

THE PLAYERS Championship

Monday, March 14, 2022

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Cameron Smith

Press Conference

STEWART MOORE: Cam Smith, 2022 PLAYERS champion. Thank you for joining us here in the interview room. Quite a long week here at TPC Sawgrass and certainly a roller coaster of a final round for you today.

Maybe just some opening comments on the victory and thoughts on the week.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it was obviously a long week. Yeah, today I think I just kind of held in there today. Lots of birdies, kept staying aggressive, kept trying to make birdies, and went through a little bit of a lull there in the middle, I guess.

And yeah, just bounced back really nice and proud of the way I hung in there.

Q. What was your heart doing when the ball was in the air going towards the flag at 17? What was your heart doing when the ball was going towards the water on 18? And could you explain hitting driver on 18.

CAMERON SMITH: I mean, on 17 I hit a really good shot. The wind didn't quite hit it as much as what I thought it was going to. Kind of left it alone there for a long time and just kind of helped me out there at the end.

I'd be lying if I said I was aiming there. I was probably aiming 10 feet left of that. But still wanted to stay aggressive, still wanted to make birdie.

18, just a hole for me that doesn't really suit my eye. I like to work the ball left to right off the tee. That's where I feel comfortable, and I feel as though I can't hit that shot down there. Just haven't quite figured that hole out.

Driver, just because I just wanted to get it down there as far as I could basically. If it did turn over, I was going to have a short shot in, and it just didn't quite turn over.

Q. The punch-out, did you think it was going to get to the water when you hit it?



CAMERON SMITH: No, I thought the shot was actually going to come out quite soft because it was in amongst some pine straw, and it actually come out really nice.

Definitely I was trying to hit it probably 30 yards less of that. I just thought it was going to come out tumbling and just roll out on to the fairway. Yeah, but just kind of come out nice, and it was unfortunate, but held it together. And great up-and-down.

Q. I'm assuming you last saw your family after Presidents Cup.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah.

Q. You've talked outside so much about chill time this week, hang time, golf kind of a second priority. Do you think that helped you in terms of expectations, or do you even have any expectations at any event?

CAMERON SMITH: I've never been one to expect much of myself. My expectations are I wake up, go to the gym, practice as hard as I can for a couple hours, and then go and have a good time. That's it basically every day.

My expectation is to prepare well and then kind of let everything fall into place from there.

Q. How do you think seeing them this week helped or didn't?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I'm not sure if it did or not. It was nice having some company at home, I guess, in the rain delays. Last week we spent a lot of time just kind of hanging out, showing them around Jacksonville.

They obviously knew I had to play this week so they weren't really expecting much, but it's nice to come out here and play well for them.

Q. You mentioned staying aggressive throughout the round; was that an emphasis you had coming into today, or what went into your thinking of keeping the pedal on the metal throughout the day?

CAMERON SMITH: I think I just knew that the golf course was going to kind of let up a few -- there was a few pin



spots out there that were very gettable, and being the way that the course played with all the rain, just soft and sticky, I just knew I had to make plenty of birdies.

I was a few behind, I think, going into the start of the round, and just needed to get after it basically.

Q. In Atlanta you told us that you don't know what you would do with \$15 million. What are you going to do with \$3.6 million?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I don't know. (Chuckling.)

I really don't. I don't have an answer for that. It hasn't sunk in.

That's a lot of money. I'm not sure what I'm going to do with it.

Q. Kind of a nerdy question, but the tee shot on 16, is it similar to how you guys play the tee shot on 13 at Augusta National now?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, similar. I think you're trying to work it maybe a little bit more on 13 at Augusta. I would typically hit 3-wood off 13, as well.

Like I was saying before, I typically like to move my driver left to right, and that hole kind of sits awkward for me, as well.

It's very similar, but probably just a different club.

Q. Aside from the 10 birdies that you made today, could you talk also about the right-to-left par putts that you made on 14 and 15 and how nervy those putts were because of the break?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, the putt on 14 is not really a putt you expect to make, to be honest. You're just trying to hit a good putt, and if it goes in, it goes in. That one had a lot of break. It was obviously a bit longer.

The one on 15 I felt really comfortable over the top of. It was probably only eight or nine feet, and the putter felt good all day, so felt really comfy over that one.

Q. After you went in the water on 18, what you did do to calm yourself down? Or did you even feel like you needed to calm down at all?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I was obviously very frustrated at myself. For somewhat of an easy chip shot, probably the easiest shot I had all day, to hit it in the water was quite frustrating.

But yeah, just kind of regrouped. I knew I had to get up-and-down to really close it out.

Q. Which one of the pars on 14, 15, 16 was the most difficult?

CAMERON SMITH: I think 16. It was a horrendous drive. Had a chip-out and still had maybe 220 meters to the hole, so maybe 240. I think that's where it could have got away from me a little bit.

Obviously hitting over the corner of the water there can get quite nervy, and yeah, just had to step up and hit a really good shot and was able to do it.

Q. You looked pretty confident with club selection and the line you took on 17. Were you feeling pretty calm inside?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I struck the ball really well. It was the shot that I wanted to play. I just thought the wind was going to kind of hold it up for most of the way. It actually kind of drifted right and then held its line at the end there.

Yeah, heart was in the throat there for a second, but I knew it was the right club.

Q. Everyone has been trying to understand the Australian term of essentially toughness. Can you describe as best you can what it means to be a Queenslander and what it is about you guys that have got you where you are today?

CAMERON SMITH: I think it's probably just never give up. I grew up watching rugby league and watching the Queenslanders come from behind, and even when it got gritty they'd somehow manage to win. I think that's kind of instilled in all of us.

Q. Is it fair to say that the competition of golf is what you love the most, i.e., the fight rather than chipping, putting, driving, et cetera?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. I had a bit of a break towards the end of last year, probably had two months off, and more than anything else I just wanted to get out and compete again.

I was sick of whacking balls at the back of the range and playing rounds with mates. I wanted to compete against the best guys in the world and try and beat them.

Q. For a guy who only made one par in his first 13

holes today, did it feel at all like a wild ride that it looked like, or did you feel like you had everything under control?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I was hitting the ball really well. I felt really confident with my irons. My driver got a little bit skewy the last kind of 12 holes, but was able to kind of scramble around and hit really good iron shots when I needed to.

I felt really comfortable with my iron shots. I felt as though I had it under control. I just needed to hit the fairway. That was the big thing.

Q. You move to No. 6 in the world, and you've done things to get there. Do you feel like the No. 6 player in the world? Do you feel like you should be part of that kind of elite class of golf?

CAMERON SMITH: I feel as though I'm playing the best that I've ever played. It's kind of weird to think like that, being kind of the -- probably the last three or four years being the guy that kind of goes from 20th to 40th in the World Rankings, and then all of a sudden to be 6th is kind of weird.

But I feel as though I've put in the work and I feel as though I've done a lot of work on my body and I've put in the time.

Yeah, it's nice to see all that stuff paying off.

Q. How often do you see your family even in the best of times, given the distance, and who exactly made it here?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, probably see them typically twice a year. I'll go home in the middle of the year for a couple of weeks just for a little bit of a hangout, and then I'll go back down and play some golf in Australia and have a little bit of a hangout over Christmas, as well, typically.

So I probably only spend six weeks at home. It was my mum and sister that had come over, yeah.

Q. Their names, and also the significance of being Australian and winning this tournament? There have been some pretty great champions from your country.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, mum's name is Sharon and my sister's name is Melanie. Yeah, it's so cool. Obviously lots of Australians have won here, lots of great Australian golfers have won here, you know, but the best that have ever lived have won here, as well.

So it's pretty cool to have the name on the same trophy as

them.

Q. Was there a moment in the final round where you thought or said to yourself, This is my tournament to win? And if there was that moment, what did you do after to make it a reality?

CAMERON SMITH: Like I was saying before, I felt really comfortable on the range with my irons, and I knew if I could somehow get it in the fairway, I felt it was mine to win from the start.

I feel really comfortable on the greens around here, so I just needed to get it on the fairway, and if I could do that, then I knew I had a red hot chance.

Was able to do that a little bit on the front nine at least, and then kind of got a bit wavy there at the end.

Q. You told us yesterday that despite living five miles from here, you try not to play this course. How, if at all, did that help you? Or maybe now are you saying, maybe I want to play this course a couple more times a year?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I try not to play it because it's typically just set up a little bit softer and a little bit slower. I found myself -- I thought moving here originally it would be a huge advantage, but I found out after a few missed cuts in a row that it maybe wasn't.

Just hitting some different clubs off tees and some different lines when it gets firm and fast, and also the pressure of the battle. You don't realize how tight this place is until you have to hit a shot.

When you're playing hit-and-giggle with your mates it can be easy at times, but it's a different beast.

Q. Who in your family, if anyone, do you think you inherited your mental toughness from?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I don't know. I think both sides of my family, my mum and my dad's side. Both have -- just both mentally strong. They're working class people who have had to work their whole life to live basically, and yeah, I guess that's just kind of what I grew up in.

Q. A lot of times when players win this tournament they have to go off to the next event or fly home, but you are home, so how are you going to celebrate this one?

CAMERON SMITH: Sleep. I feel like I haven't slept in five or six days. It's obviously been a long week. I'm sure

there will be a few beers around the fire tonight, but yeah, I can't wait for a good sleep.

Q. When you made three bogeys at 7, 8, and 9, did you tell yourself something in that walk between 9 and 10 to get to where you made four birdies in a row again?

CAMERON SMITH: I guess it was just keeping it simple, back to one shot at a time, just trying to hit the fairways off the tee.

Was able to hit a couple of nice drives off 10 and 11 and give myself some really good opportunities into the greens there.

Yeah, it was just kind of knuckling down and kind of knowing what I had to do.

Q. I don't know how much you've watched this tournament over the years back home, but do you remember anything about Adam Scott's win? And if you do, did you think about him at all?

CAMERON SMITH: No.

Q. I was going to ask if you saw it. You don't know that Adam did the same thing on 18?

CAMERON SMITH: No, I got told after the round, but I had no idea.

Q. And you didn't see it being replayed on every screen around you as you were getting set for your drop?

CAMERON SMITH: No. No, I didn't.

STEWART MOORE: Cam Smith, thanks so much, and congrats on your first PLAYERS Championship.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports