

PGA Championship

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Oak Hill Country Club

Shaun Micheel

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: 2003 PGA champion, Shaun Micheel, joins us now at the 105th PGA Championship. Welcome to your 20th PGA Championship. Nearly 20 years ago you won right here at Oak Hill. Can you take us back to that week and maybe some memories of that time for you?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, that was my first PGA. At that point I was I think still pretty green around the ears with major championship golf, so I look back and probably just making the cut I think would have been a goal. Like I said, I was still in the process of trying to learn how to play at that level.

I think now I look back, and it's totally different. I have a different feel. Anybody that was here remembers -- certainly remembers the 7-iron and everything else, at the end there kissing Stephanie and the embrace and kissing the belly. That person is right there now, so he's 19 and a freshman in college.

I've hit a lot of 7-irons in my career and a lot of 7-irons since then. The things that I take away from that week have changed a lot, and they probably surround more about with my family and having Dade here.

It was a great experience. It was a great week. I certainly have a lot of memories of the way that I was playing and the way the golf course played. Rochester is such a great place for golf. There's so many great courses around here. Donald Ross has had a huge impact in the courses around here. It's obviously a lot different, trees and everything else.

But it's a fantastic venue.

Q. How often do you visit Oak Hill? I think you've made a lot of friends here.

SHAUN MICHEEL: Yeah, I was back in '19 was the first year I was eligible for the Champions Tour, and then I was back at the end of March. Not as often as I'd like, but the membership here has always been great. They welcome



me back and kind of treat me like I've won 18 majors. I know my place in the game, but it's fun to be back here.

To your point about the membership, they love their championship golf. They've hosted a lot of majors, U.S. Amateurs, Ryder Cup. This is a club that loves -- I'm not sure they love all the setup and missing some of the golf, but they embrace major championship golf and having the players back to kind of showcase what they have here. They have a great piece of property.

Q. A lot of us would assume that 7-iron would be your best shot in your PGA TOUR career. Is it, and do you have a 1B?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Yeah, you know, I do. I do. Again, that's the most memorable shot. There have been a lot. I would go back. I guess my 1B is probably the double eagle that I made on Father's Day Sunday in the 2010 U.S. Open in the final round with Vijay on No. 6. That's probably right up there. That was probably a better shot than the one I hit here 20 years ago.

A lot of good ones. Been a lot of bad ones, too. I told the story last year. Mark Brooks went around, was kind of the unofficial emcee last year. You remember this, Julius. He went around to all the players and said, give us your best shot and your worst shot. And they got to me, and Mark is, like, okay, Micheel, we already know what your best shot is, but give us your worst shot. I told him a story about 2013 -- probably the 2012 or 2013 Byron Nelson. And on the 14th hole my caddie -- we had a good friend named Adolfo Aguilar. He has cerebral palsy.

And I was over to the left, and Adolfo was across by the green. The only way I was going to get to the green was to hit a punch hook, and it came out straight and went into the crowd. Came walking over.

I preface this story by saying, this is a shot that resulted in an injury and a grown man in tears on the golf course.

So Rory was sitting here, and he's looking at me. So I get through the story, and I come walking around the bridge. There's a person lying on the concrete, and I had hit Adolfo



right here. So it was tough to kind of recount that.

The next day Pdraig Harrington came up to me and said, we need to make Adolfo an honorary member of the PGA of America. Anyway, I kind of digressed a little bit from your question.

Anyway, being there at the U.S. Open, my mom at that point was dying of cancer, and she passed away a few months after that. To kind of get that ball out of the hole and give it to my wife, and I gave that to my mom before she passed away. So, anyway, that's my 1B.

Q. Back to the 7-iron, I'm curious, where is it now, and where has it been from the time you left here in '03?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, it's at home. I've got all my clubs. I've been in search of my gap wedge, but I have all the clubs at home.

I've been asked for it. I think I probably played with it for -- maybe not much longer because it was kind of the end of the season. New clubs were coming out by Cleveland Golf. And as you know, everybody wants you to be hitting the new and greatest thing.

I don't remember how long I played with it. Probably through -- definitely the Grand Slam of Golf. Probably through Tiger's event at Sherwood. Maybe sometime end of January. So it was only a few months.

But everything that I have, it's the same grips. It's upstairs. I have a golf room, and it's just in there. Dade has looked at it. His friends come over, they grab it out of there. I kind of keep it hidden because I don't want anybody to see it and take it away, but I have been asked for it, to put it out. I was like, well, if I was Tiger Woods and had 15 majors and I had all these extra clubs I could loan out, I would, but that's not really going to go anywhere I don't think.

Q. Obviously I have your son's age as a reference point, but even when you're out here, are there times it feels like 20 years ago and times it doesn't, from your major championship?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Yeah, certainly driving in. I drive in, I drive by the new 5 and go by 8, and I think about, yeah, when I came in in 2019, I thought about John Paramor, who recently passed away, put Chad and I on the clock. And we're like, John, this is a major championship, we'll try to pick it up. That's one of the memories I have.

Yeah, a lot has happened in 20 years. Yeah, it does seem like a long time ago. Really so much of my life has changed. All of us have kind of gone through things.

There's been some good golf, some bad golf, the loss of my parents. There have been a lot of things.

When I get onto the property and into the golf course, I do think about it. I was sharing that with Dade when we played together on Saturday. I said, this is where I was. And for the most part the routing is the same. There's been a few tees added. 5 is a different hole, so that wasn't there.

Yeah, I remember it well. I remember pretty much every shot that I hit.

But in terms of just the way my golf -- yeah, that 20 years just seems like kind of a distant memory. It's kind of the way the game is. You go one week, and you go to the next, and you're hoping to remember which hotel room you're in. You go three, four weeks in a row and wake up, and you're like, wow, it's like Groundhog Day.

But, again, when I get on the property, I just -- I know there's been a lot of changes. Andrew has done a fantastic renovation. But to me, it looks the same.

I remember a lot of that Sunday 20 years ago. It's fun. But I'm glad to be here, and I'm actually playing pretty well. My chances of winning are less than they were in 2003. That's okay, but it's fun to share this with my son.

Like I said, to me the 7-iron, I think about it. I think about the four days here, I think about the four rounds that I played and the incredible golf that I played, but I think about this little guy right here. That's what has special meaning to me this week.

Q. What did you hit into 6 at Pebble?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I hit a 3. It was 239.

Q. Tell us with the Paramor thing, can you tell us what hole that was? I'm assuming you're talking final round, when John Paramor put you on the clock.

SHAUN MICHEEL: That was the final round here on No. 8. I think I fouled up 7, too. We had just got behind.

I don't remember who was in front of us. Was it Tim Clark? I'm not sure, but we got behind. But, yeah, John came up to us walking off the 8th tee and put us on the clock and said, you guys are on the clock. And I had promptly hit it underneath a little tree that's no longer there.

Q. (No microphone.)

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, I think we were just both kind of



in shock. I know Chad probably handled it better than I did. He's pretty quiet. I'm a little more volatile, I think.

Q. What was Paramor's response when you said, John, this is a major championship?

SHAUN MICHEEL: He didn't really have a response. He was like, well, you know, turned his cart around and off he went. That was the first time I met John, and what a time to meet someone. I thanked him about that a few years later when I saw him.

Q. Since the changes now, what's required this week maybe that wasn't required the last time you won here or vice versa?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, obviously the fairways. I would say the difference that I see between '03 and when Jason won 10 years later is it was still tough in '13, but there was this new thing that they called graduated rough. What I see out there today reminds me of when I won. It was a first cut, which is a yard or two, a couple yards, and then you've got -- it just goes immediately into deep rough. It is chip-out rough.

Now, whether Kerry decides to start to maybe top it off a little bit and maybe -- what I was explaining to them today is with the trees being down and some of the comments here that I think that Andrew has given on his discussion of the changes that he made is that he wanted to allow the players to have opportunities to go at these greens.

He's made it so penal over the greens. Yeah, you might draw a good lie, but still to me it's just a chip-out. Some of the stuff he wanted to do and wanted to incorporate and allow for into the greens is really mitigated by the rough.

I love the views. I love seeing the openness of the course. You can feel the wind a lot more. It doesn't maybe swirl quite as much. We had a lot of wind changes today.

The green complexes are relatively flat. They're fast greens. But there's more edges that they can capture, which then brings the bunkers more into play.

Some of the holes in '03 and '13, like 13, for instance, every pin was pretty much up the middle, and they didn't really have any opportunities to place them on these edges. So the bunkers weren't really in play.

Now they are. They're a lot deeper. It's just difficult now from tee to green. It is so challenging. It's hard. I have no idea what a score would be around here.

Today, it's a tough day. But Andrew did a fantastic job. I'm

amazed at really what he was able to accomplish in a few months.

I don't know how you restructure the entire greens, add all the new bunkering. I love the grass faces on the bunkers. I love Donald Ross, that style, the way that he's kind of cut them into sides of hills. There are some bunkers out there, you think why would you put that there, and then you get out there and play it and realize kind of why he did it.

But it's a challenge. The fairways are so firm that a lot of the holes are -- the way they've just got the contouring and stuff that they kind of bounce off the lines and into the rough.

So I wish there was a little bit more width on some of the holes, some of the doglegs. 9 is a perfect example of that. You hit it down the middle of the fairway, but it's a right-to-left win. And I was playing with the young man, Chris, today, a club pro that qualified, and he hit it down the middle, but I told them, that's going to be in the rough, and it was.

That's some of the difficulty is just being around the edges of the fairways, that the balls are bouncing into the rough. It's good. It's really good.

I'll say one last thing. If you've not been here, and I don't know what Justin said about the course, but I think that when a player steps on the property for the first time and they walk around and they see this place, they might literally say that it might be the best course they've ever played. It's hard.

Now, asking them that on Thursday, they may not say the same. The same thing I said about Augusta... well, isn't this fun. Then I got there on Thursday and was, like, well, this is not fun at all. It starts from hole 1.

It's fantastic, and it's what a major championship should be.

Q. Some things about winning a major you're never going to know until you win one, get on the other side of it. All of a sudden you have your name on this huge trophy. What does that do for a young player and the expectations upon him, and what kind of a challenge is that for you?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, I mean, I talk about the process a lot of guys, you hear that word a lot, "process," and I think major championship golf you have a player -- I'll just go back to my era. You go to college and you play in college golf, you play four years, you get out on -- maybe you play the Nike Tour like I did or Korn Ferry Tour, maybe

play the mini-tours, you get on Tour and you keep your card for a few years. It's a process. It's like, you know, when you're a pilot you get hired; you don't start flying a 747 from the first day.

When I won that as a first, like I said, I was still in this process of learning to play high-level golf. I had gone from getting on Tour to, okay, I've kept my card a few years, I've been in contention, I've blown a few tournaments. Now it's time to get in and start contending. That's just the process that I felt like you had to go through.

Then when I won one, when I won here, I didn't know what to do with myself. I was like, how in the world do I upstage what I just have accomplished.

I think the way that I won, kind of the walk-off moment, it's like, what do I do. I struggled because it was the last major. I had a long time between the PGA and the Masters. There was a lot of interest in me and my story, my family, the birth of Dade. He came three months later. There was just a lot of things that hit me at once.

My personality is not -- I don't like to be the center of attention in anything. It just changed the way -- I like to just play golf, and if I could just play invisible out there, that was better for me. I didn't enjoy the commentary, some of the things that I heard afterwards. Several writers wrote a lot of things, and I thought, well, that's not really what I wanted to have happen.

I just won a golf tournament. I didn't do anything special. It just took me a long time personally to get over some of the things, and to some extent 20 years later I've still struggled with that, trying to, I guess -- every player wants to feel like they belong on the trophy.

I'd just say I think that the guys that are on that trophy, they played for their place in the game, their legacy, and I suppose I played to keep my job.

I think that's really unfortunate.

I look back, and I'm like, that's exactly the way I played. I played like every shot was life and death and every round and every year that either I was exempt or not. That just seemed to be what I was playing for.

I have so much regret, I think, in not, I guess, seeking some advice from say a Dr. Rotella or somebody. I made a lot of mistakes. That's one of them.

It was just tough. I look at my name on the trophy, I'm proud of it. I really am. I started playing golf, my first teacher was a PGA pro, Joe Kothe (phonetic), which I was

like nine or ten years of age. All my teachers that I've ever had have been members of the PGA of America.

I've tried to justify the name on the trophy. I've tried to do that with my kids. They push me out the door, they encourage me to play. But when you win and then your expectations change and you become, I would say, driven by perfection, that was my undoing. I gave up some of the things that I was doing well, and that was managing my practice time and playing with a bunch of people, practice rounds. I went to TPC Southwind, the next thing I knew I had a video camera and an alignment rod, and that's what I did for five hours every day, and then I got hurt in 2007 and had to have shoulder surgery and missed almost a year.

I look in the mirror and I own everything. I look back, and it's amazing what you kind of learn as an older person, and you're like, golly, if I could just rewind. Who knows if it would have been different. But I just did some things that I wouldn't do again.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time today, Shaun. We appreciate it.

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