

U.S. MID-AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

October 8, 2015

Sammy Schmitz

THE MODERATOR: First of all, Sammy, can you express to everyone what it means to be a USGA national champion?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Well, it means a lot. Normally I'm just trying to get into these tournaments, and I've been in a couple. I've lost in my first round and lost in my second round in the previous Mid-Ams, and I mean, it means the world. It's hard to put into words right now how I'm feeling because it just doesn't quite feel real yet. It'll be interesting to see how things are when I get back home. Feeling pretty good right now.

THE MODERATOR: The obvious question is what's it like to make a 1 on a par-4 hole when it means something, too?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I don't know. (Laughing.) It was fantastic. It's one shot, and you automatically win the hole. You get to walk to the next hole. I think it played about 270, and we knew the slope was there. I've hit that green four times this week, so I had a real good feeling stepping into the tee box, hitting that shot. I executed the shot I wanted to. You really never expect it to go in. I've had one hole-in-one in my life, and it was in a nine-hole scramble. This is the second.

It's an amazing feeling. Sure feels good.

Q. Talk about while the ball was in the air, what were you thinking?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah, ball is in the air, I'm thinking it's perfect. I wanted to be left of the pin. We wanted to make sure not to get it over the green, not to get it up on top because once you get it up on top, it's just way too hard to stop the ball. I hit it real -- for me I hit it really hard, and I think after Mark hit his 3-wood it was really easy for me to gauge how far my drive was going to go because he hits his 3-wood just a little further than I was hitting my driver today. I felt good with the number. I hit it, left side, we saw it trickle up the slope, and we thought, God, that's got to be good because this morning I had a chip from in front of the green, I chipped it past the hole, it came back to about three feet, made a good 3. Yeah, it's an unbelievable feeling. Tough to process right now.

Q. How long was the time between when you hit the shot before it went in?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: It felt like forever. We hit it, we knew it was good, we saw it kind of -- I think I handed the club to my caddie John. I think I had taken my glove off at that point, and just a couple steps forward, and we heard everybody screaming. You can kind of tell a scream for when it's close and when it goes in. We knew it went in. Everybody erupted, and it was a really good feeling.

Q. You had some ups and downs today, obviously --

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah.

Q. And I know you said last night that you had talked with your dad who's not a golfer. How much was what he wanted so much on your mind today?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: So I thought it was going to be really easy to block it out, until I woke up at 2:00 in the morning last night. So yeah, she called me this spring during the Masters, and he said, This place looks unbelievably amazing; we need to go there and watch the Masters. I mean, you never think -- I guess you can think you're going to win a Mid-Am to get there and actually get to play and get inside the ropes. Again, it doesn't feel real yet, but when I did win the match, I did think about it a little bit, got a little emotional that we get to go in a different sense. We get to be inside the ropes. We get to play.

I don't think any Mid-Am has ever made the cut at the Masters. I'm pretty sure they haven't. I would love

to be the first, if that's the case. But it's just real special.

My dad has been a big part of my life. He's been a big part of the competitive nature and the drive that I have to compete. I might not always hit the best shots, but I never feel like I'm out of a hole, so I'm always going to fight, and a lot of that, that teaching, was through hockey.

You know, he was coaching hockey and my mom was with all the hockey moms and they were doing the programs to generate money, and it was a team effort. Yeah, very much appreciative of that.

Q. What's your dad's first name?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: My dad's first name is Steve, Steve Schmitz. My mom's name is Barb Schmitz. My wife's name is Natalie Schmitz. And I have two little girls at home who are one and two; Aubrey is two years old; Allie is one. I haven't seen them in nine days, and it's absolutely killing me. My three friends and my caddie are flying back tonight. I'm staying in town. I'll get back tomorrow. But yeah, family means a lot to me.

Q. I know you're a member of the same club as Austin Eaton III. Do you still talk to him?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah, I met Austin last year. He moved to Minnesota. I got his contact information. He's been texting me all week, giving me little advice. Nothing too major, just a couple pointers here and there. He texted me last night when we were at dinner. I think his words of wisdom were very helpful, just stay in the moment, be present, don't look ahead, and that's what I really tried to do.

Q. There were two moments in the match where you had to climb out of adversity. The first was you lost the first two holes, and then in the afternoon round after you got 4-up, when he conceded the birdie on the 23rd hole, the par-3 5th, you had some problems behind 6 and 9 where the lead almost slipped away. How did you overcome adversity twice today?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I believe my first two holes really didn't -- it didn't really mean much to me. I was okay with it. The first hole I hit a great shot, and it just went too far, and I'm okay with that. I went right at the flag. I got it back in the afternoon, I think I hit it to three or four feet, made the putt. I felt like I got it back. Second hole I was in the rough, kind of a tough par when you're in the rough to that back right pin.

This afternoon, hole 6 has chewed me up all week. That hole by far played the hardest for me. I couldn't get the ball in the fairway. When I did hit 3-iron off the tee, I found a way to screw up the second shot. If I made a par, it was a great up-and-down or I made a 12-foot par putt. I just played that hole terribly.

But the thing that -- I was a little bit more disappointed on 7, when I had the par-3, I hit it right, I had an easy little flop shot. He had 15 feet for par. I knew there was a good chance all I had to make was a 4, and I really just didn't commit to the shot, and unfortunately followed that up with a terrible shot on 9, which was really hole 27. He took a lost ball, and I had 40 feet. All I had to do was two-putt, and I knew there was a chance he might make a 6 from there and I three-putted it.

But how I handled it? I think I handled it pretty well. My caddie John, he was in the military, he's very strong-willed. He kept me thinking ahead, kept me looking at shot by shot, going through the process, getting the yardage, picking the club and hitting it, trying not to think too much.

But there was definitely a little tension. I probably struck the ball worse in this match than I have in my previous five matches. It was a little -- fatigue was maybe setting in a little bit. But I don't know, when I made that hole-in-one, I didn't feel very tired after that.

Q. You had problems at 6 all week, but 15, you were there all week. When you first saw the hole, there was something like we're going to go for it each day?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: No, I think the game plan was get it out to the right with a 3-iron and wedge it up there. All of a sudden the tournament starts, we get this really nice right-to-left wind. I normally hit a left-to-right tee shot, so all I had to do was get it up there on the left side and let it fight the wind, and I knew it was going to land really soft. And the USGA put the tees up a couple times, and 260, 265 carry, going into the wind, that's right in my wheelhouse, so it just felt right. Like I said, I was on the green, I think, four

times on that hole.

Q. So he hit a 3-wood?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Correct. He hit a 3-wood.

Q. To 15 yards?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Exactly, he hit the 3-wood. He smothered it a little bit. He did it twice. With driver, it's real easy to get cut-spin on that driver, so I hit it up, and I'm real good at cutting the ball. I can't draw it very well but I can really cut it if I need to. So I hit it up there, and it worked out nice.

Q. You talked yesterday about when you turned pro and you were in Pensacola and you were playing against Bubba and Boo. Now you're going to get a chance to play against those guys in the Masters. Just talk about what that's going to be like?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I didn't really know those guys very well. I knew Heath Slocum's dad. I played with him some Sunday morning games, but I saw those guys out at the course. I think Bubba and Boo were on the Nationwide Tour or the Web.com TOUR at that time, so they hadn't quite reached their star power yet. Heath was doing pretty well on the Tour. The course was called the Moors, I think, just east of Pensacola. I worked there, so obviously I got a chance to play there. But yeah, I mean, seeing those guys not making it, watching them on the range, picking the range, even just going out on the Hooters Tour and playing professional golf, I didn't feel like my game was going to elevate enough to compete, and that was okay.

I'm very happy. I have a good job and a good family, and I still golf a lot. Amateur golf, just like everybody else, we're all mostly family people with jobs, try to still play golf for fun, and that's okay with me. I think the summers in the South are tough on Minnesota boys. They're hot. We wear out pretty quickly.

Q. How will this win change your schedule?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I think it's going to change how I prepare in the winter. Normally I play a little hockey and I watch a lot of NHL and I try to go to as many Wild games as I can. I don't touch a golf club until March. I forgot to thank my teacher Joel Gruepner. I feel like I left a few people out. Joel Gruepner, he's been with me for five or six years now. I also had a guy help me over the last couple weeks, Scott Cole. He's a professional up there, as well. Those guys helped me a lot, and I think this winter, Scott has an indoor place, Joel has a dome. I think how I prepare is going to -- I know I'm going to have the Masters on my mind. I can tell you that.

As far as tournaments I'm invited to, I don't really know what those are. I do look forward to the invitations. I have been invited to some tournaments here and there --

Q. You're going to be invited to all of them.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah, fantastic. I look forward to it.

Q. What position do you play in hockey?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Forward, wing or center. I haven't played too much the last couple years.

Q. Earlier in the week you talked about how you had played in the Mid-Am Tour twice before and made match play. Now that you look back at this, how much does that help you prepare, even if it's just mentally, for this?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I think a lot. You really have to gauge what your opponent is doing. In Houston at Shadow Hawk in 2011, I got beat by a man from New Jersey. I shot 4-under par and got beat, and I thought, okay, I probably would have beat 62 of the other people, but I had to look at it, and I think I did.

I mean, you really have to pick your spots, and if the guy you're playing is making birdies, you've got to stay with him. You don't really have too much of a choice. We were a little loosey-goosey today, there were doubles and bogeys made out there, and had to fight through it. I felt like the way things were going, if I just kept fighting, the result was going to turn out in my favor. So I think it helps quite a bit.

Q. Your caddie talked about how as the week went on your confidence kind of built. Talk about that.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I think it definitely built. The first match I didn't play that well. I think I was even or a couple over or maybe 1-over, but after that, I felt like I was really close in I think three of the matches I was under par. So I really felt like even though there's going to be some bogeys on this golf course, you're not going to hit every fairway, and when you hit it into the rough it's penalizing enough where you're not just going to flop one up there on the green. I knew there was bogeys, and just had to make enough birdies to get through it.

I did feel a lot more confident. A little less confident coming down the stretch, just because I was looking up, the ball wasn't quite going where I thought it was going to be going direction-wise, distance-wise, but I think that's how it goes when there's a little bit more pressure on you and you're trying to close a match. Fatigue and pressure can do crazy things to a golf plan.

Q. I thought the afternoon the key shot (indiscernible).

SAMMY SCHMITZ: The five-footer I made for par --

Q. You left yourself four or five feet.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah, I left it short, and that was a key putt. I would have gone 3-down, no doubt about it. It was a key putt. I think another key putt was on hole 13 in the afternoon. You know, I came over the top, I kept it left. I hit a good chip that didn't break, but I hit a ball 10 feet downhill right to left, and I put it right in the heart. He would have been 1-up.

Q. He would have made it 1-down, I think.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: No, I'm sorry, I would have been 1-up if he would have won that hole, right?

Q. No, you would have been 2-up.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I was 3 at that time? Yeah, I kept it 3, which I thought 3-up with five holes to go was huge.

Q. It was a great shot in at 14.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I don't think so. I took a big divot. My caddie thought I hit it a little bit fat, but I think at the end of the day, we -- for some reason the wind gets a little swirly out there, and we thought it was downwind just a touch, and I tried to hit a really hard 56 when maybe we should have laid off it a little bit. I might have caught it fat. Being in the moment, it's just hard to pinpoint how you feel on every single shot.

Q. You mentioned Mark (indiscernible). Is that a story you can admire, a caddie turning into a golfer?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Absolutely. Mark was a great guy, funny guy. Those guys were singing walking off the first tee box. I had never heard that before. They were quoting movies and singing songs. I thought it was funny. I went and gave him a high-five and told them they were hilarious. I just kind of got a kick out of it. No, it's a great story. I actually didn't know that. Somebody told me that, I think, after the round was over today that he's a caddie down here in Florida. Yeah, that would be a great story. I think it still is a good story.

Q. His girlfriend is a (indiscernible).

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Is she? Yeah, he's got a two-year-old boy. Very nice.