

PGA Championship

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Quail Hollow Club

Aaron Rai

Flash Quotes



THE MODERATOR: Aaron Rai is with us at the 107th PGA Championship.

A solid start for you today. How would you summarize your first round?

AARON RAI: Yeah, very solid. Drove it extremely well, which I think is crucial around this course. Hit a lot of nice iron shots, and the shots we missed, felt like we put them in good spots to at least have opportunities to have looks at pars.

Bogeys are not going to be bad scores around this place. So yeah, I think just keeping the round nicely ticking over, making some nice par saves and just having a lot of opportunities I think is key to playing a good round today.

Q. The first thing I see is a circle on your score at 16. How did you birdie that hole?

AARON RAI: (Laughing) Got really fortunate there. Didn't hit the best of second shots. Had a really great lie out of the right-hand rough. I think was just hoping to hit a good chip within 10 feet, and was very fortunate for it to go in. Definitely a bonus on that hole.

Q. Over the course of your last 10 years, it's been just an incredibly steady, subtle progression each year when you look at strokes gained. How would you go through the last 10 years of how you've been able to keep chipping away to get to where you are right now?

AARON RAI: It's a good question. I think everyone is always trying to improve, and you have to. The game always keeps moving forward. The standard always keeps getting better year on year.

But I think what we've tried to do as a team is to always try and underline all of the good things that are already there in the first place and keep trying to build and try and build in the easiest way possible through the most minimal amount of change possible and to keep trying to add bits to the game during the season, at the end of the seasons.

I think that incrementally over a period of time has amounted to just improvement, which has been great. Obviously I don't know what the future looks like. But yeah, hopefully I'll try and stay on the same path moving forward.

Q. You said before that you turned pro at 17 and you didn't know if you were actually ready for that looking back. What was it about that time that kind of made you realize, Hey, I might not be ready?

AARON RAI: A little bit of everything, really. I'd just come out of school, so I think the life of a touring professional was incredibly different to school, first and foremost. I wasn't particularly long, wasn't the best at kind of scoring and getting my way around the course, so it just felt I was short in a lot of areas.

I would have started on a Tour called the Euro Pro Tour, which was two tours beneath the DP World Tour, and that standard felt incredibly strong at the time. It just felt like there's an extremely long way to go to be competitive on that Tour, and then to keep trying to move forwards past that.

Yeah, it felt like I had a long way to go at that point.

Q. Talk about where you are right now, in contention for Ryder Cup Teams, in contention for major championships; that that seemed out of reach?

AARON RAI: Yeah, definitely, definitely, because it's such a long way away. I think being competitive on those satellite tours in the first place felt like a couple of steps away, and obviously then to make it to the DP World, to make it to the PGA TOUR again is a lot further in the horizon.

Yeah, I try not to really focus on steps which were so far ahead of me because they were not even in the question at the time and just tried to do my best at the level that I was playing at at the time.

Q. There were a few guys in here earlier today talking

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about the impact of mud balls given the soft conditions. I was curious about your perspective on that and the decision to play the ball down today.

AARON RAI: Yeah, I think the PGA TOUR and the PGA of America referees know what they're doing. They know a lot more than us as players. That decision would have been based on the right reasons.

There were a couple of spots that were pretty wet on the fairways, but that's to be expected with just how much rain that we've had. But I think it's extremely dry around the greens and the runoffs are extremely tight.

I think without playing preferred lies, it brought in the challenge of the short game a little bit more, which I think is an important part of the course.

So yeah, I thought the decision was good and the course played great overall.

Q. One of the things we heard earlier this week was that this is just going to be a bomber's paradise, and all the big hitters are going to have a significant advantage and yet at least three one day it do not look like that's necessarily the case. Any theories as to why that hasn't actually materialized?

AARON RAI: I think the course definitely played differently today compared to what it did Monday to Wednesday. We had a lot of rain. There was no roll in the fairways. The tee boxes in practice were at the very back. And the greens are extremely firm, as well, even though we had a lot of rain.

Judging by how practice went the last three days, it seemed like that would be the case. But today was a lot warmer. The ball was definitely traveling. I think if you hit some tee shots on some lower flights, you could get a little bit of chase out of them, maybe 10, 15 yards. I think between those two things, it kind of gave you an opportunity for some of the more average guys instead of hitting 5-woods and 3-woods you were hitting hybrids and 5-irons. It definitely played a little different today compared to in practice.

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