

American Century Championship

Sunday, July 11, 2021

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

John Smoltz

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by John Smoltz.

Q. Though it was a very disappointing finish for you after the great week you've had and all the things you've said, give us your reactions.

JOHN SMOLTZ: Couldn't have happened to a nicer guy for Vinny to win. I love playing with Vinny. He played way better than I did today. Hit his driver really outstanding.

I put myself in really bad spots. The only thing I could say is I grinded out the ability to get to the last hole because I had some very plugged lies, and I didn't play the type of golf you've got to play with a two-point lead. I made just enough shots coming in, big birdie on 16, but a horrible swing on 17. I think that's the first time I've ever hit that tree.

But all in all, I had a chance. I just couldn't find my swing on 18. Like I said, it's not a good visual hole for me. I hit two horrible drives.

I had to try that shot in the playoffs. I knew he was a 9-iron in. So live and learn. This one will sting for a little bit, but I'll learn from it because there's some things down the stretch I can do different.

Q. I don't know that you heard, but when Vinny was being interviewed after the round, his dad passed away on Wednesday. And he was very, very emotional afterwards. And I didn't know if you guys knew that or --

JOHN SMOLTZ: No, he didn't say anything. Like I said, Vinny is one of the top-class guys I've ever met. For anyone to win this -- has to be a bittersweet win for him, obviously.

I can't imagine going through the last three or four days knowing that and trying to play in a golf tournament. So he definitely he earned it. And like I said, I'm happy for him.

Q. As far as the last couple of holes, you said you lost your swing.

JOHN SMOLTZ: I get that way a little bit. I'm grinding out some things physically, but I just didn't get enough good swings that I needed off the tee. I played almost perfect the first two days off the tee. Today I was either a step in the rough or just didn't judge some shots very well.

I was in position, but I left too many balls in the bunker. Had a couple of plugged lies in the bunker. So I didn't make a double bogey all three days. That was my goal. It was to give myself a chance, and a little disappointed on 18 because I had an opportunity with any one good shot to make a birdie.

Now, granted, he had that eagle putt which wouldn't have mattered. But like I said, he just played better and his driver was fantastic.

Q. What do you take from it? We know it stings and hurts a little bit. As far as saying, okay, tough one, how do I move on? Like you said, I'm going to learn from it.

JOHN SMOLTZ: I guess you could say this has been part of the process of me trying not to -- well, I get too angry with myself. And today I just didn't. I'm frustrated, but I'm a type of person that, through these kind of experiences, I'll be a better golfer for it than had I not been in this situation.

So it's not the nerves. It's just the trust of a swing that disappeared. So it's easy to say the nerves got me on 18, but they really didn't. It was just I don't know what swing I was going to hit on 18. That's a tough place to be when you feel like you lost the center of your club head, and that's what happened.

Q. From a follow on of Vinny announcing his father passing, you're professionals at the top of your sport. You can compartmentalize, for lack of a better term. So Vinny did not mention anything to you about it. Do you think he channeled from his NBA playing days to compartmentalize, to focus on the golf course today?



JOHN SMOLTZ: I think so. I think when you're heartbroken but trying to focus, you can pull from some things that happened to you in your career. I know -- I heard him say a lot, "Lock in, Vinny; lock in, Vinny," on a lot of different shots. So whatever mental cues he was using and whatever heartfelt feelings he was having, he did not let any of us know what was going on.

I've known him for a long time. And you just can't find a better guy. And my prayers go out to him and his family for losing his dad.

Again, that's just not something -- golf's hard enough. To play in those circumstances, I tip my hat to him.

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