

U.S. Open Championship 2024

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 2)

Martin Kaymer

Press Conference



Q. Martin, what's does feel like to be back on this property? You were just telling me you hadn't been back since your win in 2014.

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, last time I was here was when I won. I live in Germany, and it's not really a place that you just swing by quickly for a couple days.

Obviously coming here with all those good memories, when I played today it felt like I left yesterday. The golf course looks a little bit different than 10 years ago, but the feeling was very positive.

I also made sure I stayed in the same hotel room that I stayed 10 years ago. I don't know if it helps. It cannot hurt, I guess. I'm a little bit superstitious when it comes down to that.

I think, regardless, it's going to be a really nice week.

Q. Same hotel, same hotel room number?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, same number. They just changed it.

Q. Are you over at the Carolina?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah.

Q. What room number?

MARTIN KAYMER: That I don't say. But they made it really nice and renovated the place, and it's a nice place.

Q. You said you were talking with the owner about the green complexes being changed. Other than that, have you noticed any other changes?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, I talked to the owner yesterday at the Rolex dinner, and he said they changed a few of the greens. He didn't get to that point. I think we got interrupted what they changed, but we tried to copy the pin positions from 10 years ago, we tried to copy that today, and certain pins are not possible anymore because the

slope was too severe. That is definitely a little bit different.

To be honest, I was a little bit overwhelmed this morning when I played the first four or five holes. I said to my caddie, Has it been that hard 10 years ago? Was it that difficult to hit the greens in the first place and then make the up-and-downs, because the grass obviously is a little bit greener than 10 years ago.

It was very hard and very tight around the greens. So it was fairly easy to use a Texas wedge back then. Right now it's a little bit more tricky because the ball bounces a little bit more around the greens.

I found it really hard the way the golf course played today, and as you mentioned, especially around the greens. To make up-and-downs, it's going to be a good challenge.

Q. When you think back on that week, I know it's been 10 years ago, but what are some outstanding memories that you recall from that week?

MARTIN KAYMER: I watched the highlights from The Golf Channel. They had a 20-minute highlights show on, and I watched it last night. It really stood out how well I putted within 10 feet. First of all, I really avoided all the big numbers, double bogeys, triple bogeys, which can happen here quickly, and I made sure once I missed the green that the worst I made was bogey, and I didn't make that many bogeys because, as I said, I was quite good within eight or ten feet around the hole.

But I feel like this week is quite difficult to get it in that circle around the hole, that eight- to 10-foot circle. That was the key, I think, to my success. Obviously I played well, yes, but I didn't make many mistakes on the greens.

Q. Your form then was excellent. You had won THE PLAYERS very recently prior to coming here. Do you remember your first impression of the presentation of the golf course which was very different from what it was in '99 and 2005, the two prior U.S. Opens? Do you remember what you thought when you saw it for the first time?



MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, I remember I did an interview, I think, on Tuesday or Wednesday after my practice round in '14, and I got asked what the winning score might be, and I think I said something between 3- and 5-over par. I would say the same thing today. Then obviously when I was 10-under after two rounds, I surprised myself and a lot of other people were surprised.

It's a very difficult golf course, and it's a fantastic challenge. Everything needs to be spot-on, especially your approach shots. It's fairly easy. I'm sure we're going to see plenty of times this week that guys will putt off the green because the slopes are severe. The greens are, I think, borderline fast already. I don't think they can get much faster than this.

So my impression 10 years ago to now, I have a lot of respect for the golf course.

Q. The native areas, I remember on the weekend you hit two left tee shots on 4 and 5. You hit wonderful shots from there. What did you think the average or the percentage of drawing a decent lie from the native area was then, and what do you think it is now?

MARTIN KAYMER: 10 years ago, 70 percent I would say you've got a chance to get to the green. Right now it's the opposite, maybe 30 percent. Obviously the grass grows, the bushes there are a little bit thicker. There's less flatter sandy lies. So you need more luck, I think, these days.

Also the two holes that you mentioned, I think they lengthened the 5th hole. It's a little bit longer. Back then I hit 6-iron or 5-iron to the green from the left waste area. Now I don't see anybody hitting 5-irons there unless your name is Bryson DeChambeau, so that has changed.

But you need more luck, I think, these days.

Q. Given your return to form, do you feel like you have returned to the kind of shape where you can compete for titles on a consistent basis after maybe the last couple of years? We talked about this a little bit, but just your confidence level now compared to how it's been for a while?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, as I said last week, I think my form has been as good, or as I say, the best form I've been in the last two and a half years. Obviously the injury took a little bit longer than I thought. Then once you get over that, it takes time to get used to it again, to being in contention, to having good scores, that it becomes more normal.

It's a lot about letting go and playing free again, trusting the swing. I didn't trust my swing for the last two, three years.

There was so much happening. Now I have the consistency in my swing again that I know approximately where the ball goes if I hit a poor shot. So that helps a lot coming here.

But obviously my form is not as good as it was 10 years ago. I won THE PLAYERS Championship. I was in total control of my game.

Right now I'm on a very good path, and my mindset, I think, is very positive, and I really look forward to the challenge. If you would have asked me that question three, four months ago, I would have been a little scared of this place. But now I have a lot of respect for the place, and I think I can do well here.

Q. I wanted to ask about the win on Sunday from a team standpoint. You've obviously celebrated individual titles, celebrated Ryder Cup championships. What was that celebration and feeling like coming off of Sunday in Houston?

MARTIN KAYMER: I always was a big believer in this is how I approach the Ryder Cup. I try to be very selfish when it comes down to the golf. I try to do my very best, because ultimately this is the best you can do for the team. If you have a good round, you will help the team the most when you can do that.

Last week obviously I was trying to finish as high as possible. I did my best. Once I was done, I hoped that Adrian would have given himself an even better chance to win the title individually. He finished second, which was a great result.

Even me, I thought, if we can get a couple top 3, top 5s during the year, that will be good. But then the way Adrian played, the way Richard played when he won the PGA recently, we were all in a good mood and we were all trending in the direction that we want to. So I guess it was just a matter of time.

I was surprised a little bit that we won last week because talking with the other guys how much bad happened to them, how many poor holes they had and how many opportunities I also left out there and we still won, that was the best sign that we could have gotten moving forward. So that was a nice feeling.

Obviously this is what that tour is all about, that team spirit, and that is a nice part of the game of golf, that we can play both team and individual.

Q. Did you and Adrian fly up to Pinehurst together?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, we wanted to fly out Sunday, but I think now talking to Scottie Scheffler, Bryson and a few other guys, it was a good thing that we didn't fly out Sunday because I think it was very, very bumpy coming in here, and I'm scared. I don't like flying. So we took a flight Monday morning to Raleigh and then drove down here.

Q. You mentioned earlier about trusting your game. How do you get to the point where you can apply that trust in your swing during a competitive round?

MARTIN KAYMER: Obviously every shot you are trying to hit, you have a plan. And how many times does it actually happen? It's very rare. So this I would call the perfect golf shot, and we don't do many of those. But the bad ones, they're not as bad as others.

If you can hit the ball the way you wanted and the trajectory comes off the way you wanted, you control the spin, you control the ball flight, then confidence will come, and then the next step would be the results. Then you need to see good results.

Once you have those two parts, control over the ball flight and the strike of the ball, plus the positive results, then you just need to wait until it feels comfortable and you don't doubt yourself as much anymore, and then it's just a matter of time, I guess.

Q. You also mentioned you and other players talking about being so close, but the results not always matching. What are the challenges mentally when you feel your game is trending but you're not having the results that you want?

MARTIN KAYMER: I believe the biggest challenge is that you should not compare yourself to others. It's very easy to see the other guys having good results, winning events, and you know if I would have avoided this and this mistake, I would have been there. You always go down that road: If I would have done this or that.

I think comparing yourself to others and what you are capable of doing, this is the wrong way of approaching it. I think you really need to see the facts and stay in the moment where you are right now, and yeah, just keep believing that eventually it'll happen.

But in our sport, it's so fast living, next tournament, the week after, and then everybody has forgotten about the week before that. You always are on to the next. It's very difficult staying in the moment and being present in this job, I think.

Q. Much was made about how much you putted off the

green from your championship in 2014. Does that change with some of the new surrounds?

MARTIN KAYMER: Again, back then I felt okay chipping around those greens, but I really wanted to avoid silly mistakes that led to double bogeys. That's why I putted off the greens.

This week it might be a little bit different. I might be chipping. I might be using the rescue a little bit more often or the hybrid around the greens because of the length of the grass. It's a little bit higher, a little bit thicker, so it's not as tight as it used to be.

It depends a lot on the situation. Back then there was never really a question for me. I took the putter and I did what I did, tried to get it within eight, ten feet and then hoped to make the par. This week I might approach it a little bit different.

Q. In the three U.S. Opens they've had here, there are a number of players champions who have finished in the top six. You obviously won here. Tiger has a second and a third. Phil has a second. Sergio, Adam Scott, Tim Clark, Hal Sutton, Davis Love III. Is that entirely coincidental, or is there something about these two golf courses that don't look anything alike that have a similar approach?

MARTIN KAYMER: I think it's about the difficulty. It's really about the difficulty of the golf course. Sawgrass is also in my books -- obviously you need to hit the fairways, but the second shots are very important. Is it a coincidence? You named great players, by the way. They know what they are doing.

I think it comes down to the difficulty. Great players, they believe, first of all, in their ability of playing well on tough golf courses.

This week, maybe 50 percent of the field don't believe in themselves that they can do well here because it is a scary track. As I said to my caddie earlier, mentally it's such a funny approach this week because usually you go on to the putting green and you try to make birdie, you try to make the putt. Here it almost creeps in that you want to avoid the bogey, avoid the three-point, because a lot can happen.

This is a strange thought. This is a new thought. And I talked to a few players, and a bunch of them, they have their thought, avoiding the bad. I think great players, the guys that you just mentioned, they have that positivity and that belief every single course they play. They don't have that doubt.



I would break it down to class of the players.

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