

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Will Zalatoris

### Quick Quotes



#### Q. Can you take us through the shots on 16 and 17.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, 16 was a 7-iron, which it looked like it was going to go in. Same club that I made the hole-in-one with a couple weeks ago. Those are bonuses. I was looking about 15 feet right of the hole and it just drew in there and rolled about six, seven feet. Joel did a great job of talking me into hitting 6-iron on 17, because I knew the wind was kind of back into us. Then just hit a perfect putt from about 16, 17 feet. So, everything feels really good, just got to keep doing what we're doing. I knew that this morning, with no wind, especially early on in the week, that's the softest that we're going to see. Even with rain on Sunday, the place is still going to be brown. It's good to get a sub 70 score here at any time.

#### Q. You're feeling healthy, do you play the game any differently because of the swing changes and things like that?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, a lot simpler. I used to kind of play a lot with my hands and try to hit, kind of shape shots more a little bit. Now, I'm just trying to kind of hit basically three shots where it's just a little cut to take off distance, a little draw to maybe add a little bit of distance, and then just try to hit simple straight shots from there. I used to do -- I used to move the ball a lot more prior to surgery, but now it's just a lot more simple, which is great. Out here, especially on a place like this, hit as many greens as you can, and the few times that you maybe pull or push one and they end up being tight say, thank you very much.

#### Q. You talked about being able to maybe practice less, play less, your approach to the game, has that changed because you're not able to beat balls like you used to?

WILL ZALATORIS: It, honestly, is weird, because, having two weeks off, I didn't touch a club for the first week I was off, which I never take more than probably two or three days off prior to the surgeries. So, if anything, coming back, it's almost like trying to settle in those first five, six holes after a couple weeks off. I might add one

somewhere in that stretch between Augusta and PLAYERS, depending upon how I'm feeling, just because I want to keep the momentum going. Then I'm going to play a ton of golf between, I think I'm actually looking at playing all the way through from Masters to the PGA. Having the Nelson in that middle stretch is kind of like having a half week off since I'll be right at home.

#### Q. You and others have talked about how the course changes, and by the time you get to Sunday it can be really a challenge. On a day like today, do you feel like you have to go out and make hay while you can?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I mean, being 1-over through 11 holes or whatever, I knew if I wanted to be in contention I knew I needed to get it to at least to red numbers. This is the calmest I've seen it. This is my fourth time playing here, I've never seen it this calm. I know we got some weather coming in on Sunday, but we're also having four different winds on top of that. So, it's just, a day like today, especially going early, try to make your hay and then hold on.

#### Q. Justin Lower shot 5-under. How good is that on this course?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it's fantastic. You try to get the par-5s, just get around the par-3s in even par, from there you just try to make a bunch of pars. If you have a few wedges, take advantage of it from there. The thing about this place especially is, when you don't have wind, it makes the greens a lot easier, especially when this get glassy. They almost get to a point where guys, I've heard guys asking rules officials in the past about can they put some sort of stick 'em on the bottom of their putters, just because their putters are sliding around, which, no, they can't do that. But once they get that glassy, when you got those downhillers, you're basically just trying to commit to a good putt and just hope it holds its line. Yeah, 5-under out here any day, I don't care what conditions it is, you'll take it in a heartbeat.

#### Q. I know the swing changes were made out of necessity, but do you think they will actually end up being beneficial as well?



WILL ZALATORIS: I think the word that we're using with everything is simplify. I used to be really high hands, very vertical, I would kind of thrust my right knee at the ball, I would have a big side bend. Right now I flare both my feet out and try to get as horizontal as I can, get as much rotation. It's kind of fun now having, looking at videos and my driver's actually been the longest in terms of where it is at the top that it's been really ever. Like I said, it's just simplifying everything that we can. I'm not throwing the ball back like I used to and hitting these like low drivers. I'm just kind of hitting three shots, and just kind of, if we got a bunch of wind, I grew up in Texas, I'll figure it out.

**Q. Are you hitting it the same distances?**

WILL ZALATORIS: So, I'm playing a shorter driver. I went to, I played a 44 and a half driver pretty much my whole life. I played a 46 in 2022 when I had a great year. Then went back to the 44 and a half. I would love to go back to that 46, just to add another 12, 15 yards, but I never really was that great with hitting fairways, and so far, so good with hitting fairways. In reality, even though I'm losing distance, I'm hitting more fairways, so I'm kind of netting everything out.

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