

# WM Phoenix Open

Thursday, February 8, 2024

Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

## Sahith Theegala

### Quick Quotes



**Q. 6-under, 65, considering the wind, the weather the delay, how would you even describe how you played today?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, yeah, I played really well. It's not often where kind of every part of the game feels, or not feels good, it's been feeling good, but actually kind of clicks during the course of the round. Usually it's one or two things that kind of hold up the round, but it felt like through the bag I did something good with every club, it felt like. It was a great feeling, made the short putts when I needed to, obviously chipping in is always nice. Ball in hand is big. I think it makes at least a shot difference. Especially with the conditions being a little wet, it's nice to give yourself a nice lie when you're in the fairway, don't have to worry about fattening it. But really happy with the start. The weather was, it was not good, those last four holes felt great, so I think there might be some good scores tomorrow with the wave that just teed off. It's going to be cold, but hopefully no rain and wind. We'll see. I played great and that's all I can do, really.

**Q. What did you do during the delay and now that you're not probably going to hit a golf ball for a long time, what are you going to do then?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, I just hung in player dining with my parents for a bit, and then had a bite to eat. I usually don't eat lunch on tournament days, I just eat heavy breakfast, bigger dinner. I had a lunch. Then sat in the car for an hour, just for warmth. The locker room was crowded and there weren't a lot of places available to sit, so just went in the car with my trainer and caddie and just, honestly, just scrolled on my phone, listened to some tunes, did a few chess puzzles, and that was about it. But I'm going to try and stay off my phone tomorrow. I know it's going to be awhile until I tee off, but hopefully I tee off tomorrow.

**Q. Do you still feel that the support and energy walking around here from that run you played a couple years ago?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, yeah, for sure. Again, I was surprised at how many fans were out here when it was raining sideways and blowing 20, and freezing. It was cool to see all the support and people chanting my name and all that, it's the best. I got a good sense of that last year when I came back after the run I made the first year, so to be back is always great.

**Q. Do you just accept at this point when they chant your name it's not always going to be the correct pronunciation?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, yeah, actually the last name's always pretty good. It kind of comes off the tongue how it is spelled, I guess, Theegala, so the last name chants are always great. It's when they try and yell the first name when they're a little drunk that some letters get added or omitted. It doesn't -- I know they're rooting for me, so it doesn't bother me at all. I love it. I don't mind any pronunciation, if they're yelling.

**Q. Would you say the success here, the playing well, is more like the course that you like or the atmosphere here?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: I think it's a mix of both. I love firm and fast conditions and the last couple years that's what it was. Even this year again, the ground's crew done an incredible job for keeping it relatively firm for how much rain we've gotten, like, the ball was still taking a skip. I think you're going to see that, hopefully, come Sunday it might take a few bigger bounces -- it's not going to be what it was last year where it's a cart path and some of the -- but some of my favorite conditions all year. So, I think it's a little bit of both. I just kind of embrace the craziness of the week and the fans. It's good people watching, honestly. You're out on the golf course waiting and you just look around and there's a hundred different story lines you can make out of it. So, it's a fun week for multiple reasons. Carl, he does a good job of, when it's time to hit a shot, just lock in, hit the shot. That way I think it's a really fun tournament.

**Q. You got, obviously, the environment, the fans at this event, and now you have the added elements and**



**weather and all the craziness. What is it like just balancing it all this week?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, honestly, the weather was, it wasn't, it was bad, but it was, like, I just I feel like we haven't played in really bad in a while, it felt very close to really bad, just because of the cold. Honestly, all we were trying to do at that point was just stay dry and stay warm. I had my mitts, had my hand warmers, Carl's holding four towels and an umbrella, and trying to wash my ball and all that stuff. So, we were just so focused on surviving that I felt like the round, all of a sudden, got to hole 14 or 15 on my round and the horn blew. I didn't even think about it, really. Just trudging along and trying to keep the grips dry and not miss the golf ball on a swing.

**Q. Were you relieved when the horn blew?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: I was relieved when the horn blew, yes. I thought I probably could have asked for a rules official earlier. I was hitting a bunker shot on 5 and, like, before, in between the hole and me, is just like a pool of water. I don't think I was going to land it in there, but it would have been nice to not have that visual. But I'm, like, I'm just going to hit it, I'm playing well, and I hit it like 10 feet by. I was relieved the horn blew, because it was, I mean, I smoked my drive off 5 and I think it went 250 yards. I absolutely laced a 4-iron 20 short of the green. So, I think I hit four or five 4-irons into par-4s which is a lot of fun actually, we don't do that often. But I was relieved.

**Q. You said you want to stay off your phone tomorrow. Is that something you like to do just log off and tune out the noise, does that help you?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: I feel like usually it's pretty easy, I can sleep in with the best of 'em, so on an afternoon time I just wake up at like 10:00. But tomorrow's going to be harder, so I'm going to try and wake up and whip out the laptop and play some chess and just try and stay off my phone. I might watch some coverage, honestly, just to see if I can pick some stuff up. But, yeah, I think go get a nice breakfast, brunch, coffee, and just go from there. I do try and make an effort to stay off my phone. It's hard. You shut your brain off and just auto scroll, but, yeah, I'm going to try to keep it away tomorrow.

**Q. How many games of chess did you play during the suspension?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: I didn't play any games. I just played some puzzles. Didn't play any games. I only played a few games in the last couple months, and I've won both of 'em, even though I feel really rusty. So, I'm at my all-time Blitz rating right now. Like, I don't want to play,

because I know I'm going to drop a bunch, so I'll probably stick to a couple longer games tomorrow.

**Q. Anything special on the hole-out?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Not really. It was set up perfectly. Honestly, we knew the right miss was great because the greens were soft and it was pitching into the wind, just didn't want it miss left. So, it was a hard shot, I hit 5-iron and that hole is a driver, lob wedge normally, and I'm hitting driver, 5-iron. I knew when I missed it right that it was going to be a pretty easy up-and-down. Again, lift, clean and place, it was a perfect scenario where I tried to fly it pretty close to the hole and nip it. I didn't hit it incredibly, so it landed on the down slope and got there. So, it was a great scenario into the wind and it's always nice to see it drop.

**Q. When you talk about improving your mental side of the game, you do that on your own, or have you sought some outside council?**

SAHITH THEEGALA: Yeah, no, I mean, honestly, my swing coach of 20 years now is kind of my mentor as well. He's got a lot of wisdom. He's still a spring chicken, he's 75, I think, 75. He's still got all kinds of quips that he throws down, wisdom. So he's kind of been my -- we butt heads sometimes, but he's kind of been the guy that -- we don't really even talk about the mental side too much, but I feel like if there's ever a problem with the mental side of golf itself, I can always just talk to him. I feel the same way about my trainer, my parents, my girlfriend, my caddie, I feel like it's a pretty sweet team that I have, and I definitely don't take that for granted. I think that's a big part of it, because doing this alone, you lose your mind. It's so easy to go down rabbit holes, and golfers are notoriously crazy, and I would definitely be a bit going down that road if I didn't have people to support me along the way.

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