

The American Express

Friday, January 22, 2021

La Quinta, California, USA

La Quinta Country Club

Francesco Molinari

Quick Quotes

Q. Eight birdies on the card today. You shoot 6-under 66, 9-under heading to the weekend. Just your thoughts on how well you played this afternoon.

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, it was very good. Obviously kind of a mistake on 9. But apart from that, played well, putted well, which is important around here. So, yeah, very happy with the start.

Q. Both these golf courses lended to birdie runs like you had, and then that, you make a 6 at the 9th. It's kind of a strange -- you got to be leery of that on both these golf course, don't you?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, I think obviously you need to be aggressive. We know it's an event where you want to make birdies and the scoring is going to be low. But there is a lot of water in play and a lot of water hazards, so you're going to eventually see some big numbers.

But, yeah, as long as, like today, obviously, the birdies were beating the over-par holes by a long time, that's always a good round.

Q. Give us an analysis of how you feel right now, how you're playing, is the confidence level high as you get into playing here in the States a lot?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Well, no, I feel great. It feels like I'm coming off a sabbatical or something like that. The energy is definitely high. Confidence, it's a bit of a question mark because I played solid last year. I think it's going to take a few more events to get back into the routine kind of thing. But, yeah, I've had a good winter. Obviously making the most of the nice weather here in California and playing a lot of golf, playing a lot more golf than what I was used to in the winter. So it's nice to be back out here.

Q. How did you feel about your round out there today? What was working so well?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, very happy with the start,



both yesterday and today. I think everything is working quite well. I'm putting definitely very well. I could probably do better off the tee. Hitting a few more fairways could help.

But, yeah, I'm just enjoying both courses. The greens are in great shape. Obviously they're courses where you know you have to be aggressive and you need to make birdies, so that's been kind of the challenge the last couple of days.

Q. You said you took, you felt like a sabbatical. Why did you take that time off after the Masters? Was that the plan all along not to play until now?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: After the Masters?

Q. Yes.

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, no, the sabbatical was more referring to before the Masters. Like, January to November, I think I played maybe four or five events. So, yeah, I don't know, it wasn't something I planned before. It's just kind of a run of events. We didn't start the year great last year and then got injured at Bay Hill and then obviously COVID kind of struck at THE PLAYERS, and then a lot more has happened since.

But, yeah, it's nice to be back, definitely. Energies are high, because in a normal season I would have played probably, I don't know, 25 events and it definitely was good for the body and for the mind to kind of take a break, take a step back and start this year with plenty of energy and wanting to do well.

Q. How settled do you feel in the U.S. and playing and you're home state now, right?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, it's starting to feel more like normal. We have been only here since September, so it's still only a few months. And conditions are what they are, so it's I guess harder in a way to make friends and to meet people with the restrictions right now.

But, yeah, we have had a very good winter. Like I said, enjoying the weather with the family. The kids using the swimming pool year round, obviously it's stuff that we weren't used to. And, yeah, for my golf it's been great to



play in the sun. I played a lot more rounds than I would have if I stayed in the U.K. in the winter.

Q. You're usually a player that plays around the globe, obviously as a European Tour player. I know you haven't been to Italy or England since the pandemic started, but do you have any plans to maybe travel internationally coming up or are you going to focus, because of the situation, entirely in the United States?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Well, I think, yeah, I mean the plan as a family is definitely, I guess, no matter how the situation is to go back for the summer, because we haven't seen our families since Christmas, not this Christmas, the one before.

So it's been a long time, it will be a year and a half in the summer that we haven't seen them.

So obviously I'm hoping for things to be a bit better by the summer and obviously playing The Open Championship, maybe play a couple more events in Europe then. But, yeah, until probably after the U.S. Open we'll be here in the U.S.

Q. I saw you had a social media tweet about the election. Were you always interested in American politics or is this just a new thing moving here? Just being here during all that?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: No, well I think it's, you know, it's -- American politics is an influence on all the rest of the world. So, yeah, even growing up, obviously it's big in Europe, it's a big thing and, yeah, just I felt like saying what I thought and, I mean, it was nothing controversial or anything, it was just I'm really happy that things have gone the way they have gone and hopefully it will help with getting rid of the pandemic in a quicker way too.

Q. Because of the -- I don't know how you refer to it -- sabbatical. What's your schedule look like going forward? Do you have a lot of starts planned?

FRANCESCO MOLINARI: Yeah, I'll playing six of the next eight weeks. I'm missing Phoenix, so I'm playing here, next week Torrey Pines, then AT&T, Genesis, and then Bay Hill and PLAYERS. So it's, yeah, back to just a normal year, yeah, normal schedule, I guess.

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