

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Friday June 29, 2018

Tim Petrovic



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Tim Petrovic, who shot the championship best score so far, 65, best nine of the championship so far. He's moved within two strokes of the lead of Jerry Kelly. And at 30 is -- it's the 29th time a 30 has been shot at Senior Open history, which is two strokes off the championship record of 28 that Tom Kite shot in 2012 and Kenny Perry in 2015.

Quite a nine coming in. Tell us what you did to shoot such a good score.

TIM PETROVIC: Today I just needed to drive the ball better. I needed to hit the ball in the fairway. Yesterday, it seemed like I was playing out of the rough half the day.

And this course, if you're playing out of the rough and you're hitting long approach shots in the rough, it's going to be a long day. So I drove the ball better today. And I just wanted -- that would equate to me hitting better iron shots closer to the hole. And just give myself some more opportunities. And got -- didn't get much going early on the back. And missed -- actually missed about a six-footer on 1. And then birdied, I think I birdied 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9. Couple long putts there on 5 and 6 got me going.

Q. Did you find something on the range with your driver after the round, or did something click when you came this morning?

TIM PETROVIC: No, I think it was a little windier yesterday afternoon, more an altitude thing. With the altitude, we have a tendency to, when we want to hit it further, we tend to try to lift the ball. And I think that made me -- I was coming out of some shots yesterday.

Same thing with the irons. I was just -- seems like I was maxing out a lot of my short irons, and that's not my game. And I kind of changed that mentality up. I told my caddie as we were making the turn that we need to just slow it down, not so much hit half shots, but just play within -- don't max out every iron into the green. And we started hitting some really good, quality shots.

Q. Were you college teammates with Jerry Kelly?

TIM PETROVIC: Yeah, I kind of know him. Went to school for three years together. We did. University of Hartford. We're the same age, but he's a year behind

me in school. So we played three years at Hartford.

Q. Any good Jerry Kelly stories?

TIM PETROVIC: We've got plenty of those stories. But we better talk about golf today. (Laughter).

Everybody's got their stories, right?

Q. Given your background, having to maintain the TOUR card and come through mini-tours, does something like this maybe mean more to you than maybe the rest of the field even?

TIM PETROVIC: I always kid around, I say the book's coming out some day. If I could tell you where I started and to end up on the PGA TOUR, to play -- you're .5 percent of the one percent of guys that make it on the TOUR and get to play out there for 15 years is such a small number. And to get out there be able to have the career I did from where I came from, it's pretty much an up hill climb but I never gave up and I always -- I always kind of saw the light at the end of the tunnel.

I was very focused. I kind of put the blinders on. There were a couple times I was thinking maybe this isn't happening and then something good would happen. Then maybe, no, something good would happen. '97 I was thinking, maybe this isn't happening and then I finished second or third in the World Putting Tournament just something like that to keep me going for another few years.

And I had a break-through year in 2000 and got my card in 2002. I was a late bloomer. I'm a lot different than the other guys. I didn't get my card until I think I was 34 years old. And then, so it worked out good for me playing 14 years and then I wasn't 40 years old, wondering what I'm going to do the next 10 years before the Champions Tour. I had two years to wait. It kind of flowed in for me, so that was good.

Q. Between college and being 34, was that all mini-tours or other jobs, what did you do?

TIM PETROVIC: Australian Tour, Canadian Tour. Back home. Nike TOUR. Ran out of money. Played 11 events. Sold cell phones. Delivered pizza. Worked at the Y. I could just -- it's unbelievable. I could make a list of stuff -- I don't know why my wife followed me down to Florida. I guess she must have thought I was going to make it on TOUR. But she quit her job and we

moved to Florida in '93. And it really wasn't happening for about seven years.

Q. Stuck around for seven years.

TIM PETROVIC: Stuck around. She's a keeper, for sure.

Q. What tour were you playing at that point?

TIM PETROVIC: I'd say we've got Moonlight Tour. Teardrop Tour. Traveled around. Tommy Armour Tour in Orlando. Didn't do much of the Hooters Tour. Mostly Tommy Armour Tour in Orlando. And the Golden Bear Tour, they had that was kind of my big break through, played it in '98, did okay. Had to put up 15 grand. Got someone to put up the money, 15, 20; you played all summer for pretty good purses. In 2000 I ended up winning the money list on that. I won 160 grand. I thought that I was a billionaire, won 160 grand in minis over the summer, and carried over to the BUY.COM TOUR. Got my card in '97 and stayed out there until '02. I think there's enough there for a book, might be enough there for a book some day.

Q. Has something changed in your game? You mentioned being a late bloomer. Did you change something up? Because I know you contended last month. You finished second.

TIM PETROVIC: You know, I've been pretty much trying to stay the course. I did do an equipment change this year. I went to Mere, got a nice set of irons made and a nice set of wedges. And Tour Edge hooked me up with some nice hybrids and fairway woods. Pretty much staying with the same stuff. And just trying to stay healthy. Kind of looking the other way now, instead of going having a beer, maybe I'll go work out or something, now, take care of myself. I think maybe that has something to do with it.

Q. Is there something in your background whether your parents have something in them, the drive to stay with things?

TIM PETROVIC: Yeah, my dad was a baseball coach but he did play golf. And that's where I learned -- I used to go hit golf balls with him when I was nine years old. Probably lost half his shag balls back in the day. That's how I started, sun up, sun down, my mom drops me off at the course, if I wasn't playing baseball I'd be at the golf course all day.

And I think spending three or four hours a day on the putting green. I remember just all day, not hitting balls, just putting and chipping. That's probably the thing that's carried me through.

And I try to tell the junior players, they all want to go to the range and hit it 300, like Dustin. I said go chip, go chip. Be like Jordan, go chip and putt. That's where

you're going to make your money. That's where you're going to beat your buddies on the putting green. Two-to-one, go hit balls for an hour, go putt and chip for two hours. I think that's one of the things that kind of carried me through.

Q. What do you think of the putting out here? I'm sorry, I didn't see it, but did you have any long ones or particularly tough ones on the front there when you were --

TIM PETROVIC: Yeah, I did. I was at 5 and 6, yeah, I made a 200-footer on 5 and 6. I had a left-to-righter, one of -- the shrine's over here and it's going to put a blinker on when it goes to the hole. And it just took a right turn and just one of those crazy putts.

I'll be honest with you, I do not like putting on the poe. It's not my friend. I try to go to my happy place -- when I putt on the green I try to go to my happy place. I do not like putting on it.

Especially yesterday in the afternoon, they get soft and footprints -- best way to describe it is when they get soft and they get footprinted and the whole field goes through, it's kind of like putting on a waffle iron. You hit it and it bounces around.

As I tell my caddie, he asked me: Why doesn't it break? It doesn't break when it's in the air. It's not going to break. That's the best way to describe it.

Q. Now that you've had a couple of practice rounds, couple tournament rounds in, can you talk about the whole myth of putting with the shrine and everything? Do you feel like you have a feel for it at this point. You were on a roll there.

TIM PETROVIC: I got on a roll on the front. And for me, especially because I don't really like putting on it, it's taken a few days to get used to it. And I'm a field putter, I'm trying to get the feel. You try to get the way the ball is rolling out and the way it stops.

And I think on these greens a feel has -- once you get the feel of the greens, I think you'll make a lot more putts than a guy who is really mechanical on them.

But you've got to hit your putt solid, anything within four feet, if you miss your putt, it's going to go wandering, you're going to miss it. Really gotta focus on them.

Q. Roughly how long were the putts you made on birdie?

TIM PETROVIC: I think they were 20 and 24 feet, maybe. The left-to-right is about 23, 24 feet. That was a tough putt. I was trying to throw it up there, let it settle around the hole, took a right turn and went in.

Q. You're referencing 6 and 7?

TIM PETROVIC: Yes, 6 and 7. And actually on 9 I hit a 5-wood on the green in the right. It was one of the best putts all day. 60-, 70-footer across the green. I almost made it. Hit it like about three, four inches away.

Q. The wind has come down?

TIM PETROVIC: It's playing easier because the wind has come down. Yesterday we had the waves of wind that come off the mountain. You can hear them coming. You can hear the wind. I back off the shots because I hear the train coming. You could just hear it.

Once it blows through, it calmed down, but we definitely didn't have the 20-mile-an-hour gusts, 25-mile-an-hour gusts we had yesterday afternoon. The greens are softer in the morning and smoother because the whole field hasn't gone through. It's definitely a little bit easier in the morning.

Q. Walking up -- they shortened No. 17. Did that make a difference? The back nine is a lot harder, I think, generally here. But 17 seemed to be playing a bit easier.

TIM PETROVIC: We're not getting quite the roll-out in the morning that we did in the afternoon. But it's still a mid-iron shot, if you hit a good drive.

If you miss the fairway there, you're going to be hitting a hybrid out of the rough to that green and trying to roll it up there. It's just not an easy hole. I don't know if it's a par-5 for the members, maybe. Is it?

Q. 6.

TIM PETROVIC: Par-6. I think they bumped it up a little bit. They moved a couple of tees up for sure, they bumped it up.

Q. Have you played with Jerry Kelly since -- you might play with him tomorrow?

TIM PETROVIC: That would be fun. We'll be elbowing each other out there tomorrow if we get paired together tomorrow. It will be fun, for sure. We haven't been paired together this year for sure.

Q. Do you know when the last time would have been?

TIM PETROVIC: No, I really don't. I don't know if we played together this year at all. I don't think so.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.