

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Thursday, June 29, 2023
Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA
SentryWorld

Mike Small

Quick Quotes

Q. Mike, I know it didn't end the way you wanted to, but pretty spectacular for not probably playing a whole lot.

MIKE SMALL: Yeah, for not playing a lot of tournament golf I held it in there. I didn't hit many fairways today, and that caught up with me on the last hole. The last hole was probably the best drive I hit it all day.

But that's just a weird hole when they take a par-5 and turn it into a par 4 and move the tee up. That's a weird deal.

And then I left myself a bad layup. It was a good day. I played solid. A little nervous starting off. Solid day.

Q. You got a few runs in with Steve and looked like there was a lot of conversation in terms of how to play some of these holes. Were there any that you were uncertain of coming into the day, and how do you feel you executed the game plan?

MIKE SMALL: Yeah, the ones I was uncertain of, I didn't play very good actually. The ones with some obstacle out there, like No. 3, I think -- 1, 2 -- 4. 4 is a tough one.

And then No. 9. I still don't know how to play No. 9. I don't know if anybody knows how to play that one.

It's such a good golf course. But to do that and on that hole and to do that the way, I think it just kind of sits out by itself. I hit 121 to the pin and hit a great drive I thought. Just barely in the rough.

Where you lay it up to? I laid it up to a bad number. You can't judge how far you're going to lay it up out of the rough. It's so thick. Ended up being the tightest lie over water to a tucked pin and just hit a bad shot.

Q. (Indiscernible) off the tee is not a problem, right?

MIKE SMALL: No, but the rough is a problem. And then



when you hit it in the rough, where do you lay it up to? I laid up down the right, but then it -- it's just a tough hole.

The hole is not made to receive a driver to play a 430 yard hole, like a 420 hole. It's like 500 or something.

Q. What's it like to look up and see your name at the leaderboard multiple times? Do you even pay attention to that when you're out there?

MIKE SMALL: I saw it. It's nice. It means I'm playing well. But I've been playing golf a long time. I played full-time back in the day. I've had that experience.

I've learned not to take this too seriously. It's not the end of the world for me anymore. It's not like I need to keep a card on any tour anymore or anything, so it's not the end of the world.

I would like to have finished better. I stayed away from doubles all day. If I'd just made a bogey on the last hole, it would have been a good day.

It feels good. It feels good to be here. I played okay good two weeks ago at Steve's event last two rounds, so I'm playing okay.

Q. Did you qualify the day before your team left for NCAA?

MIKE SMALL: I did on the way to the airport. I dropped them off at Olympia Fields and went across the street to Flossmoor and it worked out great. I played in this thing twice before and did okay, but I haven't played in a few years so it's nice to get back.

It's a special tournament.

Q. When you got back from Grayhawk, what was the to get ready for this?

MIKE SMALL: Grayhawk, I got back from there and had to decompress because that was a tough deal. We had a really great season. Finished highly ranked. Probably had as good a chance as anybody. So I got over that for a couple days and went to Strick's event and tried to find it.

Played better there, and then I've been improving the last



week and a half. Western Junior in Chicago. I played our state Open Monday and Tuesday. I played our senior state Open Monday and Tuesday. I didn't come here until Tuesday night.

I needed to play, so I played our state Open and come up here Tuesday night.

Q. How did that go?

MIKE SMALL: I won that. So that was good.

Q. Different deal, though?

MIKE SMALL: Different deal, oh, yeah. Huge different deal. And this course is so hard. It's difficult. I hit one fairway on the back nine today. Hit four fairways all day.

So to do that and score what I shot, I'm pretty thankful.

Q. What was the most impressive birdie in your mind out there that you made today?

MIKE SMALL: I birdied the first three holes. I made a bomb out there on No. 12, my third hole, which was a surprise. Then I played pretty solid.

No. 18, I hit a wedge -- killed driver, hit wedge in there about six inches. So I tapped that in for birdie on 18. That was a good one.

Q. So 10, you birdied, and yesterday it looked like Steve and Jerry were really perplexed as to how to play that hole.

MIKE SMALL: Well, we were trying to decide with the sprinkler -- if the sprinkler yardage is correct. That's such a weird layup. You're almost hitting out into the highway, but it's such a dogleg and you want to be sure with the tree in your way and the fairway when you're approaching it that direction is very shallow, so your numbers have to be correct.

We thought maybe one of the heads was wrong, but it wasn't.

Q. And birdie, birdie, birdie to start was probably -- at that point, what are you thinking?

MIKE SMALL: Yeah, you never know how I'm going to play. I tell people my game is -- remember when we were kids and we used to go to church and had potluck dinners. You didn't know what you had in the dish until you opened it up. Oh, I like that, or I don't like that. That's my golf game.

Trying to find out what I had today, and it started off good. So it felt good to do that.

Q. What would you call what you had today? Like a tater tot casserole, or what was it?

MIKE SMALL: It was a roast beef dinner there at the end, until the end, but the dessert was bad.

Q. What do you hope to open up the next three days?

MIKE SMALL: Open up?

Q. In the potluck. How do you think this sets you up for the next three days?

MIKE SMALL: I know I want something good, but you don't know. I don't know. That's my game. I don't play full-time anymore. I coach, and I'll be recruiting on the phones this week and I'll be trying to relax and get away a little bit.

I don't know. I'll work on the range and try to find my driver. I missed fairways with hybrids and 3-woods off the tee today, which is pretty bad. If I can hit it in the fairway, I'll be okay. I can compete.

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