

The American Express

Saturday, January 23, 2021

La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Tony Finau

Quick Quotes

Q. Solid round of golf. This is going to be your fourth time going into a final round with a portion of the lead. Unfortunately, you haven't gotten it done yet and I hate to ask you this, but what's got to change tomorrow for you to come away with a victory?

TONY FINAU: I think make a couple more putts. I'm putting it nicely this week. I think if I continue to do that tomorrow I'm going to have a shot at this thing.

Q. You changed caddies at the end of last year. Not that there's anything wrong with your last caddie, but was the change of caddies in moments like this where you kind of maybe thought you needed something extra at the end of a tournament?

TONY FINAU: I had a great caddie before. I have a great caddie now. And they're both great guys that I like to be around, different in different situations. But Mark's done great job this week of getting me in contention and we got a shot at this thing tomorrow.

Q. On the inside of you, how bad is it itching to get that second win? I know you come out here, the paychecks are nice, but listen, I know you're out here to compete and to win. How bad does it eat at you, itch, do you sleep well tonight? Give us a little sense of the anticipation for tomorrow, another opportunity to win.

TONY FINAU: Fortunately for me, I've had a lot of opportunities, so hopefully everything that I've learned I'm going to bottle up. And there's 18 holes tomorrow. I'm a competitor, I've won at every level. I would be lying if I said it doesn't sting to not have another one. So tomorrow's a big day, as I know, I feel prepared, and we'll give it a shot.

Q. That's tenacious. You stumble, make double bogey back at the 13th, you respond with birdies at 14, 15 and 16. Tell me about that stretch and your thought process leaving that 13th green?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think I just I knew what I did wrong

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as soon as I made contact, so I was able to, sometimes it's not a terrible thing to hit a bad shot as long as you know what you did. So it actually helped me on the holes coming in. I was able to hit a lot of quality shots really close and I was able to finish off a solid round. So I didn't think too much about it, really. I knew the mistake I made and was able to make a nice swing there and it was unfortunate to make a double bogey in that situation, of course, but I learned from it and I was able to just capitalize on the next few.

Q. You've been pretty open in your thought process trying to validate your first win. You've had some opportunities. Things didn't always go good for you on Sunday. Your thought process playing in the final group in the final round.

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I've got a great chance to win this thing tomorrow. That's exciting. It's always exciting. I've had a lot of opportunities, some lessons that I've learned from in the past, maybe it will pay off tomorrow and get a W. I'm playing some solid golf, putter feels good, so we'll have a shot at this thing tomorrow.

Q. To have the opening bogey and then the double on 13, how did that affect you?

TONY FINAU: It takes a lot of patience, but I've taught myself how to stay patient in these tough moments. There's a lot of golf left. I knew I was playing well. I had a feeling I was going to string on some birdies. I just had to stay patient with myself.

But it's tough. I think it's something that comes with experience and just understanding the situation. I knew I had still plenty of golf in front of me and I couldn't afford to make anymore mistakes, but I was happy with the way I finished that round today.

Q. What were you happy with in your game today?

TONY FINAU: I hit it pretty close and in situations where I needed to. With a wedge in my hand or a 9-iron and down, I was able to hit it pretty close, and so I was able to tidy those putts, you know, those shots up with the putt. And I think from 9-iron and in this week, I've been pretty deadly and if I give myself those of clubs tomorrow, I hope I

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hit them just as close.

Q. How much do you sort of get tired of us asking about when the next win is going to be?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it is tiring, but I kind of welcome that challenge. I have for the last couple seasons. What I mean by that is I challenge myself every time I play to prove that I can do it again and I know I can. I've got, I feel like the skill set's good, at a high level. I'm going to have a lot of opportunities to win tournaments. That's to me what the exciting thing is. Every time I don't close a tournament, I'm never thinking, Wow, I let another one slip. I'm never going to have this opportunity again. For me, it's like, What did I learn? How can I take what I learned into the next opportunity? And I've got another opportunity tomorrow.

Q. Do you think having that mindset kind of takes a little bit of pressure off of you?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think it does. I mean, this is who I am. I try to have a proper perspective. I'm not going to kill myself over not closing golf tournaments. Golf's really, really important to me, if I claim it to not be the most important thing then I'm not going to let it kill me. I got 18 holes tomorrow and I'm playing good golf, I got 18 holes to try and win and hopefully I get it done tomorrow.

Q. What was the mistake you made at 13?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I think I stood a little bit too close to the golf ball, at least that's, it seemed to be right. At the very next shot I stood a little further from it and struck the inside of it instead of kind of the top of it.

Q. Was that a 7-iron there?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, 7-iron. Perfect number, perfect everything, really. Didn't execute the first one.

Q. What's the best piece of advice that you've been given about how to close? I'm sure -- I don't know whether you sought out advice from people or people have just come and volunteered it to you, but what's the best piece of advice you received?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I mean most of the guys that, either veterans that have talked to me or messaged me after a tough loss just told me, Look, you're time is coming, you just keep doing what you're doing. There really hasn't been, I think, any advice given to close the deal. I've had some pretty tough breaks when it comes to winning. What I mean by that is a lot of tournaments I didn't feel like I lost, a lot of guys played a little better than me down the stretch and kind of stole it from me. But nothing really. I'm going

to continue what I'm doing this week, obviously it's working and hopefully it works tomorrow.

Q. You're a big believer in momentum. How did the momentum, how did the ebb and flow of this round change?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it was quite crazy. Sungjae comes right out of the gate, makes some birdies, and on this type of golf course you just never know when somebody's feeling it. I mean he could turn in 5-, 6-under and start running away from the field. So I tried to stay patient but I knew, hey, I needed to start making some birdies to make up this round as fast as possible.

I was kind of able to do that. In the middle of my round I kind of jumped out front and unfortunately hit that shot in the water on 13, but with some birdies coming in, I'm right at the top of the leaderboard, so I'm happy with that.

Q. This is a probably not a quick answer, but what have you, what's the biggest thing you've been able to do to improve your putting?

TONY FINAU: This week I'm putting conventionally. I haven't done that since 2018. So it's been like about two -- sorry 2019 -- it's been like two years. I went back to it. It just felt good this week. I didn't know what I was, that I was going to put conventionally, I had the charity match with Phil and Casey and those guys and I was like, you know what, I'm going to try it out. It felt pretty good there and I threw it in for the first three rounds and it seems to be working so far.

Q. What stands out about Max's game and him as a person?

TONY FINAU: He's always struck the ball beautifully. He's a good kid. I've known him since our WEB.COM days or Korn Ferry TOUR days. So he's a good kid and it will be fun competing against him tomorrow.

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