

U.S. Senior Amateur Championship

Press Conference

Thursday August 29, 2019

Bob Royak

Q. So we're here with Bob Royak, the 2019 U.S. Senior Amateur champion. How does that sound, Bob?

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, that's terrific. To be a USGA champion, to think of the fact that your name is gonna go up on the wall in Far Hills with the other champions for that 2019, that's kind of beyond belief.

Q. Would that be an emotional moment to see your name go up there?

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, absolutely. I don't know when they put it up, but I'll go up there sometime next year maybe if I am in New York and get over there and see it.

Q. When you were growing up who were the players you emulated?

BOB ROYAK: Growing up, you know, Nicklaus was always a big -- you know, probably my favorite player growing up. And then as I got -- when Tiger hit the tracks, you know, he's the guy that I love to watch play.

Q. Today par was your friend more than anything.

BOB ROYAK: All week actually. I'd love to count up the number of birdies I made. How many holes did I play? I have no idea. I probably made less than ten birdies and however many holes that was, which is unusual. I usually get on a roll and can make a lot of birdies.

This week I made a lot of pars.

Q. Didn't make any birdies today.

BOB ROYAK: No.

Q. Second time it's happened last couple years.

BOB ROYAK: They set the course up pretty good.

Q. Talk about this one. Early on in the match you had several birdie attempts and was just missing for whatever reason. Then he got back in the match with back-to-back birdies at 9 and 10. What was going through your mind?

BOB ROYAK: Just keep it going. I knew I was hitting ball really well. I felt really good with my tee shot. I got a little unnerved on 11 when I missed it left there and then missed the fairway to the right.

That was the only time I kind of maybe second

guessed a little bit today, because I really drove the ball pretty good. You have to out here. The rough is -- they haven't mowed it since when we started last Thursday, so it's grown probably an inch or two since then.

Q. You're 1-down on 12; both missed green to the right. Tell us about that chip. That's pretty good chip you hit there.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, absolutely. I had a decent lie, not great. I took a 9-iron and just played it back on my right foot. I knew if I trapped it, got it rolling a little bit downgrain, I saw his chip a little bit get away from him to the left, so I probably played another two or three feet more to the right and that was a good read.

Q. He got in trouble on 13 in the fairway bunker. It was pretty much up against that tongue --

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, I didn't see his lie. He must've had a bad lie. He had to just kind of wedge it out, right? I didn't see it.

Q. Yeah, up against that tongue. But you played over the flag. Had about 30 feet and then it went past pretty far.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah.

Q. You missed speed on that?

BOB ROYAK: Yep. Downhill, downgrain. Kind of got maybe a little frisky on that one. It was a little quicker than I thought it was going to be, but that was a nice putt coming back.

Q. Yeah. It was about a six-footer. Was that straight in or...

BOB ROYAK: It was right center. Right center, yep.

Q. So now you go 1-up there, and then it's back and forth with pars. 15, talk about 15. You're in the middle of the fairway.

BOB ROYAK: Worst shot I hit today and probably the worst shot I hit in three days. I had a great yardage, too. I told Jack I got full gap wedge. Only thing that was throwing me off was it was a little downwind. That green has been the hardest green to stop the ball on because it's firmer and it's downgrain. A lot of guys hit that green and go lower, and I was worried about carrying it too far.

I just hit it a little heavy probably just trying to ease up



on it a little.

The chip, that was disappointing. The chip wasn't hard at all. Probably just miss-hit it a hair and hit the fringe instead of on the green. Ran that putt by, but I --

Q. -- made that putt.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah.

Q. Yeah, it was about six and a half feet.

BOB ROYAK: That was not very smart.

Q. But, again, you were good from that range.

BOB ROYAK: I'm always good in that range for whatever reason. If it's for par, I make them. If they're for birdie, maybe; 50/50.

Q. Go to 17 now. You had about that four-and-a-half-footer that you missed.

BOB ROYAK: It was a bad first putt. I can't remember what the second putt looked like. Now I'm trying to remember. Went a little right to left. Oh, yeah, I didn't play it high enough. I just didn't play enough break. It was a really not a good putt, first putt.

I was going up the slope. I thought it was into the grain, and then when it got on top it kind of leveled off and it just was quicker than I read.

But it was a good tee shot there.

Q. In the fairway on 18.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah.

Q. What did you have?

BOB ROYAK: I had a long way. I had 226 back to the hole. I think the pin was 30 on. I had like 195 or 6 to the front. It was into the wind and I could have hit a 4. Could've busted up my 4-iron, but I couldn't have got it to the hole.

So I kind of just hit a really solid hybrid, 19 degree hybrid, and just pulled it a little. Didn't hit it that poorly. Wind maybe took it a little left, and fortunately I had a decent lie in the rough.

Q. And then 50-degree wedge out of that.

BOB ROYAK: I had two choices. My initial thought was I was going to take my sand wedge and I was going to fly it up to the ridge. So I had maybe 20 feet to the top of the ridge and then it leveled off. I either had to go way high and just stop it around the hole, or go low and run it up the hill.

I figured if I went low I could get it within six feet. If I went high I could hit it over the green or leave it short. I went with the safer shot and came out just about what I

thought. Just ran it up the hill. What did I have, about five, six feet?

Q. Yeah.

BOB ROYAK: And fortunately it was pretty straight in.

Q. In your favorite range again. And then you dropped the putter. What's the emotion at that point?

BOB ROYAK: Relief. Done. Yeah, it's hard to describe to be a USGA champion. You think about it, you know, last night and even this morning before you tee off what it means, and when it finally happens, it's like Whoop, relief.

Q. Your fourball partner has won one of these.

BOB ROYAK: Dougie Hansen is a very good friend of mine.

Q. Did you hear from him?

BOB ROYAK: He texted me. He said just, Play one shot at a time, one hole at a time. I learned a lot from him. He's a great player. I learned a lot of golf from him. I owe a lot to him.

Q. You said about this book, when did you buy it?

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, so it was probably right after Notre Dame, so end of June, early July. The Lost Art of Putting. I was on a Podcast, some golf Podcast, and these guys were on there. I listened to it and I was like, Oh, this makes a lot of sense.

So I kindled the book and read it and I listened to those guys. They were on a couple other Podcasts. It just clicked with me. So I don't line my ball anymore. They don't like you to line your ball because they're all about pace, not about line and worrying about that kind of thing.

And it worked for me.

Q. You never got past the round of 16 in either previous USGA championships.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah.

Q. Why did it click this year?

BOB ROYAK: Experience really helps I think. So this was my fourth go. It's amazing what experience does for you. Just in the qualifying rounds you just pace yourself, don't play yourself out of it.

I played the worst golf I've played all year on Saturday and scraped it around. That was the worst golf I've played all year. I said, You got to fix this.

So I drove it really good on Sunday and I really hit it about the same every day. Yeah, it was just a long

week. A lot of shots.

Q. You must have turned 55, right?

BOB ROYAK: I did. So I played at -- this is my fourth, right? I played in (indiscernible), Minikahda, and then Oregon last year, and this is my fourth.

Yeah, so I actually took it to the 18th hole in my first one at (indiscernible) in my like third-round match. I forget about Minikahda. I believe won one match, last my second round, and last year I lost in the first round. I played terrible.

Q. Your birthday is coming up when?

BOB ROYAK: September 9th, yeah.

Q. So you gave yourself a little bit of an early birthday present.

BOB ROYAK: Uh-huh, absolutely.

Q. Might be the best one you've ever given yourself.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, it's good. December and January are one of my favorite times of year because I look forward at the schedule and map out my USGA events. Okay, where is the Senior Open qualifier, where is the and Senior Amateur qualifier, where is Mid-Amateur qualifier; where are the tournaments at? I picture those events. I'm going to be at Notre Dame. I'm going to be at Old Chatham. When I knew that was on the schedule, I'm going, Okay, I can drive there. It's going to be bermudagrass; it's going to fit my game.

I think if you look at the guys who played the best here, probably most of the guys were southeastern kind of guys. The turf here, it's not easy to play on.

Q. You look at where you're from, the Georgia area, but talk about growing up in upstate New York. Who influenced you there and how did you get started?

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, so my dad, he grew up as a caddie in Fairfield, Connecticut. Loved the game of golf; he was a lefty. Soon as we were old enough he gave us some clubs and balls, Go play. I never took lessons growing up. My brother Paul, he's three years younger than me; Jack a couple years older. We all played. It was a great life growing up.

In the summertime my mom would drop us off. She would go to work. She worked for the town of Guilderland and she would drop us off. We would play golf, go swimming, play golf, she would pick us up. 6:00 my dad and I would come out and play nine holes at night, and that was our whole summer. So it was a good place to grow up.

Soon as I got old enough I decided to go to the University of Tampa. I knew I wanted to go to Florida and try to play a little more golf and get away from winters.

Q. Getting back to your schedule, next year you can map it out; no qualifying for you. Senior Open you'll be playing with Steve Stricker and Bernhard Langer?

BOB ROYAK: Langer too?

Q. He won the Senior British, so that's the traditional group.

BOB ROYAK: Bandon next year and Oakmont the next year?

Q. (Speaking over one another.)

BOB ROYAK: Oakmont is one of my favorite golf courses. I played in the Amateur the last time it was there. Was that in '04 or '05.

Q. '03.

BOB ROYAK: I played in that.

Q. And obviously ten years in the Senior and the next two Mid-Ams, too.

BOB ROYAK: Next two Mid-Ams, and --

Q. And also get an exemption into the U.S. Open next year.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, so I was telling you last night, one of my best friends, Brian Claar, college roommate, he's a Champions Tour official and he lives really close to the course out there in Colorado, so I got a place to stay out there.

And I missed by a shot three weeks ago in the qualifying. I knew this was my last chance to get in.

Q. (Regarding Kinloch.)

BOB ROYAK: Oh, Kinloch. It's in Virginia? I've heard it of it. I heard it's outstanding.

Q. Last question. Jeff Wilson when he talked to the players he talked about the moment at the Senior Open. Obviously already played in the Senior Open. What do you think that moment will be like when you step on the tee with Steve Stricker and Bernhard Langer?

BOB ROYAK: Special, very special. I've played in two so it won't be a shock to the system now. I got to play with some -- I played with Esteban Toledo and Paul Broadhurst this past year and played with Tom Watson up in Detroit. So that was a thrill.

So hopefully I'll get some pairings with a couple of those guys even Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, so

that'll help. Yeah, it'll be awesome. Get some TV time.

Q. In Newport next year, historic club.

BOB ROYAK: Yeah, yeah.

Q. Congratulations on winning the U.S. Senior Amateur.

BOB ROYAK: Thank you.