

U.S. Senior Open

Flash Interview

Thursday June 28, 2018

John Smoltz



Q. Can you sum up the day?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I can sum it up. I made a lot of easy bogeys. A lot of par putts turned into easy bogeys. I did not hit the ball in the fairway enough. I thought I hit a lot of, a lot of good shots that just didn't get good results. I can promise you there won't be worse lies tomorrow.

If there are, then, I don't know, maybe a lottery ticket. Look for a lottery ticket.

Q. Did you feel comfortable out there at all or ever?

JOHN SMOLTZ: You know, the thing I'm working on with my golf game is, I'm just being honest, I knew this course -- I don't have enough game for this course yet.

I don't play enough. I was hoping to avoid some of those areas so it didn't expose it. But that's what happens in the best tournament of the year. You know, the USGA puts on an incredible venue. And certainly I never expected to get that many bad lies. I got some really bad lies. Nothing I could do about it. I tried to stay patient. I got frustrated the last three holes, understandably so.

And I had a lot of tough shots that I have not practiced or been used to hitting. If I had to go back, I had three bad shots, that's it.

And I shot 85. So it just tells you, from an amateur standpoint, people sitting at home, I don't know if you can tell how hard the course played, but how great these players are.

I mean, this is their livelihood. And I will have to do a lot of work on my game to get to the level I want to get to, that's for sure.

Q. Could you describe -- we all know what a bad lie is -- but could you maybe just bring us to one of your bad lies?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I had seven lies you can't advance it more than 50, 60 yards. There's just nothing you can do. And it's kind of humiliating.

And then I'd hit it on the green, good shot, miss the putt. That was all day. All day I missed about, I'd say, 12 makeable putts. And I didn't make any of them. And that's what it comes down to. That's what I was most worried about, honestly, when I got here, was my

putter, and just the familiarity of this whole terrain.

And it's about as severe as I've ever played when it comes to the conditions as pristine as it is. Tomorrow will be much better. And I will grind as hard as I can to hit fairways, because I have to.

Q. I was with you last few holes. Looked like you came up short quite a few times. Was that like a conscious thing, that the last thing you wanted to do was be above the hole?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I was above the hole all day yesterday and it was miserable. I mean, like impossible. And so a lot of the club choices today were trying my best to stay below the hole. The hole I got a 7 on was probably the cruellest the course could have played, just bad bounce, up against the lip, chip it out, hit a good shot on the green spin it all the way back, hit it up, spin it back.

So that ruined my day. But there were a lot of putts that could have went in, too. I thought I had about five of them.

Q. I know it's a triple, but you were talking about spinning it back short of the green and you were a wedge in and kept going up --

JOHN SMOLTZ: Hit a wedge almost pin high. And want to be below that hole for sure and it spun all the way off 30, 40 yards down the fairway.

I hit my chip shot trying to get it just on the green and it spun back into the rough. And then missed a nice little five-footer.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd shoot 85. But that's what golf's all about, learning from it. I did the same thing in a Nationwide event. Found myself doing the same thing, coming up short, just missing putts, and next thing you know you start adding numbers. You don't want to add numbers.

Q. How did you feel at the start and what happened the first four holes?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Yeah, not bad. I had a four-footer for par and missed it. And that was the theme all day. I had a bunch of four, five, six-footers for par and missed some. When you make some it feels real good, the hole gets bigger. I didn't make any.

And that's the discouraging part, because every putt, not every, but most of them looked like they had a chance. I either didn't read it right or make the stroke.

I'm not in the position that I would like to be in to feel confident enough, but I know I can shoot obviously much better.

Q. Was the pace of play a little tough?

JOHN SMOLTZ: It was okay. I got a nice couple of blisters on my feet walking as slow as I could. But I give these guys -- this is what they do. You know, I'm in and off a plane, sitting in a chair, doing my thing.

I will take to heart that I'm not in the shape I want to be in for golf, especially for this kind of golf. So I'll be working on that. I don't walk very often. I get in a cart and zip around.

Q. Did you tape your toes a couple times?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Yeah, I knew it was coming. Big rookie mistake. Nice-looking shoes. And they're one day going to be very comfortable. But I broke them in out here. Live and learn.

Q. Tuesday you said that if there's a cloud higher than nine you'd be there. Given the way today went you still overall thankful for the experience, tell me about it.

JOHN SMOLTZ: I'm never happy -- I'm too big of a competitor to be happy about my round. But to get here was incredible. And like check off a bucket list. People have been great. I've tried to sign as many things as I can. And everyone's been cheering me on.

I just hope to put on a better show tomorrow. My family and friends, I would have left if I was at the ninth hole. They stuck around. I'm happy they did. But I would have left. I couldn't have watched myself anymore.

Q. The lies and such you talked about, a lot of those things out of your control. What are you taking from today towards tomorrow, what are you going to work on after the round?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I just gotta find a way to play my fade in the middle of the fairway. I thought I hit some really good drives that just ended up in the rough. When they end up in the rough you're at the mercy of where it goes. Unfortunately, for me, they all went to the bottom.

There wasn't one shot in the rough that I could actually do what I wanted to do with the golf ball. And that's pretty frustrating. But that's why you gotta hit the fairway.

And I'll do a much better job of that.

Q. Where does that mental grind compare to the other stuff you do, the mental grind, compared to a golf course?

JOHN SMOLTZ: I'm more confident when I was a baseball player to grind through a game, don't have my best stuff, don't feel good.

Physically, I deal with the same thing a lot of guys are dealing with, but I'm not strong enough anymore with my shoulder to do some things. So I've learned how to play golf in a different way. And I have not learned to shoot these numbers. So when you get -- you kind of feel that the course is beating you up every time you step on a hole.

I didn't honestly feel like what am I going to do next to mess up. I didn't have those feelings. But I did put myself in some really, really tough spots to accomplish pars. I never dreamt I would only get this many pars. They literally were all 16 par putts. That's not what you want. But 16 par putts to come away 15-over. I'll do better tomorrow.

Q. How do you feel about the course set up by the USGA and the Broadmoor?

JOHN SMOLTZ: It's hard. It's hard. I think the back nine, which unfortunately I had to start on today. The back nine is the hardest back nine I've played in a while. They've lengthened a lot of those holes that were once par 5s, I was getting excited looking at the card on my way here, going those are two par 5s I could reach. They set them as par 4s when I got here.

It's weird, I don't think anybody who is sitting at home thinking -- we all, when I watch golf you think I can do that, I can break 80 at that course. Not in an Open. There's not a 5 or 6 or 7 handicapper that could break 90 at most USGA Opens that the big boys play at. And this is about -- this is almost right there up with it.