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Southern Hills Country Club

Table with 22 columns: Hole #, 1-18, Out, Total. Rows: Yardage, Par, Score.

An Interview With:

WOODY AUSTIN

KELLY ELBIN: Woody Austin, ladies and gentlemen, in with an even-par 70 in the second round of the 89th PGA Championship at Southern Hills Country Club.

Woody, looked like a pretty solid round of golf, two bogeys, two birdies.

WOODY AUSTIN: Yeah, it was very solid. Unfortunately a bad score. (Laughing).

KELLY ELBIN: We'll go through those two bogeys and two birdies.

WOODY AUSTIN: The second hole was a 3-putt. I hit it on the front right about 30 feet and 3-putted.

The fifth hole was about a 1 1/2 footer.

And then No. 9, I flew my wedge in the middle of the green, spun all the way off the green 30 yards down in the fairway and then holed it. Really goofy birdie.

And then we had a bit of a delay on 13 tee and I just hit a bad drive and I hit it down the left side and I thought it was all right and I hit it in a little creek. I didn't even know it was there, so made 6.

KELLY ELBIN: Thanks. Open it up for questions.

Q. You had that 62 not long ago. Was this ball-striking-wise kind of in the neighborhood of that? I can't imagine a guy -- I've never heard a guy more disappointed than you are from what you said outside with the final math on the scorecard.

WOODY AUSTIN: Yeah, well, this is -- you know, the big talk about majors is you can't win the tournament on Thursday and Friday, but you can lose it. Well, I feel like I've lost a great opportunity to be out front because I've had way too many chances. You just can't have that many chances -- when you're someone in my position who has never won a major, never won one of these big events, you can't throw away all of these opportunities. I don't have that luxury. There is somebody that has that luxury but it's not me.

Q. It's the other Woody.

WOODY AUSTIN: Yeah, he seems to be able to turn the switch and make everything. Well, I don't seem to be able to do that. So I can't afford to throw away all of these shots I feel like I'm throwing away.

For me to make only five birdies, and I've made one putt over three feet for birdie. And I've had -- I don't know how many 10- and 15-footers I've had. If you can't make any of those, you're done. And so therefore, my score, I'm in a great position, yes. But my score is not good for the way I played.

Q. Are you aware of the fact that all six majors held at Southern Hills, the winner has

led or either had a share of the lead after 36 holes and can you just kind of talk about that?

WOODY AUSTIN: I did not know that at all.

I played here in the '95 TOUR Championship, so I remember it from that as far as being such a great golf course. And I knew coming in that if I could drive the ball well, and play well, that nobody was going to run away, so to speak, and shoot too many low numbers.

So I had good thoughts as far as that.

As far as it being a huge thing for here, I just -- again, I like my position as far as being up towards the top but I'm still disappointed that I'm not farther out front.

Q. There was also -- I'm sure you've heard a lot of talk about your decision to skip the British Open this year. Just talk about it one more time and do you have any regrets, certainly the way you played today, about not going over there and trying to give it a shot?

WOODY AUSTIN: See, that's just it. If Tiger doesn't play more than two weeks in a row, and it's a rarity when he plays two weeks in a row because he talks about how mentally draining it is to play the game. I've played eight weeks in a row. The British Open would have been nine in a row after a 15-hour flight, get over there on Monday night and not be able to play a practice round until Tuesday afternoon.

I chose to not play nine weeks in a row, and I'm getting lambasted because it was the British Open. It had nothing to do with it being the British Open. It had to do with the fact that I was dead tired. I played horrible the last two events that I played and I was just beat.

If I can play in a British Open, I'm going to want to play, but I'm also not going to want to go over there and make a fool of myself and shoot 80 both days. I felt like I would have gone over there so dead tired and so mentally exhausted and tried to figure out a way to play European -- or play that golf course, when I'm not accustomed to it.

So I just felt as though it wasn't a good thing for me to do. I would have loved to have played because I want to play in majors, but I also don't want to, you know, go over there after nine straight weeks.

So I'm hoping, if I'm qualified for it early enough for next year, I'll be there, I guarantee it.

Q. Can you briefly tell us how somebody born in Tampa, went to school in Miami, lives in Kansas?

WOODY AUSTIN: One reason and one reason only: My wife. My wife was born and raised in Wichita, Kansas. That's where she wanted to live and that's where we live.

Believe it or not my oldest sister lives there and my oldest sister lives right there off the first tee at the Nationwide. And I went out to try to qualify and Monday qualify when I was still working in the bank because my sister had her first child. So I went out to visit and see her firsts child and tried to Monday qualify and met my wife during the qualifier.

She was following around a guy in my group with her best friend. Her best friend just yanked her out there to follow this guy, and I happened to be in that group. And my sister got their phone numbers and, next thing you know, she took me around Wichita for a week.

Q. Why are you so hard on yourself?

WOODY AUSTIN: Well, I like to look at it this way. If you're not happy with your job, if you don't feel as though you're getting 100% out of what you put in or what you do for your job, are you supposed to be happy?

I feel as though I've only succeeded or I've only -- you've only seen half of what I have. 50 percent isn't good enough far as I'm concerned.

So I'm never -- at my age now, I'm never going to be able to show you how good I know I was, but you still don't see how good I really am, and that's disappointing. And, therefore, I'm not going to sit here and lie and say, oh, yeah, this is all great, when I know that I'm better.

Q. You sound -- and this is an impression, of course. You sound very down after this. What would be your frame of mind going into the next round?

WOODY AUSTIN: Well, like I said, I'm disappointed right now. But I'm always that way after a round. You know, it just takes -- it's such a mental grind that you're -- I'm still in the round right now, and you know, in an hour or so, I'll be fine. I'll calm down.

But again, it seems like the way I look at things, we live in such an excuse-oriented society. Everybody makes excuses, and it's okay. It's okay to be politically correct, but it's not okay to tell the

truth. I tell the truth and I get lambasted because you're too hard on yourself or you're looking at it the wrong way.

Well, I don't blame anything on volunteers. I don't blame anything on my caddie. I don't blame anything -- it's all -- I'm the one who hits the shots. I'm the one who does everything so I'm the one as far as I'm concerned, I'm the one who takes responsibility for it and I take responsibility for again what I say, if it's lackluster or if it's 50 percent of what I know I'm capable of, I know I'm not going to be happy. That's just the way I am.

Q. How do you pull out of that for tomorrow?

WOODY AUSTIN: How do I pull out of that for tomorrow? The same way I always do. I'm come out here tomorrow with the same attitude if I play my round of golf like I have these two days; all I've got to do is get something to go in. If I get something to go in and I get on a run the way I'm hitting it, I like my chances.

Q. A couple of questions. First one, I didn't see this, but somebody told me to ask you, did you have something about your golf ball landing on a frog or something today?

WOODY AUSTIN: Yeah, my ball was in that little creek on 13 that I didn't know about was sitting right next to a huge dead frog. It was upside-down in the creek.

Q. And how did you negotiate that?

WOODY AUSTIN: I just pulled it out with my sand wedge. I didn't want to touch him. (Laughter).

Q. Secondly, how much does this become -- it's supposed to be significantly hotter on the weekend. How much does this become a war of attrition or endurance contest on the weekend?

WOODY AUSTIN: It only becomes that if you allow it to become that, really. As long as you take care of yourself as far as you drink plenty of water; I have a hydrolyte drink called Gookinaid. As long as you keep hydrated and drink water, it's just a matter of sweating a lot.

I guess the hardest part is to get over how your shirt weighs five pounds when you're done.

Q. How experimented with different putters, different putting stances?

WOODY AUSTIN: Well, I've tried everything just like anybody. I putted one year with the belly putter. I've tried all different mallets and this, that and the other.

Like I said, I'm a very nervous person, so there's that -- that's why I'm animated or whatever. I have a lot of nervous energy, and it shows -- it shows in putting. It's very hard to make a putting stroke when you're real nervous. It's a lot easier to make a golf swing when you're nervous as opposed to putting. So the putting stroke, it's going to show up the most and unfortunately, that's the most important part of the game, but it's going to show up the most. And it shows up -- it showed up a lot today. I just should have shot a hell of a lot better.

Q. There's a lot of golf and sports psychologists that tell their players to celebrate their good days as well as agonize over their bad ones; what do you think of that whole industry?

WOODY AUSTIN: Well, we're all different. Everybody is different. When you look at it from that standpoint, they say, you can't change who you are, you can't change your stripes. I can't change who I am. Why would I try? Again, I'm trying to I guess trick myself. Well, I'm not very good at being tricked.

So I am who I am. I try not to be anybody different. You know, like I said, I remember Lee Trevino saying that everyone had a shortcoming. You know, his was he couldn't hit the ball right-to-left in his prime, Nicklaus, everybody. Mine is the fact that I'm just a very nervous, energetic person. Unfortunately for me it's hard for me to reign it all in.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record, Woody's best finish in the PGA Championship was a tie for 16th last year at Medinah.

WOODY AUSTIN: I didn't finish 15th in '95?

KELLY ELBIN: 23.

WOODY AUSTIN: Bummer. (Laughter).

Q. Lighten the mood a little bit, has Tabasco ever sent you a shirt that you refused to wear? I think you know where I'm going.

WOODY AUSTIN: No. The ones that I refuse to wear are the plain ones. I have a lot of

plain ones with the Tabasco name or the leaf. But anybody can wear a plain white shirt.

From what I understand, though, this will be the last year for me. So they are not making these shirts anymore. So everybody can leave me alone, I guess.

At least I don't wear lavender purple pants with white belts. You know, at least my pants are -- they are just shirts. At least I'm not wearing from head to toe in pink with pink shoes and matching tassels.

You know, so -- (laughter).

Q. You talk about the challenge of playing eight weeks in a row and the fatigue. The way your schedule is now setup, the tail end of the season has a similar stretch for players who are accustomed to having a more tailored schedule. What revelation are those players going to have in the run through the FedExCup?

WOODY AUSTIN: It will be interesting to see. We are looking at now five of the next six weeks for all of us that have a chance to make it through the four FedExCup (events).

I'll be interested to see. For somebody who says that they can't play more than two in a row, for him to play four in a row, it will be interesting to see, because then maybe you guys might understand the rest of us, how hard it is, because he only -- he gets to pick and choose when he's ready. A lot of us don't have that luxury. So we have to play those stretches. He's never had to play that stretch. So it will be interesting to see how he plays.

Q. Do you have any impressions of the game of the Chinese pro that you played with for two days?

WOODY AUSTIN: He's got a good game. He's got a real good short game. The first nine holes yesterday, he showed off some good skills with that short game of his. He's got a really good putting stroke, rolls it -- like I said, his short game is good.

I think he got a little bit too locked in to playing the hard hook the last half of yesterday and today and that got him into a little trouble. He was starting to hook it a little too far.

Q. The average guy can never dream of hitting a golf ball like you but always feels like

he can make putts. Is that any part of the frustration for you, knowing that the hard part is the part that you've got down?

WOODY AUSTIN: You look at it that way. I look at it like hitting the ball is the easy part. You can hide a bad swing; you can hit it 12 feet. That seems like a great shot. Technically you're trying to hit it -- but it only takes that much to miss a putt (indicating an inch) whether it be line, speed, whatever.

When you're not real comfortable or confident, maybe you just wish one and doesn't get there or you hit one a little too hard; that's a lot easier to show up than it is the other way. So I think putting is a hell of a lot harder than hitting a golf ball.

Q. Nice playing. I just want to revisit 13. Do you think it's possible that you may have with that errant drive killed that innocent frog?

WOODY AUSTIN: I was told that the ball rolled into the creek. I was told that it rolled off the tree, so the tree actually caused the problem. It rolled off the tree and into the creek.

And that was an awful big frog for me to kill. That guy was huge. (Indicating a foot).

Q. The exchange with your caddie, could you tell us about that is this?

WOODY AUSTIN: Well, I was sitting there looking at it, thinking it was -- where I was dropping it was going to be some pretty good hardpan so I felt like could I maneuver the ball. I'm not big on hitting hooks, but I felt like I could probably hook it out of there and maybe get it around the green. And so I was thinking of maybe dropping it in a certain spot where I felt I could get it on the green, but he said, "No, you're laying up."

Yesterday my other bad tee shot that I hit yesterday, I hit it right on 16. And I walked up to the one on 16 and I was going to lay up. And he said, no, you can hit it shot.

So he talked me into going for it on 16 today, and I pulled it off. And I wanted to go for it there and he said no, so the exchange was wait a second, you talked me into going for it yesterday and now you're telling me no. So that was the exchange.

We have a good time out there. Me and Brent get along great.

Q. You spoke of your nervous energy. Does that carry over into other aspects of your life?

WOODY AUSTIN: I've been a nervous person my entire life. If you talk to my mom, anybody, that's just my nature. I guess I'm one of those people that if you come up to me in the dark, you'll scare the living daylights out of me.

I'm always that way. I've talked to the sports psychologists, whatever; I'm the kind of guy that even when I lay down at night, my brain doesn't shut off, so I have a hard time going to sleep. Like last night, I'm lucky if I got four hours of sleep last night. My brain was just, whew, that's just the way I am, like I said.

Q. What techniques, if any, have you tried to calm that nervous energy on the greens?

WOODY AUSTIN: I guess the one that I've stuck to the most, there's a sports hypnotist or whatever I went to in California, Dr. Bee Epstein, I believe is her name, and she did some breathing. She tried to hypnotize me; she couldn't do it. Some of her breathing techniques I've tried, which do help, but again, you know, there's only -- you can only hide so much. Just like anything, based on the condition of the putt as far as is it, you know, is it Thursday, Friday; is it for par or birdie; our levels changes. If you've got an 8-footer for birdie, you're not going to be as charged or nervous if it's as if it's for par if you miss so many, because the par putt means a lot more than the birdie does because you don't want to lose shots, so your levels change.

Q. Given your wiring, what do you do to relax away from the course? What things do you actually enjoy away from the course?

WOODY AUSTIN: I've gone back to -- I've started to do the things I used to do growing up in Florida. I'm a sports junky. I love to play sports. And everybody always told me once you got out here you had to stop because you'd get hurt, this, that and the other. I tried to listen for a while. Even though I'm 43, I'm back to when I go home, I play softball, a little bit of basketball. That's the way I can get rid of that nervous energy. That's the way I can get away from golf. I'm not a hobby guy as far as fishing or -- it's not to be activity-wise. Again I guess that's my wiring. It has to be -- it has to keep me going. I can't just -- that's it.

Q. You've had a really nice career, you're a multiple PGA TOUR winner, but thanks to networks like ours (GOLF CHANNEL) at least the lasting image until we are done may be that moment at Hilton Head. Do you look back with amusement at that moment?

WOODY AUSTIN: Well, I can't help -- I wish I could look back at amusement. But the way I look at it is -- I put it to you this way. Because I got a little upset by seeing it -- where was it the last time? Every time I'm on, the whole prelude into it is that.

My take on that is if you catch me on the golf course doing something bad, and you want to lead in with that, so be it. But if you're going to lead into that after I shoot 62 or win a golf tournament; why? That has nothing to do with the 62. You lead into everything that Tiger does with the fist-pumps and all the good stuff. You never lead in with all of his bad stuff. So why is my one thing in ten years, where I did something outrageous, the only thing that I'm looked at?

So, from the standpoint, yeah, you know, I do let it roll off the back as much as possible because that's the only thing you can do. But like I said, if it's about me getting angry on the golf course, have at it. But if it's about me playing good and winning or leading a golf tournament, why does that have to come up?

KELLY ELBIN: Woody Austin in at 2-under par 138. Woody, thanks.

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