

The 151st Open

Mixed Zone

Sunday, 23 July 2023

Shunhankar Sharma



Q. You're the only guy who was bogey free in those conditions out there.

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I know, it's amazing. Yeah, just played out of my skin. I grinded from the first hole. I don't remember the last time I've hit so many long irons into par-4s, 2-irons, 4-irons, 5-irons all day, and I struck them brilliantly, so really proud of myself the way I handled myself on the course.

Front nine was slightly edgy some places. I did well to make up-and-down and make pars, but back nine was just incredible ball-striking.

Everything was close. Everything in those conditions with 4-irons, 5-irons in, everything was 15 to 20 feet; some were like four, five feet. I missed a four-footer, five-footer, six footer on the par-3s.

Really happy. Very pleased with the way I played, and yeah, gives me a lot of confidence.

Q. Before I ask you to sum up the tournament for us, would you say that this was the best you have ever played at this level?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes, absolutely.

Q. Even given your wins, which came with incredible rounds?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I know, they were just very different conditions. This is the highest stage of golf, and I felt like this was a true British Open where we saw everything from wind to rain to slightly calm conditions to sun to cold, everything.

I'm very pleased that I held my own until the end. Especially the way I played today. For four rounds to keep it together to the end, very happy. A few putts could have gone in -- a lot of putts could have gone in since yesterday, but I hit a lot of good putts also coming in, so it's fine.

Q. How do you sum up the tournament for yourself? How good is it for you going forward this year?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Well, it's the best objective of happy. Just very, very, very happy. It feels like the tournament is done also. Until the last hole, how the conditions were, I didn't obviously have this in my head that I have not made a bogey. I was still trying to make birdies.

But to finish in the end, hopefully -- I was hoping I'd make that putt on the last, but still, in those conditions to finish without a bogey on the last day, yeah, just feels like a big tournament and a lot of pressure is off my shoulder, and the energy in the body is very different. I'm very relaxed, very happy. It's time now to embrace my friends, meet my family. Very happy.

Q. That shot on the 18th where you just dropped it right over the bunker from about 205 yards, was that one of the best shots you hit this week, or which one would you think was the best?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: That, yes, in those conditions, yes, and also because I was talking to my caddie quite a lot. We had quite a bit of back and forth where he said 4-iron but for some reason I felt like 4 was too much. The feeling was very good today. I could feel how I was hitting it.

When it's windy and rainy you can't really go off TrackMan numbers, you have to feel everything. I just felt 5 would make it, and I said just give me 5, I've got this. I couldn't have hit a better shot. Landed exactly there, just over the bunker, two or three carry, rolled up; good putt also.

At least I did my process right. Hit a good putt. Didn't go in, but that was fine.

Q. You also said you looked at the scoreboard. Was it on your mind that a top 10 would mean pressure off for next year?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: No, actually. I didn't know that top 10 get invited again. I was just trying to make birdies. To be honest, I was trying to finish top 5, and that's why I really wanted to make that putt on the last. I was not thinking top 10. All of those things didn't cross my mind. There was so much happening today, changing caps, changing rain gear, three towels, ten gloves, just keeping the umbrella up.

There was no time to look at anything. Right from wedge shot



to driver, you were just trying to stay dry. It rained all day today. Until I just submitted my scorecard I didn't know exactly where I was and I asked the guy and he said you are (indiscernible), so hopefully I will be top 10.

Q. Yesterday you summed up things like as patient. Would you use any other word apart from happy to sum up the four days?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I was actually hoping that you would suggest to me a better word after happy. Just incredible. Incredible is the word. Especially with the form that I came into this week. I was feeling really good but nothing was happening.

It just shows you how golf is a lot like life. Things can happen if you just stay at it. Even after that missed cut last week, I stuck to the positives. We did everything that we could this week.

The best part is that all four rounds were under par. One was par but nothing was over par, which in an Open Championship, in tough conditions. It wasn't an Open Championship where there was sun out all the time. In tough conditions. I'm really happy.

Q. Would you say satisfied and content?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Satisfied and content I think I've already used, so for the sake of repetition, I would say that yes I would use slightly happier words: Incredible, fantastic, stupendous, whatever. It was amazing. I'm really happy, very pleased. Can't wait to meet everyone.

Q. There's a good chance that you might get an invite to the PGA TOUR --

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: If you're saying so, hopefully you will help me with it. Maybe, yes, I don't know. I've just finished. I have no idea what's going to happen.

I just got told that I'll be invited again next year, which is great. Open is my favourite, like I've said. At least one more major for next year, and we'll keep working towards better things.

Q. Your best result in a major; what does this mean on your journey as a golfer?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: It means a lot, gives me a lot of confidence. Today the ball-striking was fantastic. I feel like it would be one of the best in the field if they look at the stats, especially on the back nine. It gives me confidence that I can play at the highest level, and I know what could have happened if I had made putts yesterday and today. I could have been double digits with the way I was hitting it.

I just made one birdie in two days. I had that eagle putt yesterday but just that one on 14 today. I missed so many putts.

There's so much more to build on. It doesn't feel like I can't play better than this. I can. Which is very exciting for the future.

Q. Does it also push you to -- help you to push your goals a bit higher?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yes. I mean, the goal -- to be honest, the goal always is to win, and I will not say, oh, I've done everything -- it is fantastic. I'm very happy. But I know I have the game to do even better, and I just have to keep at it.

I think someone asked me -- someone asked me if tied 27th is the best result, would you like to better it. I never had that in my mind. That's not how I want to approach events. I know if I'm playing my best and I have played with the best in the world now for some time, I can compete and I can contend at the top.

Q. Any plan for celebrations?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: First go and dry up and then all my friends, everyone is here. Some people come from London to watch. First we'll all go in, chitchat, talk about a few missed putts, few made putts, about the ball-striking, and once we get back we'll --

Q. On the outside one could see all these pars weren't easy. That's on the outside what one observes, playing with a lot of tenacity this week. But on the inside, maybe can you reflect on what helped you kind of stay relaxed and produce your best in those tight moments?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: I just kept talking to myself, just talking about the process, what I need to follow. On a day like today, especially where you're going through so many emotions, starting on the first where -- I hit a driver, 2-iron there into the bunker and then made up-and-down on a par-4.

I was hoping that the rain would stop. It didn't stop at all, and it was just 2-irons and 2-irons and 4-irons and 4-irons. It always feels like your back is against the wall. When you still see people making birdies you feel like you also need to step up. So many things happening in the end, you just need to fall back towards basics. You fall back to your process, your breathing, trying to shoot at the targets, just control all the controllables, and then you leave the rest up to God and just do your best.

I tried my best today. A lot of good things happened, and I'm glad top 10 is a great result.

Q. Did you feel stiff at times --

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: All the time. All the time. Especially in the beginning all the time because you're trying to control everything because you're just starting, you don't really know what's happening.

Then on the back nine I really got into my feel, understanding exactly how I am feeling, what kind of a flight is coming out of the face, and then I could carve shots, and that's why my ball-striking was really good on the back nine.

I think everyone struggled with that. It wasn't easy. Right from the range we were just drenched and changing caps, changing rain gear and the ball was going nowhere. The ball was going 250 max, 255.

Q. Was that the case on the golf course, as well?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Yeah, on the golf course as well. Into the wind the driver was going nowhere because it was raining, also, and it was also a case where is it even worth hitting driver because when it's rainy and the face gets wet, the ball can slip and go anywhere, so you actually want some loft. You want to hit a club where you can get some spin, but you're also trying to keep it under the wind. It's a bit of both; it's a mix and match where you need to pick the best club that you feel you can hit into the fairway, and even then if you have a 2-iron, then just hit a 2-iron and play.

Q. Besides confidence obviously, what are the other things that you might take out of this tournament and kind of put them into play when you play across the world?

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: It gives me a lot of confidence, sure, but it's not my first time that I've played with the best in the world. Abu Dhabi was pretty close. Obviously not a major, but I was there, Rory was playing, all these guys were playing, and I was contending until the end. It gives me a lot of confidence just personally for kick starting my season. Just because I had a good golf tournament in very tough conditions, that makes me very happy.

Yes, it's a major, yes, it's a top 10. It is amazing. I'm very happy about that. Just personally for my form, I'm really happy that I could contend.

I've played with the best in the past, like I said, and I believe that I have the game to compete, and hopefully in the future the results will be better in majors.

Q. What is it about tough conditions that brings out the best in you, because Abu Dhabi itself is a great example where that one round was just hanging like a bulldog --

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA: Second round, yes. I just like it. I don't really like golf where you are bombing it and then you have a wedge in and then you make putts and shoot 10-under, 11-under. That is golf, but this is really golf where you real have I to push and you have to get into it, you have to see different shots, you can't just stand and look at a number and hit it.

I just like this kind of golf. I do well like that, also, just being gritty and tenacious and not giving up shots, and I did that today, so very happy.

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