

U.S. Amateur Championship

Quick Quotes

Thursday August 16, 2018

Cole Hammer

Q. We've got another one of our quarterfinalists here at the U.S. Amateur, Cole Hammer, from Houston, Texas. Great advancement. We talked a little bit about the momentum that you've established over the course of the last month or so with the Western and then the medalist, now advancement into the quarterfinals of the U.S. Amateur. Tell us how that happened and how you're feeling going into tomorrow.

COLE HAMMER: Well, really my game has felt great this whole year. I kind of felt due for something big this summer, kind of got it kick-started with the Four-Ball and then the Western Am. I finished well in a few tournaments leading up to that, and then the Western Am was just kind of the -- everything just kind of came up to that point. And I feel like I'm still playing that type of golf.

It's been great. To be in the quarterfinals is huge. I don't really know what that means for like next year, if that gets you back into this or not --

Q. It does.

COLE HAMMER: Well, that's huge news then. This is probably one of the hardest championships to qualify for, so it's always nice to be able to be exempt.

Q. Can you revert back to stroke play now?

COLE HAMMER: For sure. I mean, when I'm playing match play, I'm trying to treat it like stroke play, so I'm trying to play the golf course rather than my opponent, unless I've got to press it late in the match.

Q. Why did you feel like you were due for something big this year, and what changed from the beginning of 2018 to the end of '17?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, I've been hitting the ball well for the past couple years. That hasn't really changed. But I started a fitness program with Dr. Troy Van Biezen in Dallas, and I gained like 10 pounds and almost like 10 miles an hour in ball speed with my driver in about two months, and that made the long courses not so long for me anymore because I wasn't one of the longer players, and now distance is not really an issue.

That was a big factor as to why I've played so good this year, and also I switched to the claw putting wise back



in December, so this kind of all happened at the same time and ended up being a great move for me this whole year. Just really -- I'm really comfortable with everything that I'm doing.

Q. Compared to some of the other courses you've played, how would you describe Pebble?

COLE HAMMER: Awe inspiring. I think I would describe it that way, just because there's so much history here. And standing on the 6th green and 7th tee is one of the coolest experiences I've ever had. I've been lucky enough to play Pine Valley and Augusta, so I'd probably rank those a little bit higher than this as far as the golf course goes, but as far as a total experience goes, I don't know if anything could beat Pebble Beach on a sunny day like this. It's incredible, and most of the time in match play I'm grinding the whole time, but I find myself looking around at this beauty here.

Q. Your mom was on the bag at the Western. It's my understanding she was here this week but she's had to go do something with your sister?

COLE HAMMER: That's right. She was on the bag all last week, and I decided to give her a little break this week. She earned it. So I've got a local caddie on the bag this week that a family friend knew back in Houston. But yes, my mom was here until this morning. She left at about 4:00 a.m. to go to Kentucky to be with my sister, who's a horseback rider.

Q. Will she be back?

COLE HAMMER: Hopefully. Maybe on Sunday.

Q. At the Azalea Amateur earlier this year I believe you had a five-shot lead on the back nine and lost it but ended up winning in a playoff, and I'm just wondering how important that day was for you and what you learned and how important that was for everything that's happened since then.

COLE HAMMER: I truly believe that was the biggest day of my golf career so far. I was working on a great lead. I was 4-under through 10 bogey-free and came to the 11th hole, which is a brutal par-3. If you miss the green, you can easily make a big number, and I made a triple, and one of the other guys in my group made birdie, I think, so my lead kind of disappeared from there.

But I ended up pulling it off in a playoff. Hit it to like a

foot. It was just great to kind of go from the lowest of lows pretty much to the highest of highs, I guess, because I hadn't won a tournament in a couple years, and to pull that off was huge for me and gave me some momentum going into the Four-Ball with my partner Garrett Barber. I kind of continued that, was making a lot of putts on the greens, and we kind of steamrolled everyone we played.

the farthest I'd made it in match play up to the Western, and I felt like I played great, just had one bad round against Akshay, who played great. Not taking anything away from that, but it's definitely a little motivation this week here at Pebble.

It's never bad to beat people by a lot, that's for sure.

Q. Many golf fans got to know you at Chambers Bay three years ago in 2015. How hard was the expectation, not just yourself but all the other people around you, and how long did it take for you to kind of settle down and be yourself? And second part of the question is how much the transition to junior golf to top amateur golf, you made it so smoothly. You talked about the Azalea win in Charleston, but would that moment be that event, that you can compete?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, so the U.S. Open was great for me. It was a great experience. But it was definitely more difficult than I expected kind of coming out of the tournament, playing in the level that I had been playing in leading up to that. I felt like I should win every tournament because I just played with the pros, and obviously those are just not good expectations to have on myself.

I think I just put way too much pressure on myself and ended up not playing the golf that I thought I should be, and it lasted for a couple years. Not that I played bad, it's just I didn't play the way I had leading up to the U.S. Open, and it kind of -- it was a little bit unnerving, to say the least, but I was able -- this past year has been great for me.

But as far as transitioning from junior golf to amateur golf, I kind of attribute that to the U.S. Open because I wouldn't have really gotten into some of the bigger amateur tournaments if it weren't for that U.S. Open appearance, and I've been fortunate enough to play on kind of a limited amateur circuit for the past two or three years, and I think that's a big reason as to why I felt comfortable in those tournaments this year and probably why -- I came in second in the Azalea last year, and to win it this year gave me a lot of confidence, and it kind of carried through into the summer.

Q. Is there a significance to the Baltusrol hat?

COLE HAMMER: U.S. Junior.

Q. Is it a motivator for you?

COLE HAMMER: A little bit. I lost in the semifinals there. I had a great week of golf. That was probably