

The 151st Open

Mixed Zone

Friday, 21 July 2023

Shubhankar Sharma



Q. Lots to talk about today. Let's start with the 17th.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: You want to talk about the 17th first? Let's get that out of the way.

I think it was the wrong club. Just played too much club there.

Q. What club did you hit?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I hit 8-iron there. The wind was quite strong today all day, and the hole before that, we played about a 25-yard wind. It was a slightly different direction.

I just tried to be extra cautious, and I pulled it also, which didn't help. Just rolled into the waste area. Didn't have a ^ way to get out from there. The chip wasn't that bad. It was just rapid down there with the wind. Never easy to stop it close. It was just that tee shot.

But I'm happy that I came back with a birdie, and level par, I'll take it anyway.

Q. How tough are the conditions? Rory was saying that it was extremely hard to gauge the wind today.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: It was. It was. It wasn't easy. It was up and down. Downwind the ball was being affected almost 20, 25 yards, and into the wind, the same.

But again, flight is very important when you're hitting those shots. If you hit it slightly low, the wind batters it down and it doesn't go anywhere, so that was always a challenge. Especially with the ground being hard, connection and contact is very important. Bad connection, ball goes nowhere. There's always tough when you're playing links golf.

Q. Happy with the round on your birthday?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Very happy. Very happy. In fact, I was seeing the scores, and when I teed off the first two, three holes, I saw the wind was definitely a lot more than what we played yesterday. I told myself a level par round would not be a bad round today.

Obviously didn't want that 17 thing to happen and finish level

par like that, but if I look at it as a whole, I'm quite happy. Level par is good. Still in it. Still two more good days to go hopefully, and I'll be good.

Q. Still tied for sixth; what does that do for your mindset heading into the weekend?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: It's only the second day, so it really don't matter. Even if I was tied 50th, it's golf, so you've just got to get up, do your process again.

Until the time it's back nine on Sunday, your position really doesn't matter. You can't lose a tournament in the first two days. That's important. And I'm happy that I'm in and around the top 10 mark.

Now it's just how I play the next two days, and we'll see. Back nine on Sunday we'll know.

Q. (Regarding being excited.)

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Happy, yes. Content. Excited, yes, a little bit but you want to control your emotions. It's a long way still.

Q. Yesterday you said you saw the iconic scoreboard. Did you get a chance to see the iconic scoreboard today?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I did. I did. I saw it yesterday, also. And I also took a picture. I was busy playing, so go and told dad to take a picture.

But it's always nice to see your name up there on the first page.

Yeah, I did see it, and made a birdie, too, so it was quite nice.

Q. As you go through the round today and when you see Brian Harman so many shots ahead, what kind of planning do you do for Saturday to just stay in contention?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: You know, it's not one of those courses that people go and shoot 7-, 8-unders. If the wind is up tomorrow, anything is possible. It's more a test of patience. For me just taking every shot as it comes. It's not easy out there.



Trying too hard can get you into trouble. You just have to keep doing your process correctly until the 18th and just take what comes your way.

You know, obviously Brian Harman had a great round. 6-under, anyone will take 6-under today. It's like shooting 10-under on any other golf course, so that's amazing.

But two more days to go, and it'll be exciting.

Q. You said on 17 it was one club too much perhaps. How are you making those choices, and what went wrong with the choice?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Just played for extra wind because all day we were playing in heavy winds. Whenever it was into, it was affecting it 20 or 25 yards, and I had 130 something, so I felt like a 20-yard wind which was absolutely more than 150, 155 yards, which was like a chippy 8-iron, which I tried to hit.

It still would've been okay if it was right of the pin. Would have still gone over, I think, but 9 I think was a slightly better club. The wind was more 2:00 than into. Yesterday it was slightly more into on that angle. That tee is also enclosed. You can't really feel the wind as much is what it is.

At least I made birdie on the last.

Q. Is there something about links golf that you particularly enjoy?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I've not played a lot of links golf except for all the tournaments we have on the European Tour for the past five years, so the Scottish, the Irish once in a while now. Back in the day.

We don't really play true links in the Irish, either. That's all the experience that I've had. I've played two previous Opens that have been links courses.

But it's amazing. I've always loved links golf. Even though I've not played it much growing up, but just watching it on TV, watching the British Open and the different shots that you can play and be creative, yeah, it's definitely up my alley.

I really like it, even when I was here three weeks ago playing practice rounds I really enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun.

Q. (Indiscernible).

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I was with my coach.

Q. When you were growing up, which of the Indian players did you look up to? Were there any in particular?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Jeev was always the stalwart for us. He was the flag bearer. He's definitely a lot older than me, so I never played with him. He was like a golf figure for us because he was playing so well. I'm closer to Anirban because he's closer to my age. I learned a lot from him. I used to walk around with him when he was a pro and I was as an amateur. He used to play tournaments in India.

Yes, these two people definitely, but we've had a host of good players who have done really well, but these two definitely stand out.

Q. I think the best ever Indian finished The Open tied for 27th. Would you like to set a new record?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I don't want to chase records to be the best Indian. It's about coming and playing and finishing as high up as possible. I think everyone is playing to win, so that's more important.

But yes, to have that would be also good, but it's not something that I'm thinking of setting a record like that.

Q. Clearly you've got the mindset and you've got the game and the ability to win this weekend.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, I would like to think so. If I play the way I have the first few days, make a few more putts, and if I'm in my process, then anything is possible, surely.

Q. It seemed like you were scrambling really well because from the shocking stats and everything. You missed quite a few fairways and greens in the middle of the round especially. Would that be a right assessment?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, hitting was a lot better yesterday. I'd say today was okay. It wasn't bad. But it wasn't the best, either.

Iron play could have been slightly sharper. Yes, in the middle of the round a few of the holes were and shots weren't exactly perfect, and with how much the wind is, they were just falling off.

It was always in the collection area where I could putt from. One place where I was stuck I think was the 15th where I chipped out, then I made a good up-and-down from 66, 70 yards.

So yeah, that was the only one where I was really, really out of position, but yes, missed a few greens, but I was scrambling really well.

A few things to be done on the range after the round today, but my coach is here, so we'll sort it out.

Q. The birdie on the 7th, that was --

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yeah, yeah, that was a great tee shot. Missed 8-iron. Wind was a lot out of the left, but I made bogey there, so at least it was good to get one back.

Q. What are the celebrations going to be like today?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Nothing. Mom will cook. Mom will make rajma and make she'll take cakes. A few of my friends are here, as well, so we'll just chitchat.

They came together, so it'll be good fun. There's some work to be done, but then after that we'll chill.

Q. Spend some time on the range before going home?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes. Yes. I'll have food now, maybe see the physio, take some time and then go to the range. It's still early today, so hopefully I will not be too early tomorrow for my tee-off so I can bit of a lie-in. Yesterday was a quick turnaround. I left the course at 10:30 or almost quarter to 11:00 yesterday. By the time I was in bed it was quarter to 12:00, so it was quite fast. At least today I will have some time to relax, also.

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