

U.S. MID-AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

October 7, 2015

Sammy Schmitz

Post-semifinal match

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I hit a terrible drive, and I had 178 yards to the hole. We thought if we got it anywhere up here, we would be fine, as long as we weren't short. We didn't want to be chipping up the hill. We wanted to be able to see the pin and have some type of control over the shot. Even though it's diabolically downhill, we still would have rather have had that, and I hit a 5-iron, it jumped off the face just like we thought it would with that lie. I was lucky enough to hit the upslope, about four feet in front of the top of the upslope, and it popped up 25 feet above the hole, pretty easy. I mean, it was pretty downhill but it was a pretty easy two-putt. A little bit of luck involved, but I think we had the right club and made the right decision on the last hole.

Q. Let's go back to 17. You hit a second shot into that green. What did you have?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Well, he was in the rough, and he hit a great shot, I heard claps, and we knew I had to hit something up there pretty good. Claps, you know, we don't really know what that means. It could be 10 feet, it could be just in front of the green. But we had about 215, and I hit -- I just aimed at the middle of the green and tried to hit a little draw, just tried to get as much distance out of the 4-iron as I could. I nailed it and made a snake of a putt, 25, 30 feet, broke about six feet down the hill.

17 has kind of been my hole this week. I've made a lot of putts on hole 17. I haven't necessarily played the hole that great, but made a lot of putts for birdie, and that was a good one for a 3.

Q. What was the feeling like when that went in the side door kind of?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: It felt great. Going 1-up with one to go is a good feeling because the worst you're going to do is go into extra holes. You're not going to lose a tournament. It's not like a stroke-play event where you can take a double or a triple on the last hole and lose the tournament. I knew I wasn't going to lose it on the 18th, so there was a sense of calmness, felt real good. It was a tough putt. We read it pretty well. So pretty happy with it.

Q. Is getting to the final something you were confident you could do coming in here this week?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I hadn't seen the course. You never really know what's going to happen. I think as I've stated previously, the goal for everybody is just to get in match play. Once you get in match play, anything can happen. I've had matches where I've had to shoot 2- or 3-under par to barely win the match. I think my match against Joe Alfieri I was 2- or 3-under and I barely won that match, and there's matches where you're a few over par. The course is playing a little tougher like it did today or just both people aren't necessarily playing their greatest. I think I've had the best of both worlds, a little bit of luck, but I've felt pretty calm and pretty confident throughout the entire tournament. Today was kind of a struggle. I didn't make anything, didn't really feel good early on. I made three bogeys in the first seven holes. I was pretty disappointed about that. But I've been playing holes -- after hole 7, I've been playing pretty decent for the tournament. I've got to come out firing tomorrow. I've got to get it early.

Q. What's the emotion of now you're going to play for a national title?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah, you know, I'm really trying not to think about it. I'm worrying more about some of the alignment issues I've had and some of the mis-hits that I've gone through, and I feel like if I just stay focused on playing better golf and if I just continue to hit better shots, everything is going to work out. You never really know who you're going to get tomorrow. It could be a 50/50 shot. Just got to come out and get ready.

Q. You're also one step away from the Masters.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: That is something I'm definitely not going to be thinking about. I can promise you that.

Q. Going back in the match, you took the lead on 12 --

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah, oh, what a birdie I hit on 12.

Q. And then he hit it in the water off the tee on 13, kind of gave you an opening?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: It did. It did. He is a phenomenal player out of the rough. He hit some shots out of the rough I couldn't believe. I definitely couldn't hit those shots that he hit. That approach he hit on 12 almost went in. A little characteristic on 13. If you block one, the wind is going to take care of the rest. Once he did that, all I tried to do was hit a draw shot right over the bunker. I caught it real well thankfully because the wind was knocking the ball down. The wind on this hole is a lot more powerful than we thought, so we'll have to keep that noted for tomorrow.

Q. Were you surprised when he missed that six-footer on 16?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Well, a little. He's a great putter, and there's a lot of pressure, though, and he missed it, but I still had a three-footer, so my three-footer was a right-edge three-footer. I could have easily missed that. So I was a little bit more concerned about that at the time. But when he missed it, yeah, I think you always expect your opponent to make the shot or make the putt, so when they do miss, yeah, I was a little surprised, but great two-putt he hit on 15 to his credit, so we both kind of -- we both had pretty good two-putts on that hole.

Q. Do you know anything about your opponent tomorrow?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: No, I haven't known anything about any of my opponents the entire week except Joe. I know Joe played mini-Tours for a few years, so I knew a little bit about him. I knew he was a real good player. I was pretty worried going into that match. But other than that, I haven't known anybody. I'm okay with that. I'm just going to try to know my own game and get around the course and shoot under par and shoot a good score and hopefully the rest works out.

Q. What's your golf background as far as did you play pro a while?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: A little bit. I played for a small Division III school out of St. John's in Minnesota, and after that moved to Pensacola, Florida, played a little bit on the Hooters Tour, dabbled around for maybe a year and a half, two years, and really just -- I didn't feel at the time -- I didn't feel my game would have elevated enough to make it. It was a quick stint. I was practicing at a course where Boo Weekley was there, Bubba Watson was there, Heath Slocum, and you're looking at these guys, and you're thinking, maybe this isn't for me. Very good players. Very good players.

Q. Was it the Sportsman Club or --

SAMMY SCHMITZ: It was called The Moors. I didn't see a ton of Bubba. I did see a little bit of Heath. I played with Heath's dad a few times. Boo Weekley used to hit balls, a lot of mini-Tour guys out there, a lot of really good players, and it was just a little weird for me moving from Minnesota to Florida after college. I liked it, but I just realized pretty quickly that professional golf wasn't something I wanted to do. But pretty happy now, I have a one- and a two-year old, two little girls, and things are going real well.

Q. You're still playing ice hockey and you play left-handed?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I am a left-handed hockey player. I haven't played the last couple years, but I do play -- I play outdoor shinny hockey, and I played in leagues for quite a while, but I'm --

Q. Winger or --

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Forward, center, old man league. You just jump up front. Nobody really -- try not to get yourself killed. I have hurt myself a couple times playing hockey and on roller blades, so that hasn't really worked out so well for me. I've dislocated my shoulder quite a few times.

Q. What's been your top golf moment?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Here?

Q. Just in general. What would you list coming through as your -- to this point your biggest

accomplishment?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: This is my biggest accomplishment in golf by far.

Q. Previously what would it have been?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: It's really tough to say. I've never won a national Division III tournament. I've won a few conference tournaments. But I would say making the U.S. Mid-Am and getting into match play in 2011 and '12, that felt really good because I just had gotten back into golf at that time, and it made me want USGA golf really bad, and it put a lot more pressure on my golf game, and there's just something magical about a USGA golf event to me and a lot of my friends back home.

Last year I got to play Atlanta Athletic Club. It was a fantastic experience. It was pretty neat. I'm seeing a few of those guys on TV that were down there, so it was really neat looking at all the names and watching them hit balls and putt. I didn't play the greatest. I didn't make it into match play. But this is far and above any accomplishment I've ever had in golf.

Post-quarterfinal match**Q. Quite a tee shot you hit in here. About 279 it was playing today.**

SAMMY SCHMITZ: We shot it at 283. I'd been hitting a cut all day, but the wind called for a little draw and I just teed it up and hit it hard and got a piece of it and had a nice little lucky bounce at no time back slope here. We knew it was there so we thought it might be an option. Just tried to stay aggressive, not a lot of birdies in this match. I think I birdied 13 and missed a little shorty on 14 for birdie, and then obviously birdied (inaudible), but those were my first three birdies of the match. So a little slow start this morning. We both kind of started off a little bit cold.

Q. I was going to say, you won a few holes with pars to get yourself a lead.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Yeah.

Q. Again today, what were you doing well this morning?

SAMMY SCHMITZ: Tee game was good. Just keeping it in play, keeping it in the fairway. The air was heavy. The grass was wet. We knew that going in. We really wanted just to make sure the ball was in the fairway. Pins felt like they were a little tougher today, a little trickier. They've picked up on the difficulty level as the tournament has gone on, so we're really trying to pay attention to the greens. But really just playing fairly safe. I saw him, he bogeyed the first two out of three, so the goal was just to keep it in play, make as many pars as I could, and really move forward.

Q. And then tell me about that birdie at 13 that gave you the 3 up lead again.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: 188 or so, hit a 6 iron, kind of missed it a little bit, hit it on the right side. Had an uphill about a 30-footer, and I got a great read from my caddie, and I hit it right there and it went in.

Q. Tell me how excited you are to be in the semifinals.

SAMMY SCHMITZ: I'm excited. I'm trying not to think too much about it. Just trying to stay focused. I think there's some things I can improve on from the morning round. I feel if I don't, I won't last. So we're going to go work on that and hopefully I can make some improvements and have a good second match.

Q. I see you're going to go play the last three holes. Is that to familiarize yourself --

SAMMY SCHMITZ: We're going to go take a look at the hole locations. I think the key -- I don't want to be coming down the stretch and be unfamiliar with what lies ahead. I think if I have a chance to go take a peek at it, I'll go take that chance.