

The 151st Open

Mixed Zone

Saturday, 22 July 2023

Shubhankar Sharma



Q. How would you sum up that round? I thought the hitting was great, just that you gave yourself so many birdie chances but not very close to the pin.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, I'm actually quite happy with the way I played. It wasn't easy. The wind was all over the place. It was supposed to be south when we saw, and that's how I'd planned it, and when I came on the first it had switched back.

So it was more northwest. It was tough on the front nine; back nine was slightly easier. The wind dropped.

But I still hit it good. I thought the pins were quite tough. They were in tricky positions where you couldn't really go at them. Some of the shots could have been closer where I hit them really well. The wind dropped, and it was tough to gauge the wind today.

Some great putts on the back nine that just grazed the hole, so it was one of those days. But played quite solid, was in control, made a lot of good par putts. Quite happy.

Q. And that start, it was a great par save over there, wasn't it?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: It was a great par, exactly. Like I said on the first I was slightly unsettled because I wasn't sure what I was doing with the drive try to draw it, and it's just one of those courses where if you want to miss it, you want to miss it big.

So I missed it big left. The grass was trampled upon there, so I had a clear lie. Pulled it, but great up-and-down to kind of settle the nerves. Played solid. Quite happy.

Q. You must be happy with the way in an Open Championship on a tough golf course all the rounds so far has been par or under.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, yes, very pleased with myself. Like I said, I played solid. Really happy. Still in and around the top 5 mark. Just one shot off, I think, off the top 5.

Played great. Played great all three days. Scrambled really

well. Made a lot of crucial putts, which I wasn't holing in the past month or so.

Yeah, really proud of the way I played.

Q. The leader is going to be very far away, looks like 12-under right now. How would you approach tomorrow? What would be the thought?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Just try and get off to a good start. It's a major championship. At the end of the day, there's pressure for everyone.

I don't know how the weather will be tomorrow, but if it's tough and windy it won't be easy. I'll just try what I've been doing every day. I'll just do my routine well, hopefully hit greens like I did today, and a few putts go in.

I feel like once you start making a few putts and you start rolling the ball and you start seeing it going in, it's easier to make putts on the back nine, as well. That will be the strategy.

Q. What about the first four holes? We get an impression that it's scorable, but you are still par for those holes, 12 holes.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Actually, yes, you're right, but that's also a start which I'm happy about, that I haven't dropped any shots there. They are scoring, yes. Have I parred 1, 2 and 3 every day? Yes. I birdied 4 one day, so I'm 1-under, I think. (Laughter).

But yes, there are a few putts going in. Like I said, I had a birdie putt on the second today. Third is never easy into the wind. You always get a long second shot.

4 again is tricky. I hit a great second shot there today but the wind got a gust, went over the green.

So all of those holes are tricky. I'd still say they are tricky. Again, if you get into a zone, you start making a few putts -- I guess that's what Jon Rahm had today -- everything is possible.

Q. How many languages do you speak?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I speak three fluently. English,



Hindi and Punjabi, so three. Most Indians speak that. If not three, I think probably more than three.

Q. Talk me through that lovely putt on the fifth --

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes. Actually it was two great shots. Before that I was hitting it okay, but somehow was struggling to find the rhythm and the weight shift.

Hit a great 3-wood into the wind there on the tee shot, and the 2-iron needed to be struck absolutely perfectly to get there into that wind.

It was cold, the breeze was picking up a little bit, and it was raining as well, so I had about 240 to the pin. Hit a low semi-stinger 2-iron to about, whatever, 25, 30 feet must have been. And, yeah --

Q. 36.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: 36 yes, 36 feet left to right. It was just one of those putts I told myself you can't hit it left enough. It's just going to break as much as possible.

So I hit it left, it started dying, and yeah, took the long road, back door entry. Was quite happy.

And then Jason Day made the putt there, also, so it was quite special. Did like a fist bump after the hole and he was like, thanks for the line. It was a good hole.

Q. I know it lipped out on 16, but it was your first bogey in about 26 holes, I think. You've been kind of -- you've had a measure of this course, if I can say that. What do you think is kind of helping you achieve that consistency on this course?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I've just been very gritty this week. I've really worked hard on those five-footers for pars. Today also I made so many of them. Even 16 it wasn't a bad stroke. It was just on a spine where I felt like if I died it and it started right, it would probably die too much.

So I just started it outside; lipped out, but wasn't a bad putt. Yeah, so I've grinded really well on those putts. And even the long putts I hit some really good ones today. 17 was a great putt; 12 was great putt. Both should have gone in.

I've been really gritty, I've worked really hard, and I guess that's showing.

Q. I know Sunday is still out there, but three solid rounds par or better at a big event. How satisfied are you with where you are, and how special is this performance so far?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I'm really happy, really pleased

that I'm playing well. Again, I'll stick to my processes that I've done in the first three days, maybe make a few adjustments on things that I need to do, and once those are done, just go in with the same mentality that I have had for the first few days, which I've really worked and I'm very happy about it.

Tomorrow is a new day. Just play it like a new day. I don't know when The Open will be back here, so fourth round at a major, Liverpool, I'm really happy, and I'll give it my best.

Q. Any conversations with Jason Day that you might want to discuss?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Quite a lot actually. Just normal stuff. How long is the flight from India and how is it staying in Columbus, Ohio.

He's a great guy. I've grown up watching him. I remember him when he was World No. 1 in 2014, '15; I had just turned pro.

So yes, just talking about life on the road. Brilliant guy. Amazing. Had so much fun playing with him, and learned a lot. I think he struggled a little bit with his hitting, but his short game was incredible. Just made up-and-downs from everywhere, so it was quite nice.

Q. To backhand it with that big putter head he has is a little tricky or dicey --

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Did he do it? Yeah, he did on one of the holes, but it just lipped out, I think. But it's a solid head, so it's fine. With my putter, yes, that would be very tricky. I did think about it, but then I said no, it's not the right place to do it because mine has two fangs on it.

His is a solid putter, which is a Spider, TaylorMade Spider putter, so not very risky.

Q. What was the course like when you played it growing up?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I played all over India. My dad was in the Army, so mostly played on Army courses, which would be I'd say very close to traditional parkland, tree-lined courses out here. Not so much the weather. Weather was very different. Very hot and humid.

But yeah, very tree-lined. All the effort is on trying to hit as many fairways as possible.

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