was young. I want to say, when I was younger than six or seven, I spent four or five months at a time there.

Q. You love Indian food?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Of course.

Q. I've heard she prepares spicy food.

SAHITH THEEGALA: She makes everything. The problem is I don't eat too much Indian food on the road. I had it a couple times this week. I usually eat it once a week on the road. Whenever I go home, I eat it three meals a day every day. My (indiscernible) cooks for me.

Q. It was good?

SAHITH THEEGALA: It was good.

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