

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

Harbor Shores

Benton Harbor, Michigan, USA

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Darren Clarke

Quick Quotes

Q. Joined by Darren Clarke at the 84th KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship. Darren, a nice 67 for you today. How do you feel about your first round?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, I played nicely. I had a few more chances. Felt as if I left two or three out there, but overall, 67, pretty good on a tough golf course like this one.

It was nice and soft-ish this morning. Not quite that soft. But was an opportunity. No breeze, so you could get some of those more challenging flags.

Q. You stepped in this year with some nice finishes. What do you like in your game as you come in here?

DARREN CLARKE: I've been playing okay, Jeff. I been playing nicely, but just I don't -- making a bad swing on the wrong hole at the wrong -- doing one of those sort of things. Not intentionally or anything.

Just if I sort of made a mistake I've compounded it on the wrong hole at the wrong time. So I've been playing really pretty solid all year but just not scoring. Game has been really close so maybe I won't hit the stupid shot at the wrong time on one of these holes this week.

Q. Going to ask you, you get great pairings every week on this tour, but you had a really cool pairing today.

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, it was cool.

Q. Three guys from all corners of the globe that have accomplished so much.

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah.

Q. When you see a pairing like that --

DARREN CLARKE: That's Champions Tour. That's what we do. This is obviously the Senior PGA, but that's the



Champions Tour. We get to play with guys that we've played with for 30-odd years. To play with somebody who -- someone like Ernie and Weirsy and stuff, they're brilliant guys to play with.

You know, the three ball was really good this morning. Ernie had a rough start, but anybody hitting a good shot the other guys are saying, great shot, come on, knock it in, all that sort of stuff. P.

It was brilliant. We still want to kick each other's ass all the time. We want to win. We're professional golfers. I think the respect levels are way up there, especially when you get two guys like Ernie and Weirsy.

Q. Talk a little bit about this course and how it works with your game.

DARREN CLARKE: Well, I don't know if it works with my game or not, but was okay this morning. Obviously if you miss the fairways you got no chance getting close to a lot of the golf flags, the pins.

The greens are so undulating and quadrants almost that if you're out of the position you cannot get it. You got to hit a hell of a shot to get it in close to one of those quadrants.

At times you can use the slopes to feed it in there a little bit; sometimes you just can't. You just got to suck it up. You miss the slope you may have a 50-footer with three different breaks, but you got to try and lag up there and get close.

That's just the golf course. That's what it is. So if you're missing fairways out there. They're generous, but if you're missing them, you're on the road to nowhere.

I missed the 9th fairway by six inches and I could move it 80 yards. That was all I could do with it. The lie was that bad.

And so you get penalized. And that's the way it should be. I would like to see it like that more weeks where the rough is more punishing.



Q. They said the rough is up higher than in the past.

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DARREN CLARKE: Yeah.

Q. If you get any wind here, which you guys didn't have today.

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, no, we didn't have any today. We've had some in practice though, so we've had a little bit of a go at it. That wind can stay away. But the course was brilliant, great this morning.

Q. What was your highlight today?

DARREN CLARKE: I nearly -- I had a 6-iron on No. 2 this morning that hit straight down the flag. We have a thing on the Champions Tour where there is about 40 of us. Anybody makes a hole-in-one you go around, tick off all the names for a hundred bucks. It was in the air and I was thinking -- because I've been paying out a lot this past, and I've lipped out and haven't holed one for a while.

So I was thinking when it was in the air, just go in the hole so I can go round that 40 guys, hundred bucks, hundred bucks, get our cash. That was probably it this morning. Didn't go in though.

Q. How close?

DARREN CLARKE: Just about here. Right down there. But didn't go in. Maybe tomorrow.

Q. Was there a specific part of your game that you were prepping to go into this tournament?

DARREN CLARKE: No, just the golf -- everything has to be pretty much on this week on this golf course. If you do get out of position and miss a green your chipping has to be good. Your putting has got to be good because there is so much slope and speed in the greens. You got to drive it good. If you miss the fairways you're going to have lots of challenges.

The golf course is great. Tests all aspects of your game. I think it's one of those golf courses, if I'm not wrong, I hit every club in my bag today. Not all golf courses ask you to do that; this one does.

Q. As far as mentality goes...

DARREN CLARKE: Oh, yeah, I'm a mental midget. No, I was pretty good today. I was pretty calm and collected and stuff today. It is one of those golf courses that patience is required. I hope I possess as much as I had today for the rest of week and I'll be okay.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®