

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Saturday, January 20, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

John Smoltz

Quick Quotes

Q. Thanks, we have John Smoltz here with us. John had a 71 today and currently tied for second in the celebrity division of this tournament. Looks like you had a really good round today. Can you tell us about it?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I did. I had a couple really, really bad holes that I overcame. Normally today would've been a 5-under round. Should have been. I made two awful swings at the wrong time.

But I've been grinding, trying work with new clubs, trying to get my swing back since I got my hips replaced. Conditions today were tough. Fortunately battled it.

I'm still going to be a six or seven points down going into tomorrow at least, but I've climbed each day and improved each day so hopefully that continues.

Q. The celebrity leaderboard is the guys you would expect to be there with Annika.

JOHN SMOLTZ: Yeah.

Q. Kind of neat. Seems like everybody is pretty on.

JOHN SMOLTZ: Yeah, it's usually the same names, and you're looking at guys that are not having great rounds, like Mardy Fish, and he holes out for eagle and birdies. So he's always in the mix.

Got to look at Mulder and Mardy Fish.

Annika here is, I mean, pretty good home court advantage and she's a stud. She's playing great. The distance is not bothering here because she's protected with her perfect swing.

Q. And like how far -- you played enough of these -- how far back can you be?



JOHN SMOLTZ: Not more than four points back. Unless it really blows tomorrow, which I hear it might. The conditions are the only way, because in this format it looks good on paper that you're only four points back.

The reality is you can only gain a point every birdie you make, they make a par, you only gain one point. Par is king out here. I blew it in the first round.

I knew -- my goal was 67 today and I could have easily done it. That's just tough to ask when you got to do that every single day leading in. If I can get in the Top 5, then I feel like I got a shot.

To win it, Annika would have to forget how to play golf. (Laughter.)

Q. How far back did you get the hips done?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Last year this time I got my left hip replaced, and last year after Tahoe I got my right hip replaced. I cannot tell you how incredible that is, to be standing and walking with no problems. Now if I can work between the ears on my golf game.

I got a chance to work out and get better, and that's what every tournament allows me to do.

Q. How long does it take to come back from one of those and come out and make a proper golf swing?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Don't tell my doctor because I exceeded every protocol. I've been through so many rehabs and I know what to do. Literally was playing golf at four weeks, which ma be is a little early.

Q. Full-swing golf?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I would never suggest that to anybody. No, I wasn't using my hip at all and just using like light shafts and going out. Passed the time beautifully.

I got into a great place with my left hip. I had it done first. And I thought I could buy time with my right and Tahoe beat it up. That was the answer I needed. Glad it happened, because I had a brutal experience in Tahoe walking five and a half hours, whatever it takes.



All good now.

Q. What's the best thing you pulled out of the Q-School experience?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I'm not good enough. That's the best thing. Which is fine. I wasn't trying to do anything heroic. Trying to find out where my game was. When the baseball season ends I went into playing a ton. Played way too much. But I don't -- I haven't taken lessons and got my body where it needs to be.

Now I'm getting there, but my short game has to get way better. Putting has to get way better. You know, you can grind out a round or two, but when you play four rounds and get to the final stage -- my first stage I didn't have a round over 25 putts. My final stage I didn't have a round you know you have under 38 putts. Basically was embarrassing.

That's the kind of thing you get into places where you're uncomfortable, and the only way you learn is to get uncomfortable. I was very uncomfortable.

Q. Would you do it again?

JOHN SMOLTZ: You know, I may. At this point I've decided not to. But who knows. If I can get physically stronger. I haven't been able to work out for years because of my hips and shoulders.

I'm determined to gain the distance back, get a better swing, maybe take some lessons. Everything has been self-taught. Everything is kind of -- when your timing is good you can get away with anything.

When timing and you're waiting and have to hit a shot down the stretch, that's where my game needs work. These kind of events are huge for me to take notes and learn from it.

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