

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Thursday June 28, 2018

Rocco Mediate



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome our co-leader Rocco Mediate with a 2-under par 68 today. Made some birdies and a couple bogeys, but pleased with everything.

ROCCO MEDIATE: Yes, everything was fine. Golf course played just like we wanted it to. If you miss, you pay. If you hit in the fairway, you could still pay, because the greens are tough. So it's a perfect U.S. Open setup, in my opinion. I love it.

THE MODERATOR: What was the key to the success? Was it driving the ball in the fairway?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Fairways. I missed -- did I miss? I missed the first fairway. Thank you. But I got up-and-down. Just hit it short of the green, got up-and-down. Did I miss any more? I don't know that I missed any more fairways. I don't think I did. Which is good. That's the key. But then once you hit the fairways then the all the fun begins because those greens there's some great pins and there's some slope and then -- you're not that you're hitting long clubs, but you got to know, you got to have complete distance and spin control on it. Because they're a little soft this morning, which is normal.

THE MODERATOR: What do you compare the greens here to? Anything? Some of the folks said Oakmont.

ROCCO MEDIATE: No, they're not anywhere close to that.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else --

ROCCO MEDIATE: That's awful.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else that you played?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Winged Foot, kind of mini-Winged Foot kind of. I'm trying to think of what else. But just the old school stuff like it is. Oakmont's are just more severe, severe slope. These are softer, bigger, I don't if they're bigger, but they're softer. Nothing here really slopes away. 10th green slopes away a little bit, but that's it. But it's just, they're just good old school greens. Especially the Ross greens.

THE MODERATOR: How about the wind today?

ROCCO MEDIATE: It kicked a little bit on the back nine. It made its presence known nicely a few times. Yeah, that's -- it can fool you. It fooled me twice on 15 and 16. Good looking shots come up just a little short. 16 came, 15 came all the way back down, 30, 40 yards short of the green. Which it's supposed to because I didn't hit the shot I should have. And 16 was another problem, just short. But, yeah, the wind kicked up a little bit. They said there's wind advisory I heard there was going to be, but it's not that bad.

THE MODERATOR: Were your putts for birdie of any length or did you hit it pretty close?

ROCCO MEDIATE: What did I birdie? 3, 10 feet maybe. 7, what's 7? I'm trying to think there. I hit a pretty good shot there, probably six, eight feet I would guess. About 10 feet on 7.

13, par-3? About 15-footer.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sorry, 12.

ROCCO MEDIATE: 12, the par-3. Yeah. About a 15-footer, yeah, that was good. I hit a good 4-iron in there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Did you leave anything out there today? Could you have got more out of the round or did you get everything you wanted?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Pretty much all. I hit a good putt on the last from about six, eight feet, just caught the high side and it spun back at me. But that's going to happen. I made a good par putt on 13. So they even out, kind of. But, no, I hit it as good as I could hit it. I thought I mishit it, but I hit it pretty good, it just didn't break as much and caught the edge. It was pretty solid. You always say, I could have made a couple more 10-, 12-footers, but everybody else can. On these greens some of them you can't really be aggressive. I had some good putts at it but above the hole a little bit and you're just defensive, that's what these tournaments are about.

Q. Do you put a lot of faith in the 10 percent thing on altitude?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Yeah, we adjust, we go off 10 percent and then we kind of tinker with it. Depending

upon what's going on.

Q. You've been flying under the radar a little bit. Do you like coming in in that situation?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Yeah, I had a real consistent -- a lot has changed this year from the last couple years -- very solid, consistent stuff. Starting to -- haven't putted great this year. That's what I've been working on the most. Today I putted nicely, very nicely. I love the fast stuff. I'm better on fast stuff for some strange reason. But that's been the issue is -- but I would have won a few this year if I would have putted a little bit better -- or contended closer. A bunch of top-10s, but I'd been closer if I would have putted a little bit better, I don't know if I would have won. It's good, everything's solid, everything's where it needs to be, which means nothing going into tomorrow, you have to go tee off on 10 and see what happens. That's the beauty of it. You don't know how you're playing until you play. When the bell rings it's different. I think.

Q. When you say a lot has changed, but like what?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Just a lot of the things, I'm half the size I was last year. I'm way stronger, way faster, club's moving faster, back to old stuff with Rick Smith and stuff like that has changed.

Q. How did that happen?

ROCCO MEDIATE: I just felt like doing it and my daughter's three now so I figured by the time I'm 70, by the time I'm 70 I can do whatever I want and she will be 18, so I'm good. So I got 15 more years of this.

(Laughter.)

And it's easy, it's fun. We're having a ball.

Q. How many pounds?

ROCCO MEDIATE: I have probably 40 or 50 since last year. Probably something like that. Just eat good.

Q. What is it about USGA championships you seem to excel when you get into that type of an event. What you do like about them?

ROCCO MEDIATE: The test that you get. First of all, it's our National Open, which is my favorite tournament. But it's the test you get. You get to test how your game really is. Week-in and week-out you do, but you don't, comparatively to this. This is, if you miss here, it costs you something, most of the time. Unless you do something miraculous. Which is fun too, that's part of golf also. But I like when you, when it costs you something to miss fairways. That's gone, as you know. It's gone. And the only thing that keeps it alive is our U.S. Opens. The only thing. And it used to be something that was important. Even on the TOUR for all the years I played, you had to drive it straight

because we actually had rough back then. That's gone. Most of it is gone. So the smash and the gouge and wedge thing, a lot of guys think that's how golf's supposed to be played. And it makes me sick. Fairways are cut shorter because they're easier to play out of and that's where you should be, that's where the game starts. I was taught that. If you drive it in the fairway you can play good 90 percent of the time and it's a fact. You can still screw it up, but it is way easier from the fairway than anywhere else. So I've always loved our National Open because of the test it gives you. And it tests you mentally. It's not just -- not even half of it is physical, it's mostly in your head. Because there are certain things you see out there that you don't like and you want to -- but I'm learning, I learned just to go, just let it rip and see what happens. Because it's better than just trying to steer. When I steer it goes sideways.

Q. So given his question about the U.S. Open, it's 10 years since your battle with Tiger. You get asked a lot of questions about it?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Every single day. I get it every day since then. Pretty much every day. And I don't mind talking about it at all, it was one of the most fun things I've ever seen, that I've ever done. It was so cool. I remember everything about it. The smells, the people, everything.

Q. The memory gets better?

ROCCO MEDIATE: Oh, it never got bad. It hurt a little bit because I lost, because I didn't have the trophy. It didn't hurt how I lost and to whom I lost to. It hurt a little bit because you don't know how many chances -- I'm 45 at the time -- so you're like, well how much -- you never know. But to get to there on Sunday and then Monday, it's not going to happen again, more than likely. So that's what was sad. But then I recovered and I was fine.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thanks.

ROCCO MEDIATE: Hope to see you the next couple days.