

**GARY NICKLAUS (-5)**

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**Q. Gary, great playing today. What was it like getting those first couple holes under your belt and then making that first birdie on No. 3?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** I think there's been a lot of anticipation from myself to get this thing started. I came out here on Sunday morning an five days later, the tournament. The last couple days were like, okay, this needs to start already.

I felt like I was really prepared to get to the first tee, but when I got there today, I was not. I was out of my element and kind of shaking like a leaf, which I didn't expect, but it was good. Got through the first hole, had a good chance at birdie. Then hit a drive off the world on No. 2 and, okay, we've got to kind of pull ourselves back together and get this round started, and on No. 3 made a birdie and off to the races.

**Q. You've obviously played a lot of golf since 2003, but what's soaking in those 18 holes on the Champions Tour, big galleries, your dad following you along, all that stuff, overall what was that like for you that made it so much different and so special?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** It was just -- it's great to be out here. There's so many good players out here. The players have been so welcoming. To get paired with Brad and Rocco my first round out here, two guys that are friends, been friends of mine for a long time, it was great to get out and it was great to get off to a great start.

**Q. You mentioned shaking like a leaf and all that stuff. We didn't notice that, by the way. How long did it take you to get your head into trying to ignore everything else that's going on and just play golf?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** I think that the putt on No. 2, which was about a six-footer down the hill, kind of got things started and I was kind of like, okay, let's just relax and play golf, play what you know how to do. Like I said, it's been a long time since I was teeing it up for anything, 2003.

**Q. You had that stretch of four straight birdies there on the front nine. How important was that to get your round going with that early on so you kind of had that to play off of?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** Very important. I mean, I had kind of gone through what I wanted to do in my head before the round all week. I had myself birdieing the first hole, which I didn't do, but then once I got that first one on 3 and then followed it up with a long putt on 4, then from there I really -- if I had made a lot of putts coming in after those four in a row, I could have

made eight or nine, even 10 birdies. I had a lot of chances.

**Q. Gary, as you were walking away, I don't know if you heard your dad, I know he said to John, "The right play on the putting." Just talk about that, the decision that went into that and then just the putt.**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** Well, my dad will tell you that if you're off the green and you can putt it, you should putt it 11 times out of 10. I consider myself pretty good with a wedge, so he kind of gets mad at me sometimes because I use a wedge a lot more than he would, but that was actually a really tough chip shot. It was actually a tough, a really tough putt. I put myself in a bad position kind of coming up the hill and then a really fast green going away. I made the right play and made the play that he would want me to do, too.

**Q. How many times out there did you hear your dad's voice in your head giving you advice along the way?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** Oh, he's constantly there. He's been giving me advice since I could barely walk. You don't forget those things.

**Q. That said, could you share with us how special it is to have him out there watching today and especially since you played so well?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** It's fantastic. My mom and dad are both here. They were as excited as I was about getting this thing going, so it's all great.

**Q. You're only a couple shots off the early lead here as the last couple groups trickle in. How does your game plan or strategy now differ from tomorrow now where you're currently at on the leaderboard?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** Hopefully I can have a little better control of myself on the first tee tomorrow and just go out and get off to a good start. Get off to a good start, hit some good shots, knock some putts in and just kind of keep the momentum going.

**Q. You told me last week that sometimes when you were younger you would be making putts and you would be thinking about the money or the leaderboard. Did you find yourself looser out there today and just trying to enjoy it a little bit more?**

**GARY NICKLAUS:** Once I got the round started, yes, I was feeling good, I was hitting good golf shots. I was with two great guys that were kind of rooting for me to have a good round, which is always nice. It's really good to have two guys like that that you kind of feel like if you start going wayward, they're going to kind of put their arm around you and say, "Come on, you can do it." They didn't really have to today, but those are the kind of guys that they are.