

PHIL MICKELSON

Q. Welcome back to the Safeway Open. If we can get some comments on being back in Napa.

PHIL MICKELSON: I really enjoy it here. I love coming up here with the family. But what a fun golf course to play, and this year we're going to have spectacular weather and the course is going to really be showcased. The greens are firm, it's in immaculate shape, and what a fun tournament to start the year.

Q. How much adrenaline do you still have going from the Presidents Cup?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it was really a fun, special week last week. It really was something that I'll cherish, and for us to have that kind of performance was exciting to be a part of. I feel like I'm actually really excited to play because I've been playing well, I'm excited to get back in competition. I think that I'm going to have a good chance.

Q. What are you looking to prove to yourself this week?

PHIL MICKELSON: That my game is back to where I've been wanting it to be. So I have an opportunity to start the new season with a little bit of momentum. I've been playing well, so I would like to get a good finish, get a good start.

Q. There's a few twists and turns out here. Does that suit well for your game on the golf course?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think that it's a fun, strategic golf course to play and there's multiple ways to play each hole. When you feel well, you can take a little bit more aggressive lines off the tee, try to cut some of the doglegs. When you're not, you can play a little bit more conservative. But the greens are going to be really showcased this week. They're firm, they're fast, they're undulated. I think that's going to be a challenge.

Q. How did you do today on the greens, Phil?

PHIL MICKELSON: I did all right. I enjoyed them. I got a good feel for the speed, the break, the contours. They're challenging but fun.

Q. What's it like with Tim on the bag, how much fun do you guys have?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, we laugh a lot. We've had a really fun dynamic. I think the strength is he's a phenomenal green reader and that's really going to be put to the test this

week because these are challenging, but we've had a lot of fun.

Q. You have a week like last week that's so unique compared to what you experience here. What benefits can you take from that for the rest of the season?

PHIL MICKELSON: Like I say, a little bit of momentum from playing well, from getting kind of my game back to where I want it and then to have an opportunity to showcase it more on the individual level. So I'm excited to play.

I think this is going to be a fun tournament, too, George, because we've got a lot of good, young players here. I get to play with Bryson DeChambeau, who's really a good talented player. We've got the former No. 1 amateur Maverick McNealy, the newest member of the KPMG family, he's playing here this week. We're going to have a lot of the good young talent, the future stars will be here this week. You might not have heard of them right now but you will soon.

Q. A quarter of your wins have been in California. Is it a matter of just feeling comfortable on these courses or is there something else that you can pinpoint to your success?

PHIL MICKELSON: I think a lot of guys struggle with the poa annua greens, which is a grass that I grew up playing so I'm very comfortable on the greens. When you grow up and spend most of your time back east in Florida on the bermuda, this is a very awkward surface to putt on. The color looks different, it's hard to sometimes read. But when you're used to it, I don't know of much better surfaces than these right here.

Q. Talking about the young guys. You for 25 years have avoided the injuries that a lot of guys do have. (Inaudible.)

PHIL MICKELSON: Not really. I think that there's many different ways to swing a golf club and you need to find the way that works best for you and stay on that path because if you keep working laterally changing the way you swing the club, you'll never get to that finish line, you're always working sideways rather than going forward. So everybody's got to find their own swing, but I'm fortunate in that the way I swing puts a lot less stress on my body than some others.

Q. Do you ever have guys ask you what's your key to staying out here 25-plus years without any really major injury?

PHIL MICKELSON: Again, I'll get asked that, but there's so many different ways to swing the club that what's right for me isn't necessarily right for everybody else.

Q. How conscious, though, was developing that swing so it doesn't cause stress on your body, just the way it naturally worked?

PHIL MICKELSON: My swing showcases more of the strength of my swing, which is hands and touch. So the longer, the more fluid it is, the more hand oriented rather than body oriented it is, the more my touch and feel and hands get to be showcased. So my swing was built more around my strengths whereas other people's swings are built more around their strengths.

Q. What keeps you motivated, what keeps you excited about being out here after all these years?

PHIL MICKELSON: I love the challenge of competing. I don't care what it is, I just love to compete. I love the opportunity to play against the best, I love the opportunity and the challenge of trying to win and get my game back to the level I know it can be.

Q. Have you spent much time around Maverick?

PHIL MICKELSON: A little bit, yeah. We played some golf at the same club and I've known his father for some time and I've known what a talented player he is for five, six years now. More than that, he's a class guy.

Q. In what way, what's he like?

PHIL MICKELSON: He just gets it. He's intelligent, he's easy to be around, he's got great social skills, he makes you relax and he's very easy to talk to.

Q. You talk about the challenge of the competition. Has that waned at all in recent years? What do you do to keep that?

PHIL MICKELSON: I just love competing. So it doesn't matter if it's golf or whatever, I'm going to find something to compete in and challenge myself and golf right now is the greatest vehicle for that.

Q. You were eighth here last year, four great rounds. Is there something that you found out about this golf course that is advantageous that works for you?

PHIL MICKELSON: This course showcases my strength, which is iron play, distance control, shot making, controlling trajectory spin. That's always been the strength of my game. And these greens can be very difficult to get to the pins because of the contours and the slopes, and so my ability to have good distance control coupled with the right spin has allowed me to get some of these pin placements, so I think this year I'm going to add to that performance from last year.