

U.S. Amateur Championship

Wednesday, August 16, 2023
Cherry Hills Village, Colorado, USA
Cherry Hills Country Club

Sampson Zheng

Quick Quotes

Q. All right, Sampson, bit of a back and forth front nine and then you guys pushed seven straight holes on the back until 18. Talk us through the round there.

SAMPSON ZHENG: I got off to a great start. 2-up through 2 and then Preston made birdie on 3, and then I think making the turn I was 1-up but then he made another birdie on 10.

So we were all tied, and then from there it was just back and forth. We traded birdies on 16. Both missed 15-footers on 17. My third shot actually hit the pin.

But, yeah, coming down the stretch was a lot of nerves, a lot of back and forth, a lot of -- yeah, a lot of -- I don't even know what to say.

Q. Explain a little bit those nerves that you just mentioned there. Obviously you're a Four-Ball champion, so you're of the caliber player to be competing at this level. Just talk about those nerves and how much different this U.S. Am is.

SAMPSON ZHENG: Yeah, I think the good thing about Four-Ball is sometimes when you're not able to play your partner has got you, but those match plays that I -- all the matches that I've played through the Four-Ball definitely helped me just focus on the process and just stay in the present coming down the stretch.

Q. You obviously know Preston. You guys played together in the same conference. What does playing somebody of his caliber this early do to set the pace for the rest of your time here?

SAMPSON ZHENG: It's good. It's good. I mean, winning the first match always gives you a lot of momentum, but to be able to win against somebody like Preston really means a lot.

Gives me a lot of confidence moving forward for the rest of



the matches.

Q. What have you learned about playing mountain golf up here at elevation?

SAMPSON ZHENG: Yeah, obviously I think it's around 8 to 10% for how far the ball is going, how much further the ball is going.

But I think when you're under pressure it goes an extra five yards and then the elevation probably makes it like 7 to 8. So I did experience that a little bit coming down the stretch.

But I think overall about the golf course is it's pretty straightforward. If you're in the fairway you've got a birdie chance. If you're not in the fairway, you're scrambling for par. I think I did a good job so far keeping it in the fairway.

Q. Can you tell us about your relationship with your caddie. We just met him very briefly. He said you guys met up a Trans-Miss and now you're staying with him this week.

SAMPSON ZHENG: Yeah, he's a member at Denver Country Club and Trans-Miss was there last year, so I stayed with him. And then I think he caddied for me two or three rounds last year at the Trans-Miss and had great chemistry. We just decided to run it back and we did. Yeah.

Q. Talk about the putt on 16. Preston makes that bomb and you step up and make one of your own. How satisfying is that? He's probably thinking he won the hole. That would've been his first lead. What kind of boost does it give you to make that kind of putt?

SAMPSON ZHENG: A lot of boost. I mean, it's a little bit of kind of throwing a jab back at him so that was really good.

But I think I was able to make that putt in part because I saw his line. Another part is staying in the present and focusing on my putt and not focusing on what his putt was doing.

So, but, yeah, that was a great putt.

Q. That's part of match play, right?



SAMPSON ZHENG: Uh-huh.

Q. There is little moments that are crucial.

SAMPSON ZHENG: Yeah.

Q. That momentum swing, could you feel it walking off the green, like he might have been a little deflated?

SAMPSON ZHENG: Yeah, definitely. I had an eight-footer on 15 for bogey. He was already in for bogey. I was never down in the match.

At that point I think it was if I miss that putt I would've been 1-down, but I never let that happen, so the eight-footer was really big to keep the momentum going.

And I think it was probably about 25 feet. That putt was just a cherry on top to keep it going forward.

Q. Is that the kind of thing you pride yourself on, that grit?

SAMPSON ZHENG: Yeah, yeah. Just to be able to pull shots off when it matters, like when you need to, that's what we practice for.

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