

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Jerry Kelly

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the 79th Kitchen Aid Senior PGA Championship, and I'm pleased to be joined by Jerry Kelly, who won the first event of the year in Hawai'i, and you've posted four top 10s since. If that's not the definition of consistently good, occasionally great, I don't know what is. You're playing pretty well this year, aren't you?

JERRY KELLY: I feel like I have. I've felt like I've played really well at Hualalai, and it's been really spotty since. I haven't put three rounds or four rounds together yet.

I hadn't seen my trainer, I hadn't seen my coach. It was a tough two and a half months or so there. I lost my father, as well. There's a lot of things that go into it all the time. Everybody has them all. But it hasn't been that great. So I should feel fortunate that I've finished well in a bunch of tournaments.

Q. You weren't here last time we were here in 2016. You weren't part of the Tour yet, I believe. I'm interested in your first impressions of this golf course and this town.

JERRY KELLY: I think the little town down there by the lake is great, St. Joseph. I found some good restaurants. I'm staying at the Inn at Harbor Shores. I think that's a great little spot.

The golf course, I think it's a second-shot golf course, but if you don't get the ball in the fairway, good luck trying to get it on the right tier. It's paramount that you get the ball in the fairway, which I'm happy to see some rough. We haven't seen rough for a while. Yeah, you've got to have all facets of your game working. There's no question. There's about -- I think we counted on one of the greens, I can't remember which one it was -- it was on 12, there were seven different greens within one green. That's kind of the way we're looking at it this week is I don't care if it's 10 square feet, that's a separate green. That's a separate entity. If it was firmer, you could play it differently, or if it was even too soft, it would be worse out here.

But kind of like Augusta, you've got five square feet to actually land it to hit a great shot, but there's some places that you can use backstops and things like that to have it funnel back to the hole.

I think it was well-done. It's not -- I don't think it's as extreme as some people have made it seem.

Q. After coming last week from Regions, it's very rare obviously to play majors back-to-back. Do you feel at all already kind of tuned up for the type of test you're going to face this week at Harbor Shores, major-like conditions?

JERRY KELLY: I was getting tuned up last week as the temperature hit 90. Once I got back to 53 and cold and blowing, significantly a lot more tuning to do now. You know, there's a 25-yard difference in distance in my 7-iron, so there's a lot to feel out. We can adjust fine, but it should get back up to 80 here soon, make my ego feel a little bit better about how to hit it.

Yeah, there's five majors, and a few of them are kind of real close to each other, and it's different. Last week felt a little more like a regular season. This definitely kicks it up a notch.

Q. You've won on this Tour three times, I believe, and I think that matches your number on the regular Tour. You must be having a good bit of fun out here since turning 50.

JERRY KELLY: The fun thing is that I was able to -- I had that choice. I was fully exempt my first year that I was eligible out here, and I chose to come out here rather than do what I was doing the last bunch of years, which was if I play well on a course that suits my game, which is a little bit shorter and tighter, I can compete to win. I lost by a shot my last year out there in Hartford. There's about seven courses realistically that if I play well, I can win at, and it's not week after week.

I see the game changing. I see it's a different game. But it's different equipment, different golf courses, different setups. I like playing out here because it's more how we used to play. You've got to work the ball a little more. You're not having -- those guys when they have 210, 220 yards in, it's still a mid-iron. It's still like a 7 or a 6. That's utility for me.

I'm coming back to where I'm playing the same type of golf that they're playing on the PGA Tour on this Tour, and it's a lot more fun.

But I mean, playing against these guys and the courses that we're playing, I just needed a new

groundhog day, and I love it. It's been fun.

Q. You've been the Schwab Cup leader four weeks this season, top-5 every week this year. What's it like being a marked man on a weekly basis?

JERRY KELLY: Yeah, that was different. You know, right after the first tournament of the year, it's like, hey, I've never been No. 1 before. I won the Sony when it was the second tournament of the year and the first full field, but somebody had already won the Tournament of Champions and made the cut at the Sony, so I had no chance of being No. 1 after that first week. It's something that I always wanted to get to to see how that felt, and I definitely put the pressure on myself, absolutely, wanting to stay there, what's expected of me now, things like that. It's like, really, dude? Just go play some golf.

It took a few tournaments. There's no question. Oh, my caddie has got a different color bib; isn't that cool. That's what you kind of live for, to see how you actually -- do you thrive in those situations. I love getting my adrenaline up. That's the one thing I said when I made that choice, that if I could get my adrenaline up out here, I'm going to have much more fun out here. I was nervous in Naples that first tournament that I played, and I didn't look back. I was fine with being out here. That stepped it up again.

That's what makes it so much fun. It's not casual golf out here. We're trying to beat each other's brains in. It's kind of fun.

Q. We've had three championships here at Harbor Shores; this is the fourth. Roger Chapman, Colin Montgomerie, Rocco Mediate all won their first major championship of their career. Is that something you've caught wind of, and does that pique your interest and make things really different this week for you at all?

JERRY KELLY: I don't think so. I'm still a rookie at some of these golf courses, and there's a lot of course knowledge into this one. I know that I played 18 holes today, but I think I saw about six of them through the fog. I'm going to see a few more of them on the back side tomorrow, and it's going to look totally different when I get to a tee and not just picking out shapes of a bunker in the distance and not knowing where the trouble is.

So it's learning curve, learning the golf courses. I don't know if any of those guys had played this course before when it was their first major or not. Probably Rocco, maybe even Colin. Maybe.

But experience on a golf course is probably the biggest thing for a professional golfer. It's just one of those

things that I've said a lot of times this year, I'm never going to be there again. That's the luxury that I had after being out there for 22 years against some of the young guys coming up, and why I stayed out there is because of the experience, where to hit it and definitely where not to hit it.

Q. I know you're really learning the course, you like the town, you're playing well this year; what is the one thing that you need to do in your game that's going to keep you in contention for the whole week no matter what else happens?

JERRY KELLY: I need to -- you watch my feet this week, okay? You watch my feet when I'm putting, you watch my feet when I'm swinging. I get dancy in either of those positions, you know, I can still take a top 10, but it's going to be tough to win. You see me calm out there with my feet -- I may not be calm with my reactions afterwards, but then I know I've done my job. That's what I want to do. I want to be stable this week. My wife will find that hard to believe that I can be mentally stable, but I'm going to give it a shot, I know that.