

Cognizant Founders Cup

Friday, May 13, 2022

Clifton, New Jersey, USA

Upper Montclair Country Club

Sophia Popov

Quick Quotes

Q. Here with Sophia Popov; nice little 3-under to put yourself at 7-under heading into the weekend. Didn't hit a lot of fairways today. What was the struggle with the driver?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, that was quite brutal. I don't know, I think that's been a struggle the last few weeks has been my driver and trying to find the fairway. I go on streaks where I seem to find quite a few fairways, and then I go -- and throughout the round usually it kind of happens where I don't know if it's like a difference in tempo or something that's maybe a disconnect between my upper and lower body, but I just struggle to keep it on the fairway.

So I just kind of hit a lot of 3-woods, and I honestly scrambled, that. Might have been the craziest scrambling round of my life. So I think it's just a lot of fight, and now it's time to go on the range and just figure out what's going on off the tee.

Q. A lot of greens though, so your iron game must be what you're relying on right now.

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, absolutely. I was hitting really good irons. I think that's why midway through my round I was a little bit frustrated that I couldn't hit the fairways. I knew if I put myself in position I'm always going to give myself a good look.

That's what helped at the end. I had to get through a stretch of five or six saves. I saved like five or six pars in a row after missing the fairway, and then I finally gave myself a chance and I made the birdie.

From there I think it was a little bit more smooth sailing and putting myself in position and giving myself birdie opportunities and actually making the putts.

Q. Minjee set a high mark, but you still have two rounds left to play. What's are you going to take from these first two rounds, especially that grinding heading into this weekend?



SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, honestly, my last two weeks have been very, very tough and I've been working very hard. It's kind of nice to see that at least with my irons and especially my putting, things have really been going in the right direction.

I think No. 1 goal this week -- not No. 1 goal, but I just wanted to make a cut again and just get some confidence going into the rest of the season.

So that was a little bit of my main focus, and I did that. I'm Top 10 right now and I know there are a lot of birdies out there. I think if I can just put myself in position I think I can make a run for it this weekend.

Q. Looking at some of the holes you have little tiny landing strips. When you're kind of shaky with the driver, like you said, are you taking more 3-woods off the tees, taking more long irons off?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, I think the good thing for me is that I'm -- when I'm striking it well I hit it very far and my 3-wood can go very, very far.

I had a couple loose 3-woods too towards the end, so if I can just dial in my 3-woods is kind of just give me a little bit of breathing room and just another option off the tee.

Because as long as I'm hitting the fairway, even if I leave myself long irons into the greens, I am hitting so well that I would rather honestly have chance than not.

But maybe I can find a groove on the range now, and just honestly the first couple tee shots tomorrow morning are going to be important. If I can just get a few to go in the fairway or a feel that helps, I know that I can do it.

But, yeah, tiny landing strips don't help at all.

Q. What are you most proud of about your scrambling this week? Is it more chipping or saving those par putts?

SOPHIA POPOV: Probably a little bit of both. I hit some really good chips, really good bunker shots, and then I've



just honestly been putting crazy. I think on the back nine, I started my back nine with like five or six one-putts and just kind of honestly proud of my mental game.

I think it's very easy to just kind of lose it out there, especially if you have been missing cuts as of recently. It's very easy to just let it go and miss those par putts and make bogeys.

I think especially I'm proud of my putting, the way I kept giving myself chances and was just rolling it really nicely.

Q. We've seen a couple players today have been struggling on 3, and I saw you struggle on 3. What's up with that hole?

SOPHIA POPOV: Honestly, I hit a great tee shot and I was like, all right, I'm good to go.

It's the only iron I kind of hit a little bit loose. I tugged it a tiny bit. I think that's a little bit the hazard that comes into play there, and it's a tough shot to hit because you want to hit it left and feed it into the hole, but I literally missed my target by maybe two yards left.

I was in the rough, and then you have a really hard chip. I wanted to be too cute with it, left it short. Had another tough putt, and it played different than in the practice round. In the practice round you couldn't even get that chip to stop.

So I thought that's what I had to do. I actually just played it a little bit too cute and really just all I wanted to do was give myself a chance at par, but I just kept leaving it short. Every putt I left short also.

So kind of just a loose double bogey, to be honest, from me today. I felt I didn't really do a lot wrong on that hole to that point, so I think it was just a tough hole.

Q. You excited they might move that tee box up?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah. Although I think -- I don't know, I hit 3-wood off the tee today, because like I said, I kind of hit my 3-wood pretty far. I only really had 150 left of the pin, even though it was a back pin.

I don't think it changes a lot about my strategy. I just think that green is not easy. Like you just have to leave yourself in the right position. If they do put that tee up and they put the pin up, I think it's going to be an extremely scorable hole suddenly.

So I don't know. I think you kind of have to see how it is tomorrow with the wind, the weather, and just go from

there.

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