

U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship

Press Conference

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Kevin O'Connell



Q. So you really had to pull it together the last couple holes to pull that one out.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I did. It was truly an up-and-down match. I got down 2 through 3. That was the first time I was down really all week, particularly early on.

So, you know, making it to the quarterfinals, you know it's going to be a fight no matter what. Everybody is playing well at this point.

I got it back to 1-up there the on the back nine at some point with the birdie on 12.

Q. How did you make that birdie on 12?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I just kind of went right up the hole the way you draw it up. Hit a nice tee shot. We had been laying up there all week, but I had hit that one particularly well. I pushed a 3-wood up just in front and had a pretty straightforward up and down.

Went 1-up there, and then he took 15 with a great birdie.

Then I pulled my tee shot left on 16 and kind of gave him that hole.

But to kind of push to all square there at 18 was kind of cool.

Q. So now here you are coming down the stretch at 18. What are you looking at on your approach?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: We had 198 hole. Where we were plays up five yards, so it was 203 adjusted. We had the wind making it play roughly 211, 212 to the hole. We wanted to fly it maybe five short of that, which is a perfect 5-iron.

It's always nice in a tight situation to get a good number like that, which it was. Left me 20 feet right under the hole.

Q. You said it was a left edge putt?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah. So as 20-footers go that are going up a ridge, it was fairly little break. Left edge putt. The next one doesn't matter, so I went ahead and gave it a run, and right in the middle it went.

Q. And then what are the range of emotions when that one goes in?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Well, obviously teeing off on 18, particularly into the wind, I knew I had a pretty good chance of winning that hole. I thought I might win it with a 4 honestly, particularly with where he hit his second shot. Made a great up and down from the bunker.

After, yeah, after winning that hole and going extra holes, one is an iron off the tee. It's a pretty generous tee shot with a mid-iron. Fortunately, it's not too difficult.

Yeah, honestly, the approach shot on 1 pulled up a little short. We thought we were about ten feet for birdie and he pulled it in the left greenside bunker. I thought I was in great shape.

We were surprised when we got up there. Mine was actually in the rough short of the green, so I had to get up and down.

Q. What club did you use for that?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, just used my 60-degree lob wedge. It's kind of funny. I've got a buddy at home that's pretty good friends with Paul Azinger. I think Paul taught him a shot he calls a toe kitty. You hit a little a little wedge around the green off the tow. It comes out a little bit more dead and it was a really fast shot.

So I hit a little toe kitty there up there to about a foot and he gave it to me, so...

Q. Here is a guy from North Carolina getting into the semifinals of the Mid Amateur in North Carolina.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Sure.

Q. And now you have a two-year exemption into the Mid Amateur for the next two years.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Okay, cool. Yeah.

Q. What do you feel about all that?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, obviously phenomenal. I did not know that, to be honest with you. That's pretty cool.

Yeah, I mean, the Mid-Am is such a great tournament. Again, any USGA event is just so special. To have a couple exemptions is pretty neat.

Q. Last question: You're facing a guy that's kind of new to the Mid Amateur, a firefighter from California.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Okay. So he's trying to make it back-to-back years for the firefighters?

Q. Right.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I don't know anything about him. Again, you make it to this point and everybody is playing good golf. Just going to have to grind it out.

Does look like the wind is picking up a little bit this afternoon, which should make match play certainly more interesting. I'm looking forward to it.