

Charles Schwab Challenge

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Colonial CC

Phil Mickelson

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Phil, welcome to the Charles Schwab Challenge here at Colonial, two-time winner, and coming off an historical win at the PGA Championship. Now that you've had some time can you reflect on what that win meant Sunday, and are you excited to be back at Colonial?

PHIL MICKELSON: It was a very special week. I don't know how to put it into words. It's been a fun couple of days. Flew home and saw Amy that night. We stayed up until 6 Eastern time in the morning and hung out all day and yesterday, and then flew out here.

And I'm excited to play here because I've been playing well and I want to try to carry that momentum into a tournament that I've enjoyed many times and fortunate to win a couple of times on a great golf course.

Q. You've mentioned it but how important was it for you to honor your commitment? I don't think anyone would have been shocked if you didn't show up this week after winning?

PHIL MICKELSON: Never crossed my mind. I think this is an incredible tournament and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to compete, especially now that I've had a bit of a breakthrough last week and played really, really well, and it's on a golf course that I've had some success, too. I also have a great playing with Jordan Spieth and Daniel Berger, a really great pairing. It's going to be a fun week and I hope to continue the same type of focus and performance as last week.

Then I'll take the next two weeks off prior to the is open and try to spend some time at Torrey Pines as much as I can and put everything I can into that Open Championship.

Q. When you look at Colonial, it's known as a shot-makers course but when you have 360 in your back pocket, do you feel like you can overpower this course, different parts of it you know what I'm saying?

PHIL MICKELSON: I do. I would say no, I don't feel like I can overpower the golf course because of the penalty for



being off line with the trees and so forth and the rough. That's one of the reasons why I like the golf course because iron play is so important and that seems to be the strength of my game. So if I can get the ball in play and I don't have to hit a lot of drivers to get the ball in play it allows me to hit approaches and make some birdies and I think it's the reason why I've done well here in the past is because of my iron play.

Q. I wanted to talk about belief with you. You talked about how you still believed and you said that you didn't believe that you actually did it. How did you continue to have the confidence and belief in yourself? I feel like after the round at Tampa, maybe that was close to your most dejected I've seen you in a long time. What were you able to turn around from there?

PHIL MICKELSON: It's obviously been a struggle as you know. A big thing for me in getting things turned around has been the opportunity to play with a lot of good, young players, and so just prior to Innisbrook I had a chance to play with Rory McIlroy and Rickie Fowler at The Grove in Florida and I had a chance to play a lot of golf in the last year and a half with Charley Hoffman and Xander Schauffele in San Diego and that's made a big difference for me. I remember a year ago almost to the day where I was playing a few rounds at the Farms with Xander, and we played a match and he went out and shot 64 and I'm like, wow, all right, I want -- you gave me a pretty good beating and I wanted -- let's do this again so a few days later went and played again and he shot 63. I'm like, wow, okay. Let me try one more time.

So we go out next time and he shoots 62 on a 220-yard par 3, I had to press and hit one four feet and he makes a hole-in-one. I went back and talked to Amy and I'm like, I don't know how I'm going to beat this guy. He's probably playing the best of any player in the world right now. Then he came Colonial the following week and almost won here.

But seeing that, and the way he played with this calm, and didn't try to overpower every hole but overpowered the holes he should and keep the ball in play and keep the ball on the ground and hit his iron shots pin-high and being solid from inside 15 feet. I saw what it looked like to play at the highest level and so forth.

Well, just prior to Innisbrook, I started shooting those same



scores at the same course and I felt like I should be able to compete and then I went to Innisbrook and I missed the cut and I didn't shoot the scores and I didn't execute on Tour the way I had been at home.

So I still had a barrier to break through and that's why I was so frustrated is that I wasn't bringing my best out when I knew I could, and I had a glimpse there obviously at Charlotte in one round but wasn't able to sustain it.

Then to hold it together and play some really good golf over 72 holes last week meant a lot because I had seen the progress but I had not seen the results, and so that's why I say, I had a belief but until you actually do it, it's tough to really fully believe it.

Q. The way that you were able to focus last week, does it give you -- did it bolster your confidence that the days of playing like an idiot at the U.S. Open are over?

PHIL MICKELSON: No, after 35 years of that, like it's just not going to go away.

But what I do think is this. One of two things are going to happen: Either that's going to be my last win and I'm going to have one of the most cherished victories of my career to look back on and cherish for a long time, or I also may have kind of found a little something that helps me stay a little bit more present and helps me focus throughout round a little bit longer and maybe I can execute and play golf at the highest level for a nice extended period of time now.

I don't know which one it's going to be, but either way, they are both positive.

Q. A lot of younger golfers and players coming up in the game look upon you as an inspiration, but you see yourself probably as an inspiration to players your own age, and the reason I ask you that is there's an English golfer named Richard Bland who won the British Masters last week looking forward to shaking your hand at Torrey Pines in a couple weeks' time?

PHIL MICKELSON: That's a pretty impressive win that he had, and to stay at it and work hard as long as he did, to have that breakthrough, it's an awesome feeling, and I'm really, really happy for him. It's a special moment. I get a lot of inspiration out of the young players, too. I see how talented they are and it motivates me and inspires me, too.

So I think there's places to find motivation and inspiration all over, and I really get a lot more out of playing with the young players I think than they get out of playing with me because I get to see what I need to be able to do and

continue to do and what guys are -- guys are playing the game in a different way. Like they are coming at it with a different approach. Bryson is a great example, coming at it from a different approach and having a lot of success doing it, and I think it opens my eyes to opportunities to continue to play well and to play better.

Q. As an Open Champion you probably heard the news that the R&A are hoping to get between 25 percent and 75 percent attendance at Royal St. George's. As Open Champion, what's your thoughts about possibly even at least a three-quarter attendance at Royal St. George's when the event was canceled last year?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think that would be really special and cool. I should be fully vaccinated here in the next week, week or two, and I'll feel a little more comfortable after I'm able to complete that.

But I think it's cool that things are starting to slowly progress and get back to normal. But we still need to be careful because it's not -- we're not totally out of the woods yet.

Q. I know that obviously you're an inspiration to golfers, but how much do you think that people from other walks of life will kind of look at this like, hey, I'm not too old for X or Y or Z or whatever, and how much have you heard from people in other professions or other fields?

PHIL MICKELSON: So I don't know if they need to look at this moment as the inspiration, but there's no reason why people can't be their best at an older age. They have a lot -- after many years of doing something, you have a lot of experience. You have a lot of knowledge and getting that out is the challenge. It might take a little bit more work like you might have to work a bit harder for me physically or you might have to be more disciplined off the golf course or practice more especially, all these things.

But there's no reason why we can't be our best later on in life.

Q. Do you think that the toughest part discipline-wise, I heard you say something about this on Sunday, the biggest ask discipline-wise is the dietary stuff and eliminating the inflammatory sugar, processed food, wheat, etc.?

PHIL MICKELSON: I do think it's difficult. I don't know which is most difficult. It's probably different for each person. But for me, I was motivated because in 2010, I had an autoimmune disease that required me to take

medication and it could have easily shortened or ended my career. Because of a little bit more discipline eating-wise, I've been able to put it in remission and go about my normal life now.

So I know that eating is an important part for me because I have to get my immune system and t-cells and everything in balance. But it also allows me to recover faster by eating better and getting rid of inflammation in my body and I have to work out and work out the right way so my body functions right and I don't cause injury when I practice. I need to be able to practice and work on my game and do it efficiently because I might not be able to hit 500 balls, but I can still hit a couple hundred and it should be enough if I do it the right way.

Q. I noticed two trends this year, one being a lot of guys in their 40s winning, Sergio, Brian Gay, etc. --

PHIL MICKELSON: Stewart Cink, what a win at Hilton Head, Stewart Cink, that was amazing.

Q. And then guys who haven't won in a while such as Jordan. Did you gain any inspiration from any of those?

PHIL MICKELSON: Absolutely. And seeing the way Jordan Spieth has come back and seeing how hard he's worked and not getting the results that he wanted for a while and then being patient and working and working and continuing to do the right things and then his game comes back and he's playing consistently now at the highest level every week and he's had a huge win.

I think that every player goes through challenges. We saw it on the LPGA with Lydia Ko after struggling for a little while, dominating and struggling a little bit, for her to come back and play as well as she has, like that's an inspiration. Stewart Cink was a huge won, too. He won twice this year, at Napa and Hilton Head. I had a chance to play with him at Charlotte and he's striking it so good, hitting the ball long and straight and having a lot of fun there with Reagan at his side. Very inspiring person right there.

Q. Is The Ryder Cup, actually playing this year, how much did that factor into your continuing to pursue your greatness?

PHIL MICKELSON: So I have not been a thought let alone even in the discussion for The Ryder Cup, but in my heart, I always felt if I played and could put it together on the regular tour and play well that I might be able to move up and give myself an opportunity.

Now if I'm the captain, I'm not going to want a guy that

plays well one week in an entire year. And so just because I played really well last week and won a big championship, that does not warrant a spot on the team by any means but I know at least have an opportunity over the course of the next three months to at a high level consistently and maybe be in a position to add something to the team.

If not, we have such a good group of young players, I don't want to disrupt that, either. You know, we have a lot of talented players, and I've had 25 years now of playing, so it may be time to step aside and let these young guys take over, and certainly they are playing well enough and to do it and to represent the United States incredibly well, but for me personally, if I could add to the team and not be a hindrance or a distraction, I would obviously love to be a part of it because they are such special events, and I would love to be able to play for Captain Stricker.

But all I have now is an opportunity to show consistency over the next three months, because one event is not -- that's not the guy you want that plays well one week. You want to know what you're getting, and if I can do that consistently now for the next three months, then I might be able to really add something to the team. But if not, it's time for the young guys to take over and run with it because they are so talented.

Q. You were speaking about what you do eating-wise, but mentally after such a huge week, how do you turn to this week to try to do it again?

PHIL MICKELSON: So that's going to be a difficult challenge obviously. That's going to be the biggest challenge for me because I kind of went from keeping my mind off of all the distractions and the noise during the week of the PGA to really letting it come in the last two days, enjoy it, and really it hit me in the last two days what just happened.

Because when I'm doing it, I'm not fully aware because I'm so in the moment. But that night, hanging out with Amy, seeing it, seeing some of the highlights, thinking, wow, this really happened. And now, it's Wednesday and it's time to get off of social media and get back on the practice range and start to refocus and start to get my mind quiet again and get rid of the distractions and get back in the present. So that's going to be a challenge. It's not easy for me to do.

But last week I was able to acquire the skills to do that and I'm hoping that I can keep doing that more.

Q. So this the last tournament you'll play before the U.S. Open?

PHIL MICKELSON: Correct. I'll take the next two weeks off and the week before the U.S. Open they are going to close the course down for public play and I'll try to spend some time out there to just get comfortable on the golf course. Honestly since the redo 20 years ago, I have not played that course as well as I would like to. I tried to force it. A lot of pins you can't go to, you have to play 60, 50 feet away and a lot of holes I get overly aggressive, obviously that's my nature. There's a proper way to play it, and I've seen it and I want to have the discipline to do it and so I want to spend some time out there to develop a good game plan.

Q. Being here in Fort Worth, curious to get your thoughts about the great tradition and legacy created by Mr. Hogan and when you're playing here at this event, being in this atmosphere, what that means to you.

PHIL MICKELSON: It's a pretty special place, what this tournament has meant and the way that Ben Hogan has created this mystique in the game of golf and certainly somebody I would read about and look up to. It means a lot to me to be able on the Wall of Champions and to have won it twice and have an opportunity to add to that.

I enjoy competing here. This golf course as I've gotten older suits me a bit better because of the chance to hit a lot of iron shots into the green, not have to hit so many drivers and be able to keep it in play a little bit easier. I'm very, very optimistic to be able to kind of continue this type of play that I had last week and as well as my focus and see if I can give myself another opportunity, and I have a great pairing, too, to play with Jordan Spieth and Daniel Berger and have a lot of fun doing it.

Q. How much did his legacy play into playing here this week?

PHIL MICKELSON: It didn't cross my mind because I've been looking forward to coming back and playing here, and I feel like now that I'm playing well, gosh, I want to play. It never crossed my mind not to play here. I'm excited to be here.

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