

The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

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Muirfield Village

Steve Rintoul

Press Conference

STEVE RINTOUL: I've been part of the International Presidents Cup team for a long time, and Hideki is a very good friend and great professional and what happened here today is very unfortunate. So just get that out of the way.

Q. Could you explain what the situation was as the chief referee of the PGA TOUR of this event?

STEVE RINTOUL: Our committee became aware through some pictures that were posted that there may be a substance that has been painted on the face of one of Hideki's clubs. Unfortunately, when we found out about it, Hideki was playing the second hole.

And we approached Hideki and went through the process. Hideki, are you carrying this club?

Yes.

Have you used this club? Because if he hasn't used the club, it's okay to carry a nonconforming club, you just can't use it.

Have you used this club? Well, the poor guy has played one hole, and he managed to use it off the first tee.

At that point, without jumping to too much conclusion with the club and what exactly what was done to the club, I met Hideki at the fifth tee. The damage was done. One shot and it's a disqualification.

So I said just keep playing. We'll do our due diligence with this club with the USGA, the equipment standards guys and our committee, to ascertain that we come up with the right result here.

I met Hideki at the fifth hole. Took some very detailed pictures of the club. These equipment rules can get real finicky real quick. They're not like the normal getting a guy off a cart path stuff, right?



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So took some pictures, regrouped with the USGA equipment guys, John Mutch who represents us in equipment standards committee, and went through what is outlined under the equipment rules under rule 4.a.(3) of the equipment rules that says: A substance or any treatment can't be applied to the face of a club which could influence the flight of the ball, the spin, the loft or anything on the ball, how the ball performs.

So at that point it was how much of this substance is actually on the face of the club? And the pictures were damning. He had so much of the white -- you've seen pictures of it. There was a lot of the white -- it's very much like a whiteout you might use on a paper -- on a paper at home. A whiteout substance that was very much up on the face of the club which, really, it's very clear in equipment rules that's not allowed.

So not being allowed renders a club nonconforming. Now we go back into the rules of golf themselves and out of the equipment rules, and the rules of golf clearly state under rule 4.1.a. that the use of a nonconforming club is a disqualification. My worst fear -- I was hoping he hasn't used it the first tee, hasn't used it the second tee. We were going to get to him before the third tee, which I'm thinking he might use it on the third tee. But the damage was done on the first hole, unfortunately. Just unfortunate set of circumstances for Hideki for sure.

Q. Where were these pictures? How did you find out about these pictures?

STEVE RINTOUL: The pictures were posted on the Internet. I'm not 100 percent sure of the site on the Internet. We learned of them literally at 1:00 today before -- literally as Hideki was playing the first hole. Someone in our committee was sent these pictures, they said have you seen Hideki's club?

No, we haven't. Maybe this is old pictures taken from -- taken somewhere else.

Then I looked closer at the posting, and it said taken three days ago. I was hoping it was just on the range or something he was messing around with. Maybe he doesn't have it in his bag. But all the questions, he was very



honest and forthright about it and unfortunately it was in his bag and he used it.

Q. So somebody actually called in?

STEVE RINTOUL: It was not a call-in. It was not a call-in. Our committee learned of this post. Everyone sees it everywhere.

Q. How did they learn of it?

STEVE RINTOUL: It was sent to one of our committee members.

Q. By whom?

STEVE RINTOUL: Another person in the world of golf. We don't need to get into that. I mean, if this had got carried on into Saturday or Sunday and before we learned about it, it's the worst possible result at that time. Us knowing about it and learning about it right now, Hideki, are you carrying -- and let's act on it right now.

Q. When you looked at his club, was there any smearing of the dots?

STEVE RINTOUL: No. There was no dots. It wasn't dots, it was actually painted lines. There was no smearing. It's very much set paint. It's set -- it wasn't smeared at all. How many times has he hit the club this week, I don't know. But it was very fixed.

Yes, that's the club. Very painted. As I just said on TV, the number one lesson is don't paint the faces of your clubs.

It's okay to have -- and the equipment rules are very specific, it's okay to have very small discrete markings on your face for alignment purposes like a Sharpie dot here and there that aren't going to influence the ball. But that much substance is clearly above what the equipment rules allow.

If the paint had been down in the grooves and in the bottom of the grooves where it's not on the face, not making contact with the ball, again, no problem. But it was the face --

Q. Did you actually check the thickness of the...

STEVE RINTOUL: When I first got it, I took pictures, and I was looking at it myself closely. I actually closed my arm and rubbed my fingernail across. One way I could feel it, but the next way I couldn't. Even though it was done with a whiteout-like substance, it was thick enough you could pick up on where it was on the face.

Q. For folks at home who don't know, what would be the impact of this on the club face?

STEVE RINTOUL: If it was going to help me, I would probably have it on there right now. The equipment rules are made to try to make sure that the game is played and enjoyed by everybody without people applying Chapstick on the face of their driver for no spin. But the rules are clear about something that affects the spin, how the ball flies, loft, speed, all kinds of different characteristics that the ball has after it hits the face. So nothing applied to the face specifically is allowed.

Q. You said he was forthright and honest as to him doing it. Did he give you a reason as to why?

STEVE RINTOUL: In talking to the gentleman -- the gentleman was with Bob Turner, that actually applied the material to the face. The material was applied to the face for alignment for Hideki to set the ball inside the circle of the lines. That's actually the center of the face.

And applying a small, discrete dot with a Sharpie to help you with alignment is fine. We have players who do it all the time. But the amount of substance that was up on the face of the club, when we sent it to the USGA, their equipment standards guys, it was just excessive. And that's what could affect -- could affect -- the performance of the ball.

Q. Just basically it was a mistake on his part as to the amount that he applied; he wasn't aware he was doing that much?

STEVE RINTOUL: I will say this is a mistake -- I will say it was a mistake on their behalf. The gentleman that handles Hideki's clubs, his name is Panda -- probably know Panda -- he had done this on Hideki's driver before and had been stopped, on the driver. Had shown it to -- he thought that only applied to the driver. It applies to all your clubs.

And so he thought it only applied to driver. Then he applied it -- then he went down with the 3-wood with it. That's, of course, nonconforming also.

Q. When did he apply it to the driver?

STEVE RINTOUL: I know that John Mutch had a conversation with that club gentleman. I don't know exactly when. I don't know when that conversation was, but it's been in the past. This gentleman has talked with John Mutch, who represents us with the equipment rules, equipment standards on the Rules of Golf committee. He told John a lot about Hideki's equipment.

This substance on the face before has come up with Hideki. Actually he had too much substance on a driver before that was removed. This gentleman just told me in the parking lot, he thought it only applied to the driver. But it applies to all your clubs.

Q. Is it a fair inference here to suggest that he's been applying this to his clubs for a period of time?

STEVE RINTOUL: No, I don't think so. I think we would have learned about it. He's on camera all the time. He steps on camera all the time. I think this was fresh this week. It's a relatively new 3-wood, it looked like. He was looking for a place to make sure he had the ball centered in the face. They just went about it with like a paper, whiteout brush, and there it was.

Q. You said you learned from someone else.

STEVE RINTOUL: It was sent to a member of our committee. It was posted on the Internet. Sent to a member of our committee, have you guys seen this?

Q. When you say sent to a member of the committee, do you know who the person was who sent it?

STEVE RINTOUL: I do, another person in the golf industry.

Q. You're not willing...

STEVE RINTOUL: I don't think it's important here. It would have come across sooner or later. It was going to be on camera this afternoon. And like I said, the worst-case scenario, we don't learn about this until Saturday or Sunday and who knows what ramifications are there, like with John last year.

It's never a good time to disqualify a good player. But certainly getting it out of the way before it impacts the competition is the best way forward.

Q. On the alignment, the issue was not how many but the fact it was raised?

STEVE RINTOUL: No, the issue, it was actually quite thick on the face of the club, on the face.

Q. Kind of above and beyond the face?

STEVE RINTOUL: Not down into the grooves but on the face between the grooves.

Q. You could have had them if it was inside the groove

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STEVE RINTOUL: I told him in the parking lot if you had four Sharpie dots around here it's fine. A Sharpie dot -- the equipment standards people says a Sharpie dot so fine it cannot influence the flight of a ball. But when you start applying that much material, that can take spin off a ball or can affect the flight, that's when they go to nonconforming.

Q. What hole was he on when you found out?

STEVE RINTOUL: He was playing the first hole.

Q. He played the first hole?

STEVE RINTOUL: He was on the first green. Picture first came over where was he, first hole. Great, get to him. Does he have the club in his bag? Has he used it? The answer to both those questions was yes. The guy's hit one shot today.

Q. It was immediate?

STEVE RINTOUL: Yeah, if he had hit a driver off the first tee, he would be still playing.

Q. You informed him on the 10th tee. How was the reaction?

STEVE RINTOUL: I think after we talked about in the 5th fairway, I'm not going to say he was expecting, it wasn't as much a surprise as it would have been if it had been unknown.

We told him we were looking at this; there was a problem with the stuff on the face. But our committee wanted to give Hideki all the due that he was deserved while we ascertained whether this club was nonconforming or not.

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