

U.S. Amateur Championship

Sunday, August 20, 2023

Cherry Hills Village, Colorado, USA

Cherry Hills Country Club

Nick Dunlap

Press Conference

Q. Your caddie kept yelling it out there, that's history, so it's you and Tiger Woods, the only guys to win the Am and the Junior Am. Talk about that.

NICK DUNLAP: We talked about it all week. He's the reason I got into it, and just to have my name even halfway associated with Tiger who's the greatest to ever play is the reason I'm playing golf, and it means everything to me.

Q. You kind of had a pretty poor start on Monday in stroke play. What was the key to bouncing back and resetting after that start?

NICK DUNLAP: Jeff wrote something in his yardage book and showed me. Said some words that I can't say. But he said, if you snap out of this, this could be something really special.

I got the ball up-and-down on 8 for birdie, and from there I was honestly just trying to give myself a chance with nine holes to play to try to make the cut.

He said on the first tee on the second round, or the second round this evening, he was like, we were 5-over through seven holes and we've got 18 holes for a chance at the United States Amateur. Just soak that in.

Q. You make 12 birdies out there today. Where would you put this round in terms of the six rounds you played today in terms of your game?

NICK DUNLAP: I played really, really well this evening. I did exactly what I was trying to do except for some poor drives late. Nerves, couldn't feel my hands, couldn't feel my legs, my feet couldn't feel anything. Everything starts going really fast, but I'm stoked with how I played. I executed exactly what I was trying to do. You're going to miss some shots. 36 holes is a long day. The momentum is going to change. The crowd is going to do what it's going to do.

But I'm really pleased with what I did today.

Q. You've talked a lot about in the past hour or so since you won about "we" and about you and your caddie and your coach and your teammates. And your family, as well. What did it mean to have everybody here today and you see them in the gallery following you along?

NICK DUNLAP: Unbelievable. My parents showed up yesterday. They got to come and watch. It was cool for me. They weren't able to see a couple of my other big events this summer.

So for them to be here, it means everything.

Jeff and I have been through a lot. A lot that some people don't know about. For him to be by my side during -- as of right now, the biggest day of my life, yeah, and my teammates got up at 3:15 this morning, stayed in Atlanta last night. For them to be here and support me, it just shows what Alabama golf is about. I'm stoked to go to war with them here in a couple weeks and get our season on the road.

Q. It's hard to say one shot might define a championship, but I was watching you on No. 10 in the second round here today. That up-and-down you got on No. 10 there to go 4-up on him, that seemed to really change the momentum for you. What did it feel like for you?

NICK DUNLAP: It was a putt on 9 for me to be honest with you. I think it halted his run a little bit. I think he was going to go in to make that putt, and I think that turned things a little bit. I got a really good break on 10. I honestly thought that was out of bounds. I thought that was out of bounds well, and it turned out to be ground under repair, ground relief or whatever and I was able to get a swing at it and give myself a look at it, and fortunately I made it.

Q. How tough and emotional was the week as a whole? You played Gordon in the first round, had the tough match in the quarters. How did you handle the week?

NICK DUNLAP: It's cliché to say one shot at a time, but I think it goes back to what happened in the first round, battling back from 5-over and legitimately taking one shot at a time, like okay, I've got 120 yards, let's attack the shot in front of me. If you look at it in the grand scheme of when you're on Monday looking at Sunday, it's not going to go your way. I've done that a couple times and it's ended poorly, whether I've missed the cut or whatever that might be.

We had a game plan coming into it, and our goal was to stick to it. If somebody beat me doing it, hats off to them, great, but I can hang my hat on that.

Q. You mentioned that you had been talking all week about that bit of Tiger history that you were trying to match or at least partially match. Does sort of thinking about that throughout the course of the week add to the pressure a little bit, or is it something that you could maybe pull up mentally in a big spot if you felt you needed motivation?

NICK DUNLAP: I've talked to Brett McCabe, a sports psychologist a lot, I've talked to him a couple times this week. I don't think you can tell yourself not to think about it. I think it's there. I think all you can do is really embrace it and embrace what it stands for, embrace the people. What's happening, the pressure, it's the United States Amateur, most pressure I've ever been under. Take it for what it's worth and enjoy it, and like he said, going against Gordon, it's like man, this could be a week you could never forget regardless whether you win or lose. I've taken that outlook and brought in everybody that's -- the atmosphere here is unbelievable. Just proud to be a part of it.

Q. On 10 you said the relief was actually for ground under repair and not the structure?

NICK DUNLAP: It was something -- I got relief from the wall.

Q. Secondly, going back to you're seven, eight, nine years old, what do you think made you gravitate towards Jeff?

NICK DUNLAP: Just how good he was. I think a lot of people don't give him the credit that he deserves. He's one of the best iron players I've ever seen in my life, and I will stand by that. The amount of hours we've spent trying to -- I don't know if anybody heard it, but 15 or 14 I pulled it -- man, just us on the back of the range and the amount of hours we spent going iron for iron and me trying to beat him I think has only helped me in my future and my career.

Q. You won the Northeast Amateur, won the North and South. A lot of great amateurs this week. Did you feel like the favorite, or did you feel that the cards were stacked against you? What was your mental approach coming into this week?

NICK DUNLAP: Yeah, to be honest with you, I tried to trick myself into thinking that people don't think I can win, and I used that as motivation, and it doesn't take much to get me fired up at all.

I will gravitate or grab on to things that people may not even mean, and I will use that to my advantage as if they were trying to insult me. As bad as it is to say, it fires me up and it gets me going, and I'm able to start a little bit better. That's something I've struggled with in the past is jumping on it from the get-go, and that was kind of one of me and Jeff's sayings this week was early and often. Go out there, let's make a statement early, let's get off to a lead and let's keep that.

Q. Neal obviously had a lot of support out there today. It sounds like it helped you.

NICK DUNLAP: A little bit. For my teammates for being here, they were loud. I heard them multiple, multiple, multiple times. Just to hear that, and he's going to have his support, honestly it was awesome just to see everybody out there supporting golf.

The crowd that Cherry Hills brought, I got to kind of turn around and look a couple times, but I imagine there was a couple thousand people out there watching, and it was just awesome to be in the middle of it.

Q. Your match play record is really impressive. What part of your game really translates to match play, and why do you like match play so much?

NICK DUNLAP: Good question. I think I have a mindset for match play. I like being ahead, but I never give up if I'm behind.

I think I'm a fairly good iron play, and when I do get the tee, me and my caddie call it when we get the pond, I'm able to put some pressure with some irons.

The last couple years I've gotten my putting in a place to where I think it's one of the strengths of my game, and I'm able to trust that. For some of these pins, for me, I struggle sometimes with the left pin when the wind is off the left. Not going at that all the time. Of course you're going to hit some bad shots here and there, but I'm able to hit it to 30 feet and trust that maybe I'll make it, and today I made a couple of them.

Q. Speaking of 30-footers, you made at least two or three and then some mid-ranges. Given the situation how would you rank this match putting-wise?

NICK DUNLAP: I putted great. I don't really -- for making 30-footers, I don't think you can really base it off that. It's 30 feet -- if it hits a tiny pitch mark and bumps it in, you never know. It could have bumped it in or bumped it out. My speed was really good considering the situation all day. That's what I base my putting off of. If I'm not marking it from 40 feet, it's a success.

But I putted fantastic. I was starting it where I was looking. The hole looked about this big, and it's a lot of golf -- golf is a lot of fun when that happens.

Q. What did you learn about yourself and your golf game this week that maybe you didn't know at the start of the week?

NICK DUNLAP: I just learned that I could do it. I always thought I could, but when you're 5-over through seven and your mind is spinning and you can't see straight, obviously it's red, you're not really looking at that. You're looking at the negative, like man, I think I was in last at one point.

For me to be able to snap out of that, kind of slow things down, I tried to walk slow, think slow, take three extra sips of water, back off, whatever it took for me to slow down and get back into my process, I think I just learned that anything is possible as long as you put your mind to it.

Q. The match went to 4-up with four to play, and it looked like you and Jeff had a conversation on 15 tee. Can you share what you guys said there before you hit that?

NICK DUNLAP: He just said, soak it all in, man. This is why I practice. This is why I get up early. I think somebody quoted me earlier on it.

Just for moments like this. The first tee when they announce your name to the last green whether you win or lose, it's special just to be a part of the United States Amateur and what it stands for and Cherry Hills. It's awesome.

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