



87TH PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

BALTUSROL GOLF CLUB

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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67-65-72-72: 276 (4-under)

An Interview With:

PHIL MICKELSON

JULIUS MASON: Phil Mickelson, ladies and gentlemen, the **87th PGA Championship** Champion.

Before we go to Q&A, Phil, is it true you've got an interesting phone call, I believe, from somebody?

PHIL MICKELSON: I did, yeah. That was President 41. It was pretty cool of him to take the time, yeah.

JULIUS MASON: Very cool. Some opening thoughts about your victory, the week, and we'll go to Q&A.

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it was an amazing week. I really enjoyed myself the whole week, and the people here in New Jersey just treated me and my wife amazing. We just really are appreciative. I'm very, very grateful to have been able to pull off the victory.

JULIUS MASON: Questions, folks.

Q. When Bones was asked to point to the best part of your game this week, he said, "guts." Would you agree with that?

PHIL MICKELSON: It was a week where there were -- things didn't go perfectly the whole time. The first couple of days, the ball was going in the hole, but thereafter, it was not. Yet, I had to gut it out and just find a way to make some pars and find a way to make a couple birdies. I'm just ecstatic that I was able to get it done.

Q. Can you just talk about touching the plaque on 18 and in the context of your regard for history and the game? You consider yourself a student of the history of the game, and just talk about that moment.

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it was an important -- obviously an important hole, but it was

an important tee shot. I had driven the ball well on 15, 17 and I just hit a good drive on 18. I knew I was hitting the ball well and I just gave that plaque a little touch for some good karma.

I had been hitting 4-, 5-, 6-iron in earlier in the week, and I busted a drive and a pretty good 3-wood to be able to reach there today. The wind turned immensely, and I hit a really good shot. It was surprising to me that it didn't quite get there far enough or it didn't fade enough to get to the green; instead of being right of the green, I thought it would fade more to be in the center. But I hit a really good shot and made a nice up-and-down.

Q. We were talking with your dad out there about the shots in the backyard around the green. Similar shots at all to what you had to hit today on 18 with all of those practices? Your dad was saying how he keeps the mower out to keep that rough up, so similar shots?

PHIL MICKELSON: We had some pretty thick rough in our backyard, and that's exactly what I was thinking on 18, that this is no different from what I've done in my backyard since I was a kid. I had been a little tentative on some shots out of the rough earlier in the week, mainly that double on 1, I didn't go in aggressive enough. The lie was okay; it wasn't bad but it was sitting down a little bit, and I went in aggressively and the ball popped up beautifully and trickled by the hole. It was a great feeling to see it come out the way I wanted it to.

Q. You were forced to sleep on the lead in a rather unique situation overnight last night; you only had four holes, plus one putt to play. Did you review those four holes in your mind and formulate any kind of a specific game plan? Did you actually visualize playing the four holes?

PHIL MICKELSON: No. I had a 3-footer on 14 and I never got past that 3-footer.

Q. You're now halfway to the Grand Slam. How much does this victory elevate your expectations for the future?

PHIL MICKELSON: I'm sorry, a little

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clearer?

Q. You're now halfway to the Career Grand Slam. How much does this victory elevate your expectations for the future?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it's hard for me to look out that far yet. It's only been an hour or two that I've had two (laughter). You know, it feels terrific, and certainly that will be a long-term goal, to get the other two.

But right now, I just want to savor this victory. It was hard-fought. I think it was one of the most stressful tournaments for me because I was on the lead or at the lead or tied every night. There was an extra night thrown in there for good measure, and it was a very stressful week. I'm looking forward to be able to relax for a day or two.

Q. I was wondering if you were aware how energetic your son was after collecting the victory, and if having the family around made it easier to deal with that stress each night like you were talking about?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, he's always like that. It wasn't just that particular moment. He just has endless energy.

We've had a lot of fun this week. But I also am very appreciative for my mom and mother-in-law, for Amy and our assistant, Macy, for helping out a lot at night, especially getting the kids bathed and down and giving me a little bit of peace time after the round to kind of unwind.

There was a lot of people to help make this win possible, whether it was **Rick Smith**, **Dave Pelz** or whether it was the local knowledge from **Doug Steffen** or whether it was all the work that Bones did, all of the help from family and friends, I think words of encouragement. I think certainly the people of New Jersey gave me a boost when things were tough. A lot of people helped me achieve this and I'm very appreciative.

Q. Can you compare this win to Augusta? And also, there seemed to be a sense of relief today when you made that putt.

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, comparing it to **Augusta**, **Augusta** I was a couple of shots back and had to charge to get the lead. Here, I was in the lead the whole time. It was just trying to fight out through a very difficult golf course and make pars and one birdie at the end.

So there certainly was a sense of relief. As I said earlier, there was a lot of stress this week, with being in the lead each night and having an extra night to sleep on it, thinking that it was

going to be done yesterday and having it come today.

I had a tough thing happen in that the wind changed, and I have a 3-iron and a sand wedge that I have in my bag, and yesterday I took out the 3-iron based on the wind, mainly because of No. 16. And today, the wind did a 180, it was straight into the wind and I didn't have my 3-iron, which I desperately needed. So I knew that I was going to struggle with that particular hole, and as I said, you've just got to fight it out. I hit a good shot, the ball plugged in the bunker and I was able to fight through it and make birdie on the last. Sometimes things don't always go through your way and you just have to gut it out.

Q. Before I get into my question, what did you hit on 16?

PHIL MICKELSON: 4-iron. That was all I had.

Q. There was a list of guys obviously before you that had the best-to-never-win-a-major type thing, and once they broke through, they never won again. I just wanted to ask you how important it was to go another year, consecutive year, with another one?

PHIL MICKELSON: You know, it's hard for me to answer that because I haven't really thought about it much. It feels great to have won it, but even though -- before I even won **Augusta**, I had never really doubted that I would eventually do it. And even after **Augusta**, having not won a major or come close this year, I didn't doubt the fact that it would happen again, I just didn't know when. I'm very fortunate and very pleased and excited that it was this week.

Q. Just for the record, can you give us the putts, the length of the putts and each club you hit from 14 in, please?

PHIL MICKELSON: I had a 3-footer that I slept on all night on 14 and was able to knock that one in.

I hit a 3-wood and a 9-iron to 18 feet on No. 15 and 2-putted it.

I hit a 4-iron on 16, because as I said, it's the only club I had. The wind changed. It would have been a 5-iron last night, but today it was a 4 and it wasn't even enough. Buried in the bunker, hit a decent shot out to about 18 feet again, and missed that.

Hit a good drive on 17, a nice 3-wood, and punched in a little pitching wedge on 17 to about

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12, 15 feet. And boy, did I think that putt was going in. It wasn't too firm. It was just a nice, soft speed. I thought it was going to break right in the middle, and it just didn't quite move enough at the end.

I got a good break, I think, on 18 that Steve and Thomas did not birdie it. I really thought I needed a 4 to tie. I hit a good drive to be able to go for the green in two and found out that neither one of them made birdie. It was kind of an emotional boost because now I feel as though it's my tournament to win, as opposed to fighting for a playoff.

Q. How long was the putt?

PHIL MICKELSON: Maybe three feet.

Q. Could you go over the details of the chip on 18, the distance you had, the lie of the ball and the club? And the second part is, this time you didn't leap like you did at *The Masters*. Is this getting to be old hat?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, 18 feet to three feet, expectations are a little different.

It was a chip shot that I had hit tens of thousands of times in my backyard. But it was one that I had to strike it confidently and aggressive to get the club through the rough. It was sitting a little bit downgrain which was beneficial because it helped the ball come out a little bit faster to get there, and I think that the rain last night softened the green a little bit, so there wasn't a fear of the ball racing by the hole.

I hit it very confidently and aggressively and the ball popped out perfectly. There's still an element of guesswork, but when it hit the green, it took a bounce and rolled up to within a three-foot circle which I felt very confident in.

Q. Which one of your wedges did you use?

PHIL MICKELSON: A lob-wedge.

Q. You've won lots of tournaments and you've had all phases of your game working. Can you talk about maybe the different satisfactions that come with grinding out a tournament on such a tough course and all of the things that you dealt with this week?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it was a very difficult tournament. It was amazing how the course changed after the first two days to the last two and how much more difficult it played.

I thought that -- the thing I've learned the most is how important it is to control the miss and miss it on the right side or the correct side of the

course and take out half of the trouble, and being able to do that allowed me to make aggressive swings. Taking out the bunkers off the tee on 18 on the right and being able to rip that drive and go ahead and swing as hard as I want and know it's not going right, that was a big factor. I was able to do that throughout the week; even though I missed it, if you noticed, most every miss was a little bit left and I was able to play it from there.

Q. Just to follow-up on that, does winning this way give you another layer of understanding of the things that it takes to win these kind of tournaments, and do you think it gives you even more to build on for future majors?

PHIL MICKELSON: Possibly. But again, we're looking way out in the future. The next major isn't for another seven months. I just want to kind of relish this and enjoy the fact that for the next seven months, I'm the most recent major winner.

Q. You talked about how stressful this tournament was being in the lead basically from the get-go, including that extra night. How proud are you of that stress, of the way you handled all that stress to get that trophy next to you?

PHIL MICKELSON: It's an amazing feeling to be the winner and to be able to hold this trophy. It just feels terrific. Gosh, the way the week went, it was a fun week, but it was a very stressful week, and again, having the lead after each night just added to the stress and the difficulty and the challenge of it, which is why I think it feels so good right now.

Q. Given how long it took you to break through, is there anything that you might appreciate now that you realize you didn't have in your game or leading up to that?

PHIL MICKELSON: That I didn't have what now?

Q. Was there anything that you realize, having won two of these, that maybe was missing prior to that, or was this just a logical progression given your play over your career?

PHIL MICKELSON: That's a good question, and I think that it's tough for me to really say tangibly if there was something that was missing before *The Masters* win or not.

I certainly feel a little bit different I think entering the majors. Certainly I'm a little bit more patient with myself and realize that as the course

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gets tougher, it's not just my score that goes up, but everybody else's does, too, so I think that makes it a little bit easier to deal with and play through.

Q. You didn't want to tell us the other day or get into specifics about what you exactly worked on in these three weeks, can you give us some clues now on the improvements you made?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, I've never really enjoyed talking about the technical side of it. It's just that I'm trying to take out half the golf course and being able to get the ball moving right-to-left every time, and knowing that it's not going right is very beneficial.

Q. I just wonder, by the time your head hit the pillow last night, how long that 3-footer had become in your mind, and if you had ever anticipated a putt as much as maybe that with the buildup to it?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, fortunately, it was inside the circle that I practice extensively. It was uphill, left-to-right, and I knew the greens were going to be perfect this morning because they would come out and mow them and roll them, and they were, they were just perfect.

Although I thought about that putt a lot last night, when I got there, it wasn't an intimidating putt. It was just a very -- I don't want to say easy, because no 3-footer is ever easy, but it was as straightforward as it could be.

Q. You said you didn't want to talk about this until the tournament was over, but obviously there's a different perception between guys who have won majors and multiple major winners. Have you thought much about that now?

PHIL MICKELSON: I really haven't. It's not really where I like to focus things. I mean, it feels great to have won, but now I want to continue to improve and take the things, the positives that came out of this week and try to apply them to future tournaments.

I think that at 35, I've got a number of years left, good years left where my game can continue to improve. I look at some great players from the past that didn't start winning big tournaments until their mid-30s, and I want to try to get better and better as my career goes on, as opposed to thinking that I've hit some milestone by making it from zero to one major or one major to two majors. That's not really where I want to

focus. It's not really the results or how many trophies. It's trying to get better.

Q. On the last little shot out of the rough on 18, how far were you from the cup itself?

PHIL MICKELSON: Probably 35, 40 feet maybe.

Q. Now that you've won two majors, the disappointments that you had earlier, does it almost seem like a different career, another career?

PHIL MICKELSON: I feel like a different player, not because I won the majors; I just feel like a different player than ten years ago. As I look back and I see highlights of myself playing and I see my putting stroke on the greens at *Augusta*, I just think, what was I doing? The stroke was so long and I had to slow up to -- these greens are so fast, I had to learn to putt the fast greens better.

When I watch some of the misses that I hit off the tee or certain holes where you just can't miss it -- you know, today I made four or five bogeys, but each bogey I was on the proper side to where I could get up-and-down. There was never an instance where I short-sided myself to the point that I had no chance to make par. And I take a lot of pride in that because that allows me, or gives me the opportunity at least, to shoot a good score.

Q. You mentioned playing with a local pro here to learn some of the nuances of the course. Can you cite any specific shots, moments, where you called on that knowledge, especially coming down the stretch?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, the most obvious one was the putt on No. 4. I'll bet everybody missed that putt left. I don't know if you watched it, but straight from behind the hole, I would be willing to bet almost everybody missed it left, it looks like it breaks right, the mountain is to the left which should make it go right; it doesn't, it goes left. That little thing there altered my read by four or five inches, and I ended up making it dead center.

That was a big putt. It gave me some momentum earlier in the round and gave me that extra shot to kind of work with, knowing that there's some tough bogey holes or tough pars coming up.

Coming down the stretch, though, there wasn't any trickiness to the locations; those were pretty straightforward.

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Q. Rick Smith talked about not only have a lot of players won one major but some have won the same event twice, but that winning two different majors, obviously Augusta and here, very different kind of challenges, maybe makes a statement or shows the diversity of a player's game. How significant is that and how proud are you of winning in different settings like that?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, I think there are different challenges to winning each major, and I certainly have -- certainly am pleased to have accomplished two of those challenges, but there are two more that would show the real complete player. If you look at the guys that have won all four majors, their ability to hit the ball long for *Augusta*, their ability to drive it very straight and keep the ball in play at the *U.S. Open*, their ability to keep it low and control it with the wind at the *British*, it shows a complete player.

I thought that this week's setup was much more similar to a *U.S. Open* than anything, and I've played well in the *U.S. Open*, so I felt confident coming in.

Q. Can you talk about how and when you decided to use the cut drive exclusively? And also, do you think with birdies to win now two majors on the final hole by one shot, do you think you've quieted your critics?

PHIL MICKELSON: That's certainly not my intention. I went to the fade this week when I came here a couple of weeks ago, saw the course and realized that the fairways were tight, that it was important to get the ball to stop rolling. I didn't want to be hitting draws and having the ball bound and go into the rough.

So the cut was designed not necessarily for as much control through the air as there was to get the ball stopped once it hit the ground. And I had fewer drivers bounce into the rough than I would have had I been hitting a draw.

Q. After yesterday's round, you had talked about maybe it would be an advantage having stopped, as the course conditions might not be as difficult. Today, because it was a little softer, I'm wondering, were the course conditions easier today or was that off-set by having to sleep on having only five holes to play?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, the greens being softer and smoother after being mown and not having all the traffic, that was a plus. That made it easier.

However, the wind changing made it a lot more difficult. We basically played almost every hole yesterday and today combined into the wind. Normally you play into the wind, but you know that you have 16, 17 and 18 to play with a little bit of help. The wind turned around, we played those straight into the wind, too. So it seemed like every shot was into the wind. The only one that played downwind was 15.

That 9-iron that I hit on 15 stopped right by the divot, and the shot into 17 actually backed up. Now, yesterday that would not have happened. So I think that the ball on the greens, the way the greens were a little bit softer, certainly helped.

Q. There's been much made about the fact that you went back to the cut for this tournament, but in the first three majors this year you seem to have gone off it. Is it more about a case of you wanting to apply what you -- whatever you want to hit to a particular major, and if you want to hit a draw, you do; or is there some validity perhaps in the idea that you won with the cut at Augusta and you should just stick with it?

PHIL MICKELSON: What I try to do is come into the site early enough, a couple weeks, to see how the golf course is going to play and be able to practice the shots that I need for that particular event.

But if I were to just stay with one shot, I think that I would be cutting myself short on some other great venues, and I don't want to do that. I want to give myself a chance to win on every site. It just so happened that the cut was very effective at *Augusta* and very effective here, too.

Q. Could you just give us a little snapshot look at your backyard when you were a kid? How did the tournament committee set it up, how much time did you spend back there and what did you do back there?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it was -- it was a about a 25-, 30-yard shot, and it was bermudagrass. That was the only difference. It's a little bit different grass. It was a fun place to grow up and be able to chip shots. There's been a lot of pictures, though, of it. I'm sure we could pull some up for you and you could see it. It wasn't a big yard but it was just right for around the greens.

Q. Besides eliminating half the golf course and winning with the backyard shot, over five days what would you attribute the victory to? Good putting early? What else?

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PHIL MICKELSON: I think that as I look back on the 72 holes, the biggest miss that I had was just off the fairway. I had one time where I hit a tree limb early and had to play off another fairway. For the most part my misses were within three or four yards of the fairway; it was never really a big miss. That led to keeping the score in check, and I think that that was probably the biggest factor.

Q. You won at Augusta by making birdie on the last hole and you won here by making birdie at the last hole. Was there any difference in the mindset in playing those last holes, and is there a different pressure involved when you're playing to avoid a playoff with one guy and possibly be in a big free-for-all like what would have happened today if you had not birdied the last hole?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, to birdie the last hole, whether it's a tough finishing hole uphill like the 18th at Augusta or whether it's a reachable par 5 like this, you have to hit good shots and you have to drive the ball in the fairway. And into the wind, I had to step on that drive a little bit and hit it. I hit it pretty good down the middle. It was the same aggressive-type swing that I tried to make at *Augusta*.

So whether the hole is a birdie hole or a tough par, you've got to make good, confident, aggressive swings if you expect to make birdie.

Q. We rarely hear about how one celebrates a major championship when they leave the course. By the way your kids are running around the green, DisneyWorld might seem appropriate, but can you tell us a little bit of what you're going to do tonight? Will it be dinner, drinks, phone calls, that type of thing?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, we're going to fly back to San Diego and I'm going to spend a couple of days with them to unwind. I intend to play next week at the World Series, so I'll fly back Wednesday and fortunately there's no Pro-Am so I can come in Wednesday.

So after that, we had already scheduled a family vacation, so we're going to head out for a week and spend a little bit of time and just kind of be together. I'll have about three weeks off after next week, which will be fun.

Q. How did you like the back-to-back par 5s at the end, both from a playing standpoint and a theatre standpoint, and what was your strategy there?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, it was actually more nerve-wracking having par 5s and being in the last group thinking that ahead guys were going to make birdies. Thomas birdied 17; that meant that both Thomas and *Steve Elkington* could birdie 18, and then I'm trailing again and I've got to birdie to catch them. That puts a lot more pressure on me.

On the other hand, knowing that I can make two birdies to win, which is what I thought I had to do, was a nice feeling, knowing that I was in control of my own destiny, to say. After that -- gosh, I thought I birdied 17; after the putt lipped out, I was very fortunate that the two closest competitors did not birdie 18. It very well -- it would have been a lot harder to have to make birdie to tie than to have the chance to win outright.

Q. When you were in the rough there on 18 at Saturday, you took your head cover off and hit the shot almost into the TV tower. How risky was that shot and how much of the ball could you see?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, Bones and I talked about that shot. It would have been just as easy to lay up with an L-wedge, but the problem I thought was that if it came out dead out of the rough, it would go in the water, and if it came out hot, it would bound into the fairway and roll into the rough. I felt like from there, I took out the possibility of going into the water and 16 out of play, and I had a good chance to make birdie, so that's why I ended up doing that.

Q. We all saw you touch Jack's plaque there on 18 fairway with the 4-wood. When you're hitting your drive on 18 and saw it so closely, did you get a little sense of maybe Jack's magic was with you, or you're going to use a little of his magic to try to birdie the 18th to finish up?

PHIL MICKELSON: No, I just wanted some good karma, some good positive thoughts. Hey, *Jack Nicklaus* hit a 1-iron on the green from here, it can be done, just make a good, solid aggressive swing. I just wanted a positive thought.

JULIUS MASON: Phil, thanks very much for coming down.

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