

The 151st Open

Mixed Zone

Thursday, 20 July 2023

Shubhankar Sharma



That was an extremely solid round. You must be delighted with it.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, really happy. We did some good preparations before this event, and even before this week when I was here three weeks ago. It was good to look at the course, have three rounds earlier before the event started.

Really happy that all my work has kind of paid off. It's been a good start. There's still a long way to go in the event.

But I played really solid. Very proud of the way I played. Whenever I was out of position I still -- I was rarely out of position today, which was great, but I was I was able to make pars, as well. And yeah, solid round.

Q. What pleased you the most in your game today?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I was very stable mentally. I think my mental makeup was very stable, and I think that was the best thing about today.

Once that happens, then the rest of the things are easy to do. It just flows. But to pinpoint something, I think nothing really stood out. I wouldn't say everything was -- that the putting was fantastic; hitting was a 9 or 10. Everything was above an 8, which is very, very good personally for me.

I hit it good off the tee. Iron play was solid. I hit the right windows with my irons. Speeds were good with putting, as well. Nothing to be unhappy about.

Q. A great par save on the 10th.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: On the 10th, yes, and on the 16th, those two. 10th was good. I was trying to draw the 3-wood, which didn't really draw so it went straight slightly right into the rough. I had a very long second shot into a par-4, which was brilliant on the green.

The first putt I thought was a lot faster and it wasn't, so it stayed six, seven feet short from about 30 feet and then made that putt.

But that second shot was the star on that hole.

16 again was brilliant. Laid up, had about 80 yards to the hole into the wind, hit a good sand wedge, pitched it past the hole, spun it back to about eight, ten feet, and made the putt.

So yeah, happy.

Q. Last two putts on 17 and 18, they could have gone in.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, they could have, but it's fine. I'm happy I gave myself two birdie looks on the last two holes. It was getting slightly dark, slightly chilly. Hit a very good shot on 17; left it slightly short.

And then the last hole just the way the pin in, I was anyway going to lay up, but where that pin is it's tough to get any spin on the ball with that much downwind.

I was happy to get there in two. Really happy to see -- I also saw my name on the board. That board is quite iconic and I saw my name, so I was happy about it.

Q. Are you happy time tomorrow?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, I am. It would've been tough if it was a quick turnaround, which normally happens for us, late-early, but tomorrow is not very early, 10:50 something, so it's a five-hour difference exactly.

Q. Dal waiting at home?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Physio first, we'll do some stretches, and then dal at home. But it's a good start. I'm quite happy.

Q. Tell us about the putt on 17, how many feet and how did you read it?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I got a good read off Kalle who made the putt. He was just next to me. I think it was 25 feet if I'm not wrong, around that much. It was downhill into the wind. I was really into the line. I hit a good putt, just stayed short. The wind kind of got it and it stayed short, but it was a good putt.

Q. Generally starting the round today, what was your



feeling? How did you start off? And where did you kind of feel in the round that you kind of completely were ready for this?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I think right from the first hole right after I hit that tee shot. I hit a very good tee shot, and then iron play was really good. I was seeing good windows, my speeds were good, and at the start I wasn't really thinking about anything. It was just play shot by shot.

The front nine had some good holes, so getting off to a good start is key. The back nine has some scoring holes, but it's a strong course all in all. It's not easy to just go out and blast it. You can't really think like that.

Par-5s are also tough, and they have to be. So you just take every shot as it comes and try and do your best.

They're long rounds. Today was also more than five, five hours 15 maybe. Save your energy and stick in there until the end.

Q. And then you had 7. Can you talk us through that?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, back-to-back birdies I think was 4 and 5. Yes, 4 was 7-iron slightly left and great second shot from the rough to hit it to 15 to 20 feet, I think. Made a great putt. Made that putt and kind of carried the momentum into the next hole, two brilliant shots, driver 4-iron on to the green. It was a very easy two-putt from there.

Q. And then 7?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: 7 I three-putted. Nothing wrong; I hit a decent tee shot, good 6-iron. It was one of those pins like the 18th, just over the bunker, so you can't really stop it in that wind.

So I hit it exactly where I wanted to. First putt also wasn't bad. Just went four feet past, and the four-feet putt was slightly tricky; it was right-to-left, left-to-right. The wind was off the left. I don't think I hit the best putt. It lipped out. But when it's windy and you have double breakers you have to start it exactly where you look at. You can't really -- there's no room for error.

Q. Some tough conditions and tough pins today, isn't it.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, some tucked. Some very tucked pins like you saw on the 18th. Even 16 just over the slope. So not easy. Even the hole before that, the par-5, was a tucked pin just over the bunker. Some tough pins, but it's the Open, so they will set it up like that.

Q. What's your plan for the morning?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Just get up, do the usual. Jesse and I had a chipping competition today. There was so much time to kill in the house. We won't be doing that tomorrow.

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