

THE PLAYERS Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Graeme McDowell

Quick Quotes

Q. You didn't post a bad number but there's a lot of bad numbers by a lot of superstars out there. How is that possible?

GRAEME MCDOWELL: Well I mean, they always call this golf course a little bit of superstar killer, right? I feel like this golf course has that reputation, right, where the best players in the world can come here -- it kind of had Rory's number for a lot of years.

But it's very strange because greens are super quick, they're very firm in places. Like the back of the green on 17, I mean, you pitch that ball past the slope at all today and like it's getting a massive hop and going over the back. So, I don't know, to me it was gettable if you played well today.

There was just enough wind to kind of keep you honest, especially early, I mean, it was there for the getting. But, yeah, I certainly do see some big numbers on the board.

I think it's what's great about this golf course because if you play well you can score and if you don't play well it's going to punish you. There is no room to miss out there off the fairway, and we know how much trouble is around these greens that if you're a little bit off you could make a big number, there's a big number waiting for you in a lot of holes out there.

So this is also a slightly unusual wind direction. I don't think we see holes like 5 and 7 play as straight into the wind as they're playing, playing long. No, it's a good test of golf.

But like I say, to me if you play well you can score, which I think is why you see that big disparity in the scores, because I know there are 8s and 9s and 10-overs out there and then there's 3- and 4-unders. So to me level par is going to be in an outstanding position on Sunday evening here. I think level par makes a big check, finishes top-15, top-10 here and that's the way I like TPC Sawgrass, what I love about the Florida Swing, really, you know to me where Bay Hill last week and PGA National next week, I don't



even need to look at the agronomy report. I know how it's going to play next week; it's going to be firm, fast, windy and tough, and that's kind of what we expect when we come to Florida.

Q. I know you shot a good number in the round that was played last year?

GRAEME MCDOWELL: Does that count for anything -- counting the first round last year at all? No?

Q. You got a check?

GRAEME MCDOWELL: I got paid. Yeah, I did get paid.

Q. Are you satisfied though where you are now? I know it wasn't the score you might want but the fact that you are in the company of par today?

GRAEME MCDOWELL: I'm just satisfied that to me this week feels like the beginning. It feels like the end of something and it feels like the beginning of something, I don't know what it is. It's been a really weird kind of nine or ten months for me since we came back in June. I left off with some momentum and I've come back out and I've had no momentum and somehow I feel like it's the crowds and some familiar surroundings, Bay Hill last week and here this week and the familiarity to me. It's like I feel like we're at the end. Obviously it's not the end globally for this thing, but like from a golf point of view, I feel like some kind of some kind of familiarity coming back, which I need. My swing's starting to turn a corner a little bit and I needed to kind of draw a line in the sand and try and get myself back to where I was this time last year. So coming back here I think going to Bay Hill last week with the good memories of normal life last year, coming here, the first round, good memories of some sort of normal life and I hope I can sort of channel some of that and start playing the golf I know I'm capable of again.

Q. Does this golf course play with your head more than most courses on the TOUR?

GRAEME MCDOWELL: Yeah, I think so. This is one of my favorite golf courses. Like period. I think I've always kind of dreamt of standing on the 16th tee here with a one-shot lead, probably wish it was about five, but it's



always a one-shot lead in my dream somehow and trying to win this tournament, because to me it asks you every question imaginable down the stretch. Drive, second shots, the shot to 17, the two shots you need to hit at 18, it's just such a demanding golf course, but yet it's still fair.

It's very, very hard to -- apart from the odd little Pete Dye Hole in the Ground, which is his signature, there's very little to look around this golf course and say, this is unfair. It's a great track. It's a great test of golf. I love being here, I love playing this golf course, and to me the shape that they had it in this year, firm and fast on a Monday-Tuesday, we knew they kind of had the course right where they want it and it will be similar to Bay Hill on the weekend last weekend. It will be great for golf to see the best players in the world kind of either kind of bringing this course to its knees or getting beat up by it, which is kind of exactly what we're seeing today as well.

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