

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Saturday, June 25, 2022

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA

Saucon Valley C.C. (Old Course)

Ernie Els

Quick Quotes

THE MODERATOR: Ernie Els, 4-under 67. Great finish there on 18. What was the club in?

ERNIE ELS: I hit 9-iron. I had 155, so perfect stock 9-iron in this weather. It would have been really nice for the people watching if that ball went in. I think it would have given them some excitement. Nice to finish with that.

Q. We could hear the cheers, though, even when you did tap it in. Talk about the fan support this week.

ERNIE ELS: Support has been brilliant. People up here have been amazing. From Monday really. They're excited to see a tournament up here. We're excited to be here. They've really come out and supported this event. So it's wonderful to be able to play up here.

Q. Six birdies today. What was working well for your game?

ERNIE ELS: I felt better yesterday already. I really struggles on Thursday, and then I started correcting some of my faults in my swing yesterday, and today was much better, especially off the tees. I made some putts.

You know, just I played the easiest hole of the day on No. 10, and I made bogey there. Other than that, I'm really satisfied with the round.

Q. Seeing what Pdraig Harrington is doing, is there any way to catch him? What do you have to do to get close?

ERNIE ELS: Well, I've got to do what he's doing. He's obviously making birdies, and he's playing with freedom.

Tomorrow is the final day. I'm way back, eight behind. I don't know in the history of this thing it's ever happened. I think Johnny Mueller comes to mind.

I'm going to have to shoot lights out 63 or something and



wait for him to make mistakes. I'm just going to go out and play a good round of golf and see what happens.

Q. You've played with him a few times. Is it surprising to see him playing this well at this time?

ERNIE ELS: No. I played with him in the practice rounds, and I can see he's striking it really well. He's got a lot of length out here. He's probably the longest off the tee on the Champions Tour.

When he has it under control, like he has this week, you've got to watch out. It's good to see. He's playing with a lot of freedom, as I said.

Q. Ernie, is it hard, when you make a bogey on No. 10 like that? How hard is it to kind of keep yourself in it and stay the course and make sure you don't fall into a bad trap?

ERNIE ELS: Exactly, you said it. You're always going to make mistakes in U.S. Opens, but to do that on the easiest hole of the day, you just know you're giving shots away to the field.

Guys in front of me, they hit 3-woods on the green, two-putted. My playing partner hit it on the green and I make 5. So it feels almost like a double bogey. So it's very tough mentally to work that out of your system.

That's kind of what happened because I played the next two holes quite poorly, and then I started getting the ship back on track.

Yeah, those are always the traps you fall into at U.S. Opens when you make silly, silly mistakes for that.

Q. Do you find yourself gearing up more for this week knowing the test compared to the typical Champions Tour event?

ERNIE ELS: Yes. I love the setup this week, old classic golf course with heavy rough but playing conditions as fair as you're ever going to see. Greens are holding with the rain we had.

Good flag positions. Not unfair, but tough flags. I just love the test. If you're playing good, you can do what Pdraig's



doing. Maybe not quite that good (laughter), in that vicinity.
Today was more the way I should have been playing from Thursday.

Q. What do you think that you need for consistency to play how you finished today? Is there a particular --

ERNIE ELS: Yeah. Like I said, worked through some faults in my swing yesterday. I should have had that going on Thursday kind of a thing, but sometimes that's just the timing of things in your swing and in your game.

Now I feel much more comfortable. Now I feel like I can really take on the course the way you should. We have really been on the defensive end the first round. Now I'm starting to get some confidence, and I wish there was a tournament next week kind of a thing.

We've got some big events coming to your point. With that, I've got to get some more consistency into my game and really feel what I'm doing now and take it forward.

Q. But it's encouraging obviously to know that right now at least, yeah.

ERNIE ELS: Just stay upright (laughter). That's a good sign.

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