

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW
March 8, 2020



ERNIE ELS (-16)

Q. Five-way tie for first on the back nine.

ERNIE ELS: I know, I know.

Q. What were you thinking then?

ERNIE ELS: It was a bit of my fault. I had the perfect start, birdied 1 and then birdied 3 and birdied 6. On 8 I missed a short -- missed a short-ish par putt and that threw me off a little bit. I wasn't too comfortable yesterday afternoon on the greens, so then I became a bit defensive on the greens. Then I bogeyed the 11th hole, which is really (inaudible) because it's one of the birdie holes on the back nine. That really threw me off. But then I birdied the next. Then I hit some big golf shots, I hit some good shots except for 16, I don't know where that came from. I was trying to keep it left. The wind's left to right and I really came over the top of it and that obviously was a tournament-saving drop. If I could play it off that path, because it was a lot of gravel --

Q. Did you ask for a ruling there?

ERNIE ELS: I got a ruling and the gentleman said that I got relief so I got relief. Then I hit a really poor second, but I two-putted from about 50 feet. Then I hit good shots coming in. The second on 18, I was trying to hit it right where we're standing but the wind pushed it. I did not want to go over the green. So I felt comfortable out of the bunker.

Q. Did you think you needed a birdie on 18 to win?

ERNIE ELS: I was listening to the crowd and obviously Freddie's obviously a hometown man. There wasn't any big roar, so I knew he didn't make birdie. So I saw Robert Karlsson hit it over the green and he didn't make birdie. So then I just had to survive. So I hit a really good second, it just went left. I was very pleased after hitting --

Q. Did you know Glen Day got the lead momentarily?

ERNIE ELS: I saw that, I saw it. I like to look at boards to see where I am and I did see him get to 14, but I don't think he birdied 18, either.

Q. He made bogey. He got to 15 and made bogey on 18.

ERNIE ELS: I didn't see he got to 15. I guess I went after 15 when he got to 18 tee. All right. Well, there you go.

Q. He hit driver off the deck on the second shot.

ERNIE ELS: Okay. Well, I'd like to think I would have made birdie, but obviously having to make par on a par 5, most of us can maybe handle that, so it was good.

Q. What does it mean to get your first?

ERNIE ELS: It was pretty tight, you know? I felt a little uncomfortable on the greens. I didn't have that free-flowing feeling, I had to work hard for it and that's a good thing to do, to work hard for something. You don't want something falling in your lap. I'm glad the first one's over with and we can move on now and it gets more comfortable after this. After being in a playoff in Hawaii, coming close to winning there, I didn't want to mess this one up. I had a great opportunity and I wanted to try and take that.

Q. What about just using the (inaudible)? What about that?

ERNIE ELS: I drove the ball fantastically. I'm using it with the long clubs, driving. This is as good as I've driven it for quite some time so I'm really pleased with the technology.

Q. Did you make a driver switch this week?

ERNIE ELS: I did. Yesterday I went to another shaft and another head with a little lower loft. I was at the factory.

Q. Srixon?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, down in Huntington Beach and I found this head and I put a shaft in and I used it yesterday because the wind was a bit more, ball was coming out a little lower and had a lot of heat on it, but I went back to my normal one today.

Q. (No microphone.)

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, just because of the loft. It's nice to have options.