



August 11, 2007



Southern Hills Country Club

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total
Yardage	464	488	451	372	653	200	384	245	374	3,631	366	173	458	537	223	413	507	358	465	3,500	7,131
Par	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	4	35	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	35	70
Score																					

An Interview With:

ERNIE ELS

KELLY ELBIN: Ernie Els in with a round of 1-under par 69 in the third round of the 89th PGA Championship at Southern Hills. He's 1-under for the championship and in a tie for 6th at the moment.

Ernie, nice 32 on the back nine. Talk a little bit about your round, please, and then get into some birdies and bogeys, please.

ERNIE ELS: I didn't get off to a great start. I was looking for a pretty solid start this afternoon to try and shoot a really good number.

I made a double on No. 4. That definitely didn't help the course. And I finished the front nine in 2-over. Missing short putts on 8 and 9; one for par, one for birdie. But on the back nine I got a couple of things going. Three birdies out of the first four out of the back nine. Kind of salvaged my round a little bit.

But I was actually looking for a nice low round today to try and get myself back into it. But I gotta be satisfied with the way I finished. I was well out of it. Nice to get it back into great numbers.

KELLY ELBIN: Could you give the length of the birdie putts starting on 5.

ERNIE ELS: 5 I made a long one after the double. Must have made a 35-, 40-footer down the hill. I was off the tee and in trouble off the second shot. That was a real bonus for me.

On 8 I hit my tee shot into the right bunker, hit it out to about six feet and missed it.

And on 10, myself and John went for the green. He hit it left of the green and I pitched it up to maybe 20 feet, made that for birdie.

And 11 I hit a 9-iron, made a 15-footer for birdie.

13, I had a really good second shot into the par 5 with an 8-iron. Only had about 12 feet for eagle but I misread it.

And I bogeyed the next hole. That was probably the toughest position today on 14.

And then birdied 15 from about 15 feet again.

KELLY ELBIN: Let's open it up for questions.

Q. You talked about how this course, it's tough to play for position every hole and that puts a mental strain on you. Can you describe what kind of mental grind it puts on you?

ERNIE ELS: I mean every hole, you get a certain position where you've got to put it. If you don't do that and you miss the fairway, you got your work cut out. I love the way they've got it set up. You can advance the ball to the green. But that does not always mean that you're going to make a par.

You could get a fly-out or you could make a mental error hitting it to the wrong side of the green, and you're always bringing a double bogey. So it's a great layout. Today I tried to be quite aggressive off the tees, hit a lot of drivers. And,

you know, subsequently I think I made four or five birdies and quite a few mistakes.

KELLY ELBIN: Do you feel like there was a particular score you needed to get to today to give yourself a realistic shot tomorrow?

ERNIE ELS: I was trying to shoot 65 today. My goal over the weekend was to try to get to 10-under. But I've just got to shoot 61 tomorrow, that's all (laughter).

Q. Talk about driving on 10, going for the green there. Obviously that's a huge risk/reward thing. Is that something you do when you're behind? Or could you describe what types of things you run into when you try to do that?

ERNIE ELS: First of all, your tee shot, if you want to hit it in the fairway you have to hit a 5-iron, if you pull it you go down into the rough. So I figure, you know, if I hit a pretty decent drive I can get it around the green and from there I could get it on the green and maybe make a par or birdie.

If I get on it the right line I could get it on the green. It's 330 downhill. So it's a big risk. But to answer your question, I guess if I wasn't leading I would probably not be doing that, no.

Q. You were a triple bogey away at Carnoustie from being right there on Sunday. Today you have a double and some other near misses when you could have really had bogeyed the round. Do you feel like you're closer than you've been in a long time to being at the top of your game, because last couple majors you've been --

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I think so. Somebody just mentioned to me that I've made 14 birdies this week and I'm 1-under par. So it means that I'm doing a lot of good things out there. But the frustrating thing which drives me nuts is that I'm making soft mistakes, soft errors. 3-putt here or a bogey or a double from nowhere on No. 4 which is a short little par 4. That drives me crazy.

And that's the frustrating part. But my swing has been pretty good. My putting stroke's not too bad. My whole game as a whole is pretty good. And it's been like that for a while. But for some reason, you know, the game is just kind of testing me at the moment.

Q. You've shown a lot of fortitude here, if you go to Carnoustie or here, when you make

a big number, you come back and you're able to string birdies together. Given that frustration you talk about, what do you try to reconcile as you approach tomorrow?

ERNIE ELS: Well, you know, I am what I am. I can't change that. Tiger, he's what he is, and he's not making the mistakes I'm making. And in a way that's frustrating, as I just mentioned. But in a way that's got to be a positive, too. If I can start eliminating these mistakes, I can start really challenging for tournaments again.

And that's what I've got to keep working on. And at the moment it feels like it's just such a slow process for me. I feel I'm so close at times and so far away from where I want to be at times. So it's a bit, as I say, a battle with the game of golf at the moment. But I'm keeping my head down and I'm just trying to get myself through it, just play through it. And that's kind of what I'm trying to do.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record, Ernie has two Top-5 finishes in the last three PGA championships he's played in.

Q. Yesterday you came in, you were talking about how you have to convince yourself that it's not over. As you said, you're trying to get at 10-under. Given Tiger's record in front running, and I think at last look he had a 5-shot lead, going into tomorrow is this over now?

ERNIE ELS: I don't want to -- I can't say that because I'm competing. And tomorrow is the final day. It's 18 holes of golf left to be played. The statistics will tell you, yes, it is over. But as a competitor, I can't sit there and tell you it's over. I can't ever do that.

So I gotta play the round of my life. We've all played rounds of our lives, and he's got to have a couple of mistakes. He's unbelievably solid at the moment, as we all can see, and full of a lot of confidence.

So as a competitor, I want to say no, you can't ever think it's over. So I need to shoot something unbelievable and he's gotta make mistakes.

Q. If I could follow up, if you were watching from your couch at home, would you think it's over?

ERNIE ELS: How can I put it? Yeah. If I was not a golfer, a fan on the couch, I'd be putting my house on him, yeah (laughter). As a fan.

Q. Would you mind a couple of Presidents Cup questions? I know your mind is elsewhere. You know about Gary's comments at the British Open about steroids and how you and Retief responded to it. Do you think there will be any carryover come Presidents Cup time?

ERNIE ELS: I think we'll needle him a little bit. I think our captain will get a lot of abuse from the players in-house. So if you want to get a little hidden camera inside (smiling) I think we'll give him a lot of stick when we get there. But it will be tongue in cheek.

Q. How about with Rory and Tiger, do you think that will spice things up come Presidents Cup time?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I think Rory really seems to be wanting Tiger so he can play him in singles on Sunday. (Laughter) seems like he's really after him so he can play him head-on on Sunday. But they'll probably push me to play him (chuckling) like they always do.

Q. You've won a lot of golf tournaments by being in front, you see the way Tiger plays when he's in front. When you're in front, how much does the game change?

ERNIE ELS: Well, you want to be in front on this golf course. To shoot a low score around here without any mistakes is very tough to do. So we've got a lot of pressure on us. Tiger is -- with his game, with guys that hit the ball long, you can play very safe on this course off the tees. You can you hit 3-irons all day or 3-woods all day. The worst you can shoot is not probably 2-over, it's when you're pushing, trying to make birdies, trying to make eagles, that's when mistakes can come.

If you're leading there, you're doing fine.

Q. I know that early in your career this wasn't one of your better majors, and you played better lately. You alluded to the setup of the rough and how you can go for things here. I wonder, over time have you come to appreciate this tournament more and maybe just kind of the way it plays, you see how punitive and punishing they seem to be trying to make other majors?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I think -- definitely I think through time, I mean, I've been playing major

championship golf for a good part of 15, 16, 17 years now. And I'm a great fan, obviously, of the British Open.

Only messed up maybe once that I can remember. I've always enjoyed playing the Masters. But there, again, we've always said if we have bad weather at the Masters you'll get what we got this year, you'll have an over-par champion. And I don't know if Alister MacKenzie designed the course that way or Bobby Johnson intended for it to be that way. We get to the U.S. Open, which is borderline ridiculous.

I mean Oakmont was a great golf course. It was very fairly set up. You know what I'm saying? The rough from the fairway out to where the crowd is, I'm all for that. But 290-yard par 3s and 510-yard par 4s, stuff like that, you're going to have over-par scores.

And I'm not sure if that's the right thing to do either. But it seems like the PGA of America, they've got it pretty right right now. I didn't quite agree with some of the venues they had in the past. But they've got really good venues now. They've got great venues coming up. Classic golf courses. And you've got the best player in the world leading here, leading by a bunch, because we keep shooting ourselves in the foot.

But that's gotta tell you something, that if you play proper golf, you can score what he's scoring. And I think that's fair.

Q. With the intense heat this week, I was curious to get your thoughts on how the course and the greens are holding up?

ERNIE ELS: As I said, I think they've done an excellent job. I think obviously the rough at the start of the week before all of the field has gone through the golf course, the rough was a bit thicker and a lot more penal. With the heat and a lot of the play through, your second shot you can definitely get the ball further down the fairways. But the greens are great. You can hit shots in there, they're going to stop. And the pace of the greens are fine. So the course setup is great.

Q. Can you just talk about the perception's always been that Tiger has trouble on tracks that are kind of twisty like this or Hoylake with cross-bunkers, do we have that wrong and maybe he's better off without the driver?

ERNIE ELS: He's figured it out now. I shouldn't say that. He's won 12 majors. But on courses like this he's figured it out now where he's been very aggressive, and in the past, even with his 3-woods it's almost too aggressive on some of these holes out here. I think the way he played at Hoylake, he's learned a lot from himself there, being very disciplined and being -- what's the word -- patient. Very patient off the tees and really not pushing it.

I haven't seen him play this week, but I think he's doing very similar things this week. And when he's swinging well he can do this. And he's obviously swinging very well. And he's definitely figured out these shorter, twistier golf courses.

KELLY ELBIN: 3-time major champion Ernie Els at 1-under par.

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