

WM Phoenix Open

Sunday, February 11, 2024

Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Nick Taylor

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome the 2024 champion of the WM Phoenix Open Nick Taylor to the media center. Fourth PGA TOUR title and finishing runner-up last year, you were able to get the job finished this time. How did that feel out there?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I had good vibes all week after the start. Was obviously in a position to keep going, but it was a pretty tough round to follow. Long two days. I think I played 30 holes two different days and maybe 12 on the other couple.

I didn't have it early on today and was trying to hang in there as long as I could. It seemed like a bunch of guys ahead of us were making birdies, and to make a couple, two or three kind of making the turn to still stay in it -- the finish was pretty dreamlike. Making all those putts when I needed to was a lot of fun, and the atmosphere has been incredible all week.

Q. The shot on 16, the par-3, could you go through the game plan for that shot and what you were thinking at the time and how the adrenaline might have affected what you were doing on that shot?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, again, the last I saw, Charley was at 21, so I knew in the back of my mind I needed to make at least two birdies. The number and the wind was perfect for what I needed to hit. It was a 9-iron. I started it at the 16 in the background and drew it in, and it worked out perfect.

It was funny how our whole group almost fed off each other. Kind of bad early in the round, and then when we started making putts we kind of could see it and did that end. Sahith made a putt there and got the crowd going, but I also saw the ball going in, which was nice.

17, that back pin, again, I would have loved to have been aggressive on that pitch, but I felt like I've seen it too many times in the past if you try to force it there you can run it off into the water and didn't want to spoil my chances there.

The birdie on 16 was huge to give me a little buffer the last couple holes.

Q. The announcers were critical of your decision to lay up on 15. What was your thinking there?

NICK TAYLOR: You know, our rule of thumb is honestly if I don't have a 5-iron, 4-iron going in, I've always laid up the last handful of years. Even this morning, the only reason I went for it, it was a back pin, which is super tricky with the soft greens to try to hit a wedge close, so I hit a hybrid just short of the green and was able to make Mabel birdie. But it wasn't even a decision. It probably would have been a 5-wood.

My wedge game is a strength of my game. It turned out there; last year I did the same thing, and it didn't turn out. I was confident in the decision. I just knew that with how receptive the greens were, the wedge shot with the backboard there was very doable, and I thought that was my best percentage play.

Q. I asked you last night about the change to the claw grip. Kind of got the short version, but can I get the extended version of you and Gareth Rafelewski and that change, what it's meant to you?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's been huge. I've probably a handful of years been probably a very streaky putter for six, seven, eight years. Had good tournaments but was never the consistency that I wanted, and the reason we went to it is my setup got much cleaner, my face rotation slowed down, so we've done the same drills for a year, just constantly repeating them over and over again. It was a little ball position stuff and things.

The confidence that I've gained from doing it for a year, I felt like growing up the claw was kind of a stigma. If you went to that, you probably struggled on the greens, but for me, once I committed to it, I haven't turned back, and I've never puttied better than the last year.

Q. Have you ever puttied better than this week?

NICK TAYLOR: Probably not. Probably not.



Q. What was going through your mind when you were lining up to putt on 18 the first time through?

NICK TAYLOR: I had nothing to lose there in a sense where I had a bit of a buffer on second place. So many of these reads out here are very subtle. I'll use the pull of the valley a little bit here or there, but in the past I've overemphasized it and it's kind of messed with my head.

The last two years we kind of threw it out, kind of feel the putt or the break over the ball. Dave has been incredible on the greens this week reading them for me, and we've been on the same page a lot.

That hung on the right side and snuck in there, which was obviously great, but it was kind of a win-win in the sense where I had nothing to lose. If it missed, I finished solo second, so I just gave it a run.

Q. How do you deal with weeks like this where it was sort of a mess from the get-go, a lot of rain, stoppages, delays? How do you block that out, especially with not being regrouped going into the final round? That doesn't happen very often. How do you play your game? You're not really playing 18 holes a day like normal, so it's obviously an adjustment.

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's a lot of patience for the week. To start the week, the wave that I was in got a huge break. It was probably almost three shots. I didn't really see the final number, but big break that we didn't play in a lot of that rain and the wind and the cold.

That second day to be able to get in a groove early on and continue the day was probably an advantage, but yesterday was a long morning. Just kind of hung around all day and then played six holes.

We knew it was going to be a marathon today. I knew pretty early on they weren't going to re-pair, but both times after finishing the round and going back out, I was kind of out of sync. Today we finished I think at 12:05 and they said we were on the tee in 10 minutes, so it was quite the turnaround.

I probably didn't handle it great, but I really salvaged some good pars there, which just kept me in it for as long as I could.

Q. When you think about last year and kind of this tournament, coming in second and the win at the Canadian Open, was there any sort of an attitude or mindset shift like in elevating where you feel you stand in kind of the top of the world in golf, or is that

something you always believed was your game and potential? How have those two this past year helped --

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, having time off in the fall was amazing. I've never really had that, having a bunch of family time.

But also in talking with my team, I didn't want to -- in the past after years that I've won or had great years, there's been a down year, and I didn't want to change anything but emphasize keeping the same things and almost try to validate last year.

I had a good third round last week but really struggled the first couple days. Sony played nice, but it was kind of a mixed bag, but everyone on my team kept reminding me I've shot one round over par this entire year, so the game was there. I don't know if I expected 60 out here especially, but again, just reminded me to stick to what we're doing and be as confident as I could.

That first day was probably -- I putted out of my mind, but I drove it incredible, and I kind of got back to that the last nine holes today, which gave me some more opportunities.

Q. In terms of where you feel you stack up in golf, you've put together a great resume with great wins, Pebble and Canadian Open. You've had some signature moments on signature stages. How good do you feel like you can be?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I'm getting there. I think last year was a huge steppingstone in my career to play with Rahm and Scottie in the final group, one, two in the world and really stand my own and gave me a lot of confidence, so to ride that the rest of the year and win my national Open in the fashion that I did was incredible.

It's been fun to be in those moments. I think last year I drew a lot on for the Canadian Open and I've drawn on that for plenty of moments, as well. For whatever reason it is, the latter it gets, I just seem to get a little more locked in and zoned in and kind of relish those moments, and it's been a lot of fun.

Q. Where do you think that comes from, that ability to channel that in the big moments when there's a lot of external buzz outside the ropes?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I don't know. I think just enjoying it. Everything leading up I feel like to playing kind of sucks. You're nervous. I don't eat very well when I'm nervous preparing for a round. But when I start hitting balls, I get comfortable, you're kind of in your own world. It's the position you want to be in, but the leading up to it is

definitely not how I want to feel.

I'm going to just, again -- I said at the Canadian Open I'd want to soak it up as much as I could because you never know when it's going to happen again, and for it to happen again nine or ten months later, I'm going to celebrate this one, as well.

Q. You're obviously great on the greens under pressure. Is there a way you're able to create that kind of feeling when you're practicing, or is it just a natural instinct when you're on the course?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I think you can practice it as much as you can, but it's really hard to get in that kind of atmosphere, obviously, when you're practicing. But a lot of stuff we do is just the basics. Stick to the routines, and I work on my routine a lot, which when you get in those moments if you feel comfortable in your routine, kind of settle your heart rate down, it's just kind of hit another putt.

Again, I had such a good feel on the greens the entire week that I felt like when we just read it, it was just hit the putt and stay out of my own way, and that's what I tried to do.

Q. What were you thinking as you saw Scottie charging up the leaderboard again?

NICK TAYLOR: Oh, boy. Scottie is No. 1 in the world, phenomenal player, so I knew -- honestly to start the day, I thought 20, or even after the second round I thought 20 would be a pretty good spot. Charley and Scottie were charging up there.

The ball started to run out a bit in the fairways, and still playing lift, clean and place, it was out there for the taking. You had to keep making birdies as much as you could.

Q. There was a lot of Canada love out there; how did that make you feel? What role did that play in this?

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it was reminiscent of the Canadian Open a little bit. A lot of snowbirds down here, a lot of people come down to this tournament that I know, even on the West Coast and all over Canada.

The support was incredible. A little rivalry with the USA chants and "go Canada." It was pretty fun to be around, so it was fun all week.

Q. I know Adam Hadwin was out there. Did he fare a little better this time?

NICK TAYLOR: He pointed out he wore the same outfit,

but he dodged security this time, so it's good.

Q. Nick, obviously two big opportunities to represent your country coming up later this year with the Olympics in Paris and then obviously the Presidents Cup at Royal Montreal. Maybe talk a little bit about those two opportunities. It was kind of a USA-Canada rivalry there on the playoff.

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, this fall, again, looking at goals for the season, what I've done so well I think the last year has been process goals, but you want something to look forward, and the Olympics and the Presidents Cup were big time on the top of my goal list.

I knew playing good golf would take care of that. This is obviously a good start, I hope. I would love nothing more than to play in those two events and keep playing well here, obviously. There's a lot of great events coming up. I kept saying that this year, that there's a lot of Signature Events. Obviously this one was a home game, and the Masters, this will be only my second time playing. I have a lot to look forward to and kind of keep my head down and grind.

Couldn't ask for a better start.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

