

U.S. Amateur Championship

Quick Quotes

Wednesday August 16, 2017

Braden Thornberry

THE MODERATOR: Braden Thornberry, 2-up winner over Joaquin Niemann first round of the U.S. Amateur, which happened to pit the No. 1 ranked player in the world against the No. 3 ranked player in the world.

Tell us about your reaction when you heard that's what the your draw was. Got in through the playoff, but tell us about that.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, so I played with Joaquin the first two rounds of stroke play and got to be pretty good friends.

As soon as I finished the playoff I thought I might be like the third one in, the 59th seed. I knew he was tied for sixth, so I didn't know how it was all going to work out, but I knew it was going to be close.

After looking at it, we drew each other. Kind of unfortunate for two of the higher ranked players to play each other in the first round, but you got to do it at some point.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Seemed like the match turned a little bit on 13 when you were over there behind the tree and he was in the middle of the fairway and you win that hole. What was that shot like and what look did you have?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, that's kind of the way my golf game is. Usually better from that kind of stuff than the middle of the fairway. As you could watch today, I hit a lot of good shots from the rough and stuff and struggled a little bit from the middle of the fairway sometimes.

I had 225 and then wind coming in probably playing or so, and I hit it 2-iron and cut it probably 20 yards. It just looked good to my eye. It was a perfect number. Kind of just went from there. I was trying to get it 20 feet left of it and worked out a little better.

Q. You also holed a bunch of putts. One on 3, 18, some other up and downs. People come out here and they talk about the poana greens. They don't like them too much if they're from another part of



the country. Why did you think you've been able to adjust so well?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I've played poana once or twice before, but they're very similar to bent greens, which I've played a little bit more. We have bermuda where I'm from. Played bent mostly. Pretty similar to that.

No matter what you're on, if you start seeing a couple go in and get a little confidence it's kind of the same. Ball is just going in the hole, so...

Q. People remarked a lot about how quick you play and about how you got the great homemade swing. You haven't had lessons. There are a lot of great players like that, like Bubba Watson. Is the quickness just a natural thing for you, and do you do other things like that outside of golf as quick as that?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: You know, like getting ready for my shots and reading putts I'm very average. I would say I'm not on the quick end at all. I didn't realize I was that fast. Once I get in my routine I think it's like four or five seconds until I hit it.

I never even really knew it was fast until people started mentioning it and I saw it on video. It was never a purpose thing. Just kind of how I felt good on it.

Q. And the way you swing, your dad said that you tried to take a lesson once and said, This doesn't feel good. Any details on that?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, at the lesson like that they were more concerned with where the club was at the top and all that kind of stuff and not where the ball was going out there.

There are a lot of people that can swing it perfect, but all that matters is where that ball is going. That was kind of my philosophy, and I just worked hard.

Q. This is another great step in a great season. Jones Cup, Sunnehanna, Top 5 Tour event, NCAA championship. Did you see that coming? I'm sure you put in all the work on the front end, but did you see that coming, the success you've had this year?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: As far as the season, I've been close for a couple years. I had a couple wins my freshman years and I showed signs of it a couple times

a year.

I been working a lot with Coach Malloy and a sports psychologist to kind of just be more consistent really. The spurts of good were really good and I was just a little bit inconsistent.

Really the season has been more showing up each day with my game instead of losing it kind of here and there.

Q. Are you committed to going back to...

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yes, sir. As soon as I'm done here I'll be back in Oxford, so...

Q. Come back out presumably for the Walker.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yes, sir. If I make it, I'll be here.

Q. Do you remember much about watching U.S. Amateurs and things you might've picked up?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, it's cool being at this level, being one of the better ranked in the field. I remember a couple years ago playing my first U.S. Amateur at Olympia Fields. I was watching Maverick McNealy, who I played with first two days, and telling my dad who that was and how he was a big name and stuff like that.

So it's kind of cool to be considered one of those names and good friends with those guys. It's kind of cool.

Q. Impressions of Riviera?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I think this might be the best golf course I ever played. There is not a bad hole out here. They're all really fair. If you're playing good golf there are a lot of birdies. If you're playing bad, there are a lot of bogeys.

I'm a big fan of golf courses that are really fair and separate people, and I think this is one of them.

Q. Favorite course back home you play on the most?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: That I play on the most, probably Spring Creek Ranch. I don't know if you all know...

Q. Is that in Mississippi?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: It's in Tennessee just across the border. It's a many really nice golf course. All of them are pretty good. If you have friends there and a good practice area, you can figure it out.

Q. You said you've got a guy who helps you mentally.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: A girl actually.

Q. Okay. How did that help you today playing somebody as highly ranking as Joaquin?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I think he's one of the -- he's probably the best golfer I've ever played with even playing in the St. Jude and stuff like that.

So I knew he wasn't going to make mistakes. He was going to keep making birdies. What she's taught me really, it sounds cliché, just staying in the moment and just hitting each shot. I was playing really well, but I didn't want to start looking ahead and see like I needed to tie this hole or win this hole.

I was trying to just hit each shot the way I needed to do and just hope it worked out in the end.

Q. You think he's the best player you ever played with?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, I think so. He's just a really fierce kid. He just knows where the ball is going and he knows how golf works.

He's really good. He'll slap it around, but just misses it in the right spots and really good short game. Just kind of how it all comes together. I've seen it three days now and it's really impressive.

Q. What did you take away from the St. Jude mostly?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Obviously confidence knowing that's the best players in the world and I didn't even have my A Game. I drove it fairly poor that week. Obviously the putter was really good, so that always helps.

Kind of just knowing that I don't have to fire on all cylinders to play with those guys. So coming out here in an amateur tournament you can bring the confidence into there, and that's kind of what I got from that.

Q. How do you feel like you've played the past couple weeks and months after that tournament?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Won the Sunnehanna so I played really well there. Kind of since then, as every golfer knows, your game is close. I was doing everything good. Just wasn't clicking, kind of like in the first two rounds out here. I had some solid points, but at the same time I was just losing strokes here and there.

Today was definitely a step in the right direction. The course was playing hard today and I played well, so hopefully I can carry that momentum over.

Q. Did the short game come first for you and then the long game?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Just in my game in general?

Q. Yeah. As your game evolved, was the short game the first thing you did well?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, I don't really practice my putting a crazy amount. It comes fairly natural, mostly feel. I do drills here and there but not anything crazy.

I've always just really enjoyed chipping. If you can get feel on the greens and just weird shots around the greens and stuff like that, I think it goes into your whole game. Just makes you feel -- you don't have to be a robot. You can kind of feel it and get the ball out there.

I think it kind of spreads in all parts of your game.

Q. You won any money chipping over the years?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I haven't won any money, but usually just me and my friends will play games like to 21. We just do that for hours and hours.

Q. Knowing what you have tomorrow, how long will you allow yourself to enjoy what you accomplished today?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: That's kind of a hard question. Probably really just until I get home, and then just try to get some rest and reset. This match it didn't matter who I play. Tomorrow they don't care who I played. It doesn't matter.

Just I am going to go out there tomorrow and have a fresh start and handle whoever this is.

Q. Can I ask you about your decision to come back to Ole Miss?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Mainly I'm still working on some consistency, what I was saying earlier. Coach Malloy, he's really groomed me and I've gotten better every single semester. I think it would kind of be a dumb decision for me to leave early while I am still in that environment and I'm still getting tournaments for free and can have a great practice facility.

That was kind of behind my decision. I've talked to a lot of pros, you know, Ollie Schniederjans, and guys that have stayed, Maverick. You can only make a bad decision leaving early. No one ever thinks it's a horrible decision staying. Just playing, staying in the moment, and going from there.