

PHIL MICKELSON

Q. Phil, thank you for joining us at the Cologuard Classic. Before we begin, I'd like to give you this opportunity to give your thoughts on Tiger.

PHIL MICKELSON: So all the guys here understand and appreciate what he has meant to the game of golf and for us and the PGA TOUR. We all are very appreciative and supportive of what he's done for us, but right now that's so far from our minds. And I thought Rory McIlroy really said it well when he said that we're just lucky and appreciative that his kids didn't lose their father. We all are hoping and praying for a full and speedy recovery, but we're also thankful, because that looked awful, and we're thankful he's still with us.

Q. Thank you for being here this week. You haven't been here since 1991, but last time you were here you had great success. Did that contribute at all to you wanting to come back this week?

PHIL MICKELSON: So, I was very fond and always appreciative of this tournament. It was obviously the first tournament I ever won on the PGA TOUR, but also the Conquistadors gave me a sponsor's exemption that week in 1991 and I'll never forget it. I was always appreciative of that.

Unfortunately, the regular Tour did not come here after a while and I was really disappointed because I've always loved playing here. There's a special place in my heart for this golf course and this tournament.

To be able to come back, I can't believe it's been 30 years, it just has raced by. It brings back a lot of those memories. And Steve Loy and I have been spending some time the last few days -- he caddied for me that week, he was my college golf coach -- as we were talking about all the great things that have happened certainly the week here and all around that week and that win and how much fun we had. It's a really special place to me. For me to come back and relive and experience all of those moments has been fun.

Q. How has your relationship with Tiger evolved over the years?

PHIL MICKELSON: We were -- it's -- we were opponents -- you know, competing against each other for quite some time, then we started working together to try to get the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup team events, to get our players to play our best, and then we became partners in developing a couple of matches. It's been fun to be able to work with him. Again, I realize, just like all the guys here do, how much he's meant to the game of golf and the growth and getting us off the back page and onto the front page. We've all benefited from him.

You're right, it has really evolved from competing against each other to working with each other.

Q. Jim Furyk the other day was talking about his days and his team battling your team back in those days. What are some of your better memories of going head to head, ASU and U of A?

PHIL MICKELSON: We had a lot of good matches and we both -- both squads were always really good while Jim and I were in college. We had some great matches against each other, with each other.

I remember playing with Jim back in junior golf and one memory that stands out for me was it was raining and he had these white cotton gloves and he had no problems gripping the club. I thought, wow, I've never seen that, never heard of that. It's little things like that that we kind of carry through.

Jim's one of the most quality guys on the PGA TOUR and I'm very appreciative of our friendship over the years.

Q. He also said that you've had a knack for one-upping him through the years in college and the pros, you're always one step ahead. Are you looking for some more of that this week? You guys both won your first two starts.

PHIL MICKELSON: That's not my motivation because I find myself pulling for his success. He's a guy you just can't help but pull for, he's one of the greatest guys. I think U of A is very proud to have him as an alumni and he's represented the school so well for so many years as well as the PGA TOUR. Like I say, I'm appreciative to call him a friend.

Q. Jim was mentioning that in those days, even back then you were super creative in some of those matches and sometimes to the point where Coach Loy would want to maybe say that might not be the shot we want to do here. I'm just wondering if that was always a part of your game, just outside the box and daring.

PHIL MICKELSON: It is. I've just always enjoyed playing like that and playing creatively. It goes back to when I started hitting golf balls for the first time in my yard and my dad put a little putting green there and the same shot got boring. I just didn't want to do the same shot over and over, so I was moving the pins and tucking the pins, and then I started going in behind the trees and off of the dirt and creating more of a challenge so I would have to be creative and figure out how to hit those shots. It goes back to when I was just a few years old doing that in my yard.

I love everything about the game of golf and I love trying to create shots, trying to come up with shots. One of the best shots I ever hit, I was even pointing it out today with my brother, Tim, was a shot I hit -- it was No. 11 at the time and now it's 15, the par 5. It was an 88-yard

8-iron that I had to slice around the trees and it side spun all the way across that green down to that left pin. I think it was maybe Friday or Saturday of the Tucson Open. Not the year I won, it might have been '92 or '93. It was after I won the first time. I think I won in '95 and '96 as well, so it was one of those years in between.

I still remember that because that ball spun on the green 80 feet to the side and went in. It was one of the greatest shots I've ever hit in my life. That's the stuff that I really enjoy.

Q. How did Coach Loy allow you to be that person, but still a (inaudible)?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, I wouldn't tell him what I was doing most of the time. I remember one time we were at McCormick Ranch and the last hole is this island fairway and you've got to hit over the water to the green. I hit it on the left side of the grass and I was up against like we used to have like 150 markers in the trees. So I didn't have a left-handed swing, I had a right-handed swing. Coach was back there helping the guys 300, 400 yards away, and I wanted to flip over an 8-iron and hit it right-handed and try to knock it on the green.

So I'm kind of half asking him from 400 yards away, "Hey, can I "-- and I see Coach go like this (indicating.)

All right. So I stand up over that shot and I'm about ready to swing and I hear, "Wait!" I see him back there 400 yards. "Don't! What are you doing?" He's telling me now to pause. Now I've got to wait for him to drive up. He says, "What are you doing? Just play it up, ensure your 5, we've got the team win," blah, blah, blah.

He was right. That was the one time I listened to him and he was right. Of course he was right there and he knew what I was doing, that's why I didn't tell him half the time.

Q. Phil, how much of those memories from 30 years ago, your win as an amateur, stay with you going into this weekend as you look to try to get the 30-year (inaudible)?

PHIL MICKELSON: I played with Rocco Mediate the third round of that event, so I have a decent memory of the event, and I played with Rocco Mediate and we were still talking about some of the things that kind of transpired. So here we are 30 years later. He remembers some of the stuff I remember. It's the first time I had really had a chance to play with him. I had watched him prior to that. So I would say you have such great memories that those things really -- because it was such a special moment in my life.

Q. Phil, you have a chance to make history this week here on the Champions Tour. No one's ever won their first three events if I'm not mistaken. Are you aware of that and what does that mean to you, somebody who's won as much as you have in your career?

PHIL MICKELSON: So after I won the first two, I became aware because somebody told

me, but I wasn't really thinking about it. I think it's going to be a tough challenge for me here because the course allows you to play it a lot of different ways. Although I'm going to play it pretty aggressively, I'm going to bring in a lot of trouble, too. If I can kind of eliminate some of the big misses, I think I'm going to make a lot of birdies.

But it also allows you to make a lot of birdies playing a more conservative line, too. I think there are going to be a lot of guys that shoot some pretty good numbers and force me to go low if I want to try to come out on top.

So I don't think it's going to be an easy task by any means, but I'm looking forward to it. It's a fun opportunity.

Q. You played really well today/

PHIL MICKELSON: I hit some good shots. I had a team that played really well, too. When one was out of the hole, the other one was in it. They did a really good job, so our pro-am team scored pretty low. When they were out of the hole, I seemed to make a couple of birdies for them as well.

Q. Any thoughts on the Conquistador helmet over there?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, it looks cool. I've got three of them that are wanting a fourth, they want a nice even number. They want a foursome. They don't like to go out as three, they're always looking for a fourth, so that would be a nice fit.

Q. Have you mapped out your season in terms of which Tour events you're playing, which Champions Tour events you're going to play?

PHIL MICKELSON: So, I haven't looked at the Champions events. I will play THE PLAYERS and Honda and most likely play Valero and Masters. I'm going to wait to commit to that because there's a few things that might change, but that's kind of my schedule through the Masters. And I really haven't looked at much past that and I haven't really looked at Champions Tour schedule.

I want to start playing on the regular Tour with a little bit less stress. I've been really hard on myself when I make some mistakes and I've got to kind of ease up and play a little bit more free and a little bit lighter. If I can do that, I think I can shoot some pretty good scores out there.

Q. When you came here as an amateur in '91, did you expect it win that year?

PHIL MICKELSON: So there's an interesting story on my Instagram account about that that I talked about, about --

Q. The notes?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, writing it down. So I definitely thought that that was something -- it was a goal I had set, I had written it down, I put it out there and I had forgotten about it actually three, four weeks later when the tournament came, but absolutely that was in my mind for a month leading up.

Q. Jim Furyk has said that the Champions Tour is his home tour now. Where are you at in terms of embracing the Champions Tour? Are you both feet in, one foot in?

PHIL MICKELSON: So it's the challenge of competing against the best players in the world that motivates me, so it's what gets me up in the morning to work out and gets me to the range and practice and put in the work. Without that challenge or without that hope or opportunity, I don't think I would be as motivated to work as hard as I do.

So that still has to be a big part of my schedule, and I really do have the belief I can play and compete out there. I just have not played my best and I've been really hard on myself when I haven't. When I go out and play at home, I'm playing well enough and shooting the scores to play and compete. When I get on Tour, I'm playing a little bit tight, which is not normal for me. So I've got to work on that.

Q. Phil, we saw you on 9. Can you just tell us what you were talking about on that tee box, how you were strategizing on that tee box?

PHIL MICKELSON: So there's not much to strategize if you're going to hit a 4-iron in the fairway and move on. But trying to find the right line, it's the right line for me to hit driver and what pins to go at and what the line is and do I want it to draw or fade.

Then we had to get up and see how far left the out-of-bounds was, how firm the ground was, things like that. Like I say, I've got hazard right, out-of-bounds left, but there's 60 yards wide, plenty of room to fit a golf ball in and I've got to find the right time to hit that club, what wind do I want. I don't want that wind blowing right to left to the out-of-bounds.

So it might be under certain -- what scenarios am I going to hit driver there and then what scenarios am I going to hit 4-iron. So like I said, there's a lot of opportunities on this course to play a different line and play these holes a different way, and then sometimes you've just got to play the smart way, more conservative and cut your birdie chance in half.