

**ROUND 1 QUICK QUOTES**  
February 22, 2024

**MJ DAFFUE (-6)**



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**Q. Opening round 6 under, what did you like about today?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Pretty much everything. You know, I've had a lot of time off and I was able to work on some things mentally. I've played so much golf the last two years that I think it was 15 weeks off, so I was eager to get out obviously here to just play golf. Being away from the game so much, you get very grateful to be out here.

For me, I wanted to put some systems in place, I wanted to commit to every shot and have a clear picture and it didn't matter the result. I was able to do that pretty much the whole round.

I was able to get out a lot of the feels that I usually feel when I play well. So for me it was just a nice way to get around. I drove the ball really well, I putted really nicely. Overall I just was able to execute somewhat what I was seeing in front of me.

**Q. And you had seen this course last year, so what's kind of the keys and takeaways you took from last time out?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Yeah, when you see it the second time you obviously can play a little bit of a different game plan. There's a lot of shots where you think you have the right club but you have to take one more, it just plays so much longer. And then it's long. Luckily I'm a good driver of the ball, so I'm giving myself pretty good looks.

But the key for me has been I needed to switch a little bit and get more greens in regulation this season starting on. Last year it killed me a little bit and so today was a good iron game play today.

Yeah, this golf course, you just don't need to attack too much. Greens in regulation goes a long way.

**Q. Sunday, last man in the field, so how good does it feel to just kind of -- what momentum will you gain from this round today?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Yeah, once again I was fortunate that they called me that I got the sponsor's invite when it opened up. I was messaging the guy for like a month, so I'm sure he was tired of me. I wanted to be here, I like this golf course, I like this place and once again, I was eager to play golf. Coming on short notice, it's a good course for me to start out. Like you can get away with here and there bad shots. So coming off my surgery 10 weeks ago, there's always a little bit of doubt. There's a little bit of pain, but you've got to just trust it and



not flinch at it.

**Q. How did you find out you were in the field?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** The Tour called me Sunday night and was like listen, Will Zalatoris withdrew, Scott Piercy's in on his number and they decided to give it to you. I was ecstatic. I was still hopeful that there's like one or two withdrawals because I was third alternate and eventually the third alternate got in. So there was always a chance, but it was nice to be able to plan some flights and stuff like that.

**Q. Since we've seen you last, you've had some injuries. Kind of go over hand, you said knee. So what happened and the process and how you're healing?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Yeah, so I played pretty much the whole -- since August last year with pain in my hand. Thought it was overuse, played 35 events. Rested, came back, not any better.

Went and saw a doctor and I have what they call carpal boss and it's hereditary, it runs in the family. It's just a bone condition where the carpal bones grow into each other and anytime you bend your hand it collides and causes inflammation.

Dr. Jordan in Houston was able to go in there. It's not a cool procedure, but he chisels all the bone away and makes room for the movement.

Yeah, 10 weeks and it's been -- I mean, I've gone hard. My physical therapist told me that you need to settle down because I was just ready to get back. So I think it's good. It's about 80 percent in the hand.

Yeah, I tore my MCL, luckily a first degree tear, on New Years Eve getting out of the car. But we were able to survive and it's nice to have the family around. I had a good excuse to get away from the game.

The game was beating me down mentally. I have bipolar and for me, getting into a deep hole when you play too much and when you don't play well, only way to get out is just to step away. So it was a blessing in disguise.

**Q. What have been the keys to getting back to physically and mentally?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Well, the keys are just to reflect, talk it through with your family, your wife and then some mentors. I have some good mentors, Pdraig Harrington has been mentoring me a little, I grew up knowing Retief. All those guys have been helping me to reset. I was able to refocus on what I need to do in my swing and how to build my game, reevaluate how I want to approach this season and what makes me the best, and then set some high goals.

The key to putting it all together mentally and physically is to just -- for me, being bipolar, your head's all over the place. To put systems in place, routines and being disciplined about



it.

**Q. Have you been able to talk and get together with Pdraig at all this week?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Yeah, we played a practice round on Tuesday. At some stage I told him, Are you going to give me a lesson or tip? He was like, I don't need to give you anything because it's all in your head. I was like, OK.

**Q. Speaking of friends, Erik van Rooyen is up there, fellow Zurich partner. What can you say about his game trending?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** Obviously since Mexico it's been confidence on. I played with him at Zurich and there was a little bit of a struggle there, but I think he was where a lot of guys were at some stage in the year, you know.

But I've watched him put the work in. I mean, he is a grinder, he's a believer, he is positive and I love feeding off of him. We grew up together, we've known each other since we were 14. Yeah, it's great to have someone that is just positive about everything.

Yeah, so his trend right now, I mean, it's pretty much when you put the hard work together with some confidence and that's anybody's work towards it.

**Q. Have you talked to him? Are you pitching at all to play Zurich this year at partners?**

**MJ DAFFUE:** I did, I did. Unfortunately, he told me no, he's planning on not playing, so I'm looking for a partner.

