

PGA Championship

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Quail Hollow Club

Tom Johnson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Tom Johnson joins us now at the 107th PGA Championship. Tom, a 74 for you on day one. How would you summarize your opening round?

TOM JOHNSON: It was a good hard fight, really. I didn't have my best game from tee-to-green. Mentally I hung in there and did what I came here to do. I had one goal, which was to swing freely. I figured if I was going to go down, I wanted to go down swinging and not pull my punches, and I did that. I was proud of it. But it was tough. It's a really hard golf course, and I think finishing 3-over par is an okay start for me.

THE MODERATOR: Four birdies today. Any of them stand out in particular to you?

TOM JOHNSON: Yeah, my third hole. I got off to a rough start. I bogeyed my first two holes, and the third hole, I missed another green and I had a really nice chip-in. That was huge for the momentum and just a real highlight for me to chip one in in the PGA Championship.

You know, off the top of my head, I can't really -- I made a couple nice putts today, which was good. My putting was a little bit suspect but I got to a good place mentally where I actually made some nice putts today.

THE MODERATOR: How has this whole week been overall, playing in your first PGA Championship?

TOM JOHNSON: I would say just special. Just the people that I've gotten to meet and have lunch with, shaking hands with Rory McIlroy on the range and getting to hit balls next to him, met Scottie Scheffler, had lunch with Justin Rose, Luke Donald. These guys are just heros in my eyes. To be in the same tournament as them, just being able to duke it out with players like that, it's so much fun. So I'm just really enjoying it.

Q. You mentioned Luke. Luke Donald was in here and they were trying to grill him about some college stories. He said, "I'll only tell you we had fun in college." What was it like playing with Luke for four

years there?

TOM JOHNSON: Well, Luke, he's a quiet leader. I was a freshman when he was a senior. And you know, super curious about his game and what it was like to play with the No. 1 player in the world.

I've just always really admired Luke and looked up to him. But he's just such an intelligent, steady, fierce competitor. He just has so many great traits. You know, he's obviously not the longest hitter or anything, but I was so happy to see him at 4-under. I might have lost a little friendly wager with him today. Never been afraid to bet Luke.

Yeah, he's a great guy. I still look up to him very much.

Q. It's been wet for a few days here. So what did you expect this morning? Did you just go, okay, go out and find out what it's like, or were you pleasantly shocked at how good and playable the golf course was?

TOM JOHNSON: The golf course is amazing. It took on a lot of rain, and it's drained really well, and the greens are pretty firm, considering. I think they have SubAir. You know, kudos to the whole staff that's keeping this place in the condition that it's in. I didn't really have any expectations, I only had one expectation for myself, which was to swing freely, and I did that. One goal and one day checked. I'm happy with that.

Q. Talk about 18. I know that might have been the highlight of the day for you.

TOM JOHNSON: There was a little bit of a wait on the tee. I was talking to some volunteers and fans, felt loose. Cranked a good drive down the middle, which it felt great because it's a narrow, tough driving hole. I felt mentally good about that swing. I was between a 4- and a 5-iron coming in, and I thought, I'll just hit the 5-iron and if goes to the middle of the green, that would be fine.

I put my best swing of the day on it. As soon as I hit it, my caddie said, that's the best of the day, and I agreed.



It made it all the way up to pin-high about ten feet, and I just thought, well, that's just a perfect way to end it and hopefully that snowballs into tomorrow.

Unfortunately the putt didn't drop. It burned the right edge but I hit a good putt there, too. It was really neat to be able to do that in front of so many fans.

Q. Tom, you're here this week representing the Meadow Club as a PGA of America golf professional. Can you talk about what it means to be here, the work that you put in throughout the year and how you're managing your responsibilities and staying in top playing shape as well?

TOM JOHNSON: Well, I'm not in my top playing shape. I'll start with that. The members, one of them the other day, he asked me, he says, "When do you practice?"

I just do what I can. I teach about six lessons a day. So three in the morning, I break for lunch for an hour and I teach three in the afternoon, and that doesn't really leave a whole lot of time for me to practice.

In the week leading up to this tournament, I didn't teach as much but it's my No. 1 priority is my job there at Meadow Club. I'm director of instruction, and people want to get lessons from me. I put that ahead of my own personal golf game.

I just do what I can. I'm 43 years old, and I'm not going out and hit a million range balls at this point, anyway. That might turn into diminishing returns. So I just try to practice smart; when I do, make it count, make each rep count. I hope that answers your question.

Q. And what does it mean to you to be playing in a major with so many people rooting you on this week?

TOM JOHNSON: The support is everything. I think in my prior years of playing, I felt, you know, like I was on an island. Now, I think about my two boys, Brady is 1 and Preston is 3, and I have a loving, supportive wife here with me. My best friends have flown out here to be with me. The Meadow Club members are so supportive, and just, I feed off of their positive energy.

So I'm definitely not alone here, and I'm going to give it my all for them.

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