

PGA Championship

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

Valhalla Golf Club

Sahith Theegala

Flash Quotes

THE MODERATOR: Sahith Theegala is with us at the 106th PGA Championship.

6-under for you today. How would you summarize your opening round?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, I played really well. Didn't hit the ball exceptionally -- like I've been hitting the ball really well, but today just felt kind of average.

But my short game, which I've struggled with a little bit this year, really came in clutch and kind of was my old self around the greens. Hit a lot of great pitches close to the hole. The soft greens definitely help. But they're soft and pure; so it's a combo for low scores. Got a lot of putts to drop on the back nine, which is always a bonus.

Yeah, really happy with the way I played. Tony made this place look so easy. I mean, I think 6-under was the worst he could have shot with how he just plotted his way around really well, and I just fed off him a little bit.

Q. Looked like last week there were a couple moments where you were in some discomfort. I was wondering if there was any kind of an injury, and what did it take to come back from that this week?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah. I slipped a rib on Saturday the week before the Wells Fargo, and wasn't sure I was going to play. I immediately called my chiro and got three really painful adjustments to get it back in place and couldn't really breathe or move all Saturday and Sunday.

But I traveled Monday, knowing that I've done it before, and it's healed in a week or two. So I figured with some aggressive rehab, it was going to heal quickly.

Yeah, honestly, by the time I got to Thursday, I felt pretty good. Not 100 percent but probably 80 to 90 percent. It was just a matter of loosening up the rest of the body. The actual spot where the rib came out was fine. It was all the parts around it were really stiff.



It was funny, the day I probably got healthy was Saturday, and it felt weird being fully healthy. I had my full range of motion and all that back, and I didn't know where to hit the ball at that point.

But I'm 100 percent right now. It was not a -- it was just kind of a freak injury. I was just sitting down, I just sat in the golf cart a little bit aggressively and just felt a little pinch.

And at first I thought it was strain and then it came on, and I was like -- it was the came rib I slipped last night. It's all good, just need to get stronger in that part of my back. I know what we need to work on.

Q. I asked you last year, you were 29th in the world, I think it was at THE PLAYERS. You said, I don't feel like it. I think you're No. 12 right now. Are you starting to feel like it?

SAHITH THEEGALA: Still not really. It's weird, I don't feel like there's only 11 players in the world better than me, and obviously with the whole Tour/LIV thing, that's not the case. There's guys out on LIV that are better golfers than me from an objective standpoint, and subjective. But I definitely feel myself getting better on and off the course.

I think it's really cool to see both parts of it because we talk about -- so much about the on-course stuff. But there's a lot of maturing off the course, and I'm going to be learning my whole life out here. Because even guys that have played out here for 12, 15 years always seem to learn new things.

Just learn to accept -- there's a level of acceptance I've given myself recently, and it's translated into my golf really well. Kind of the same deal, though, like no expectations, everything kind of feels like a bonus, and I really feel like my game is snowballing in the right direction.

Even though it might be a very small amount of progress, I definitely feel it, and I think my team around me feels it. Just more internal confidence.

The golf part, it's just coming along. I think as long as I



stay healthy, I know what we need to work on.

The coolest part of it all is I feel like every part of my game can get a lot better. I don't try and compare myself too much, but it just feels like every single part of my game, I have a very easy path to -- I know it can get better. I shouldn't say an easy path because there's no such thing as an easy path in golf.

But I know there's certain areas that I can improve a lot, and I know the direction I need to go in order to improve those areas.

Q. In college when you won all these awards did you feel like you were the best player in college?

SAHITH THEEGALA: I did. I did feel like I was the best player in college. Again, a lot of it was a mindset thing. Sat out my actual whole senior year because of wrist surgery, and I couldn't play till right before my senior year; and me and my coach, Rick, did a lot of really good things because I needed to change my golf swing.

If I wanted to keep playing and not hurt my wrist, I needed to change my golf swing. We found a lot of really good stuff that I was able to do because of the rehab, and because I got in the gym a lot more that year I was hurt, I really felt like I was the best player in college that year.

I think from a consistency standpoint, that was the biggest thing that stuck out to me. I felt like even in my bad weeks, I was able to get a top 10 in college on a bad week, and on a good week, I was either close to the win or winning.

There's a lot of really good players in college, and it's clear to see because it seems like guys have pretty immediate success these guys coming out of college.

Yeah, I did feel like I was the best player that year. I don't know if I'm ever going to feel that way again. We all strive to get to that point. But yeah, sometimes you look at the guys on the top of the world, and you're like, Am I ever going to be like Rory or Xander? And the answer is no. Or even Brooks; the answer is no.

I'm just hoping I can find my own path again because that's what led to my success my senior year of college.

Q. Real quick on the rib. Which side is it on? Is it something you did swinging?

SAHITH THEEGALA: No, it was nothing swing related. I have -- well, I mean, everything is swing related to a certain extent. I didn't even know the rib cage goes that far up. It was right next to my shoulder blade. So it was really

high up, and it was on my left side.

Knock-on-wood, I've never had low back issues. I've never really had back issues to begin with, really. It's just kind of a freak thing. And now that it's happened twice in the past couple years, it's just a level of -- I just need to focus on a little bit more, just strengthen the back muscles a little bit so that sucker doesn't pop out again.

Luckily, I've talked to some people, and it's nothing. It's really nothing. It's just I've got to be more on top of that area.

Q. Secondly, you turned a really solid day into a special day with the closing run. Can you take us through that? What you were hitting in, and how big is that momentum wise going forward?

SAHITH THEEGALA: I think -- I parred hole 4, which might play the easiest hole on the course today. It's almost drivable to that front pin. Just told myself, stay patient, get through 5 and 6, and 7, 8 and 9 are honestly birdie holes.

Had a great two-putt on 5, and a great two-putt on 6. I made about a five-foot downhill slider.

Then I hit the fairway on 7. I know it's an important shot, and that's kind of when I was like, all right, let's get these last few holes.

Nice to have, basically, a tap-in on 7.

Then 8, I actually didn't hit a great putt. I came out of it a hair and pushed it and somehow it held its line. It's one of those putts, you hit so many good putts that burned the edge, which I did a couple times today. But that was the one bonus putt where I didn't hit it how I wanted it, and it just snuck in on the right edge.

On 9 I had a great teach from Tony and Tyrrell. They were both -- Tyrrell was only a couple feet to the right of me. Tony was directly five feet behind me.

So I got a great idea of what the line was, great idea of the speed, and then just a matter of matching it up. It was nice because I striped the putt and was just hoping it would took that lat little turn at the end, and it did.

So that was an awesome way to finish for sure. It definitely -- it takes a good round into a great round.

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