

16 October 2012

Preview

CHARL SCHWARTZEL

STEVE TODD: Charl, welcome to Perth. I'm sure you've had a chance to look last night at some of the city, I understand you went up in the helicopter and had a look from above. Just start with your thoughts on that and also being here this week for the tournament.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, I was fortunate enough yesterday to get a bird's eye view of how Perth looks. It's fantastic. We came over the golf course. It looked so flat out of the air, and then obviously we played today. It's a lot easier than what it looks from the top.

But we had so much fun yesterday. It's my first time to Perth. I've played Melbourne and Sydney. My first tournament actually out of South Africa was the Jack Newton, I think it was. I was 14 years old or something. It's nice to finally come to Perth. I've heard so many good things about it. I played nine holes on the golf course, and it looks good.

STEVE TODD: Obviously you played quite well in Turkey last week, nice to come in with a bit of form, defeating Tiger and Rory, not a bad way to warm up for the event, is it.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, I had a really good time in Turkey last week. Played some good golf. Chubby came to me and said that the draw was done back in April when I was still sixth in the world. As it went on, didn't play well too well from then up until recently. He said to me, well, you're still in the field but you're playing Tiger and Rory the first two rounds.

Well, that worked out actually pretty good for me. I built some good confidence, played against them and you know, just showed that the game is still there somewhere.

So I've got some good confidence last week and really excited for this week.

Q. Just on Tiger and Rory, it's not every day you get to play them consecutive days, what do you but that down to, the form?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I don't know, you know, I mean, to be honest, medal match play over 18 holes, anything can happen. But against Tiger is always a thrilling experience. I've got a lot of respect for the guy.

To beat him on my side, it gives me a lot of confidence that you can beat someone when he's firing. He started off well and then I caught up to him, and then I was a couple shots ahead with a few to go and he made the typical charge of what he normally does.

It's nice to hold it all; I took a lot out of it. And the same with Rory. Again, he was up the first few holes and I thought I pulled back on him and, you know, I was one shot ahead of him going down the last and he chipped in from next to the green and I had to make to win, and I make.

So I can take a lot out of those things.

Q. Watching you play 10 and 11 you looked right at home out there for a man who has never seen the course before?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I've always enjoyed playing golf courses that's got these sort of established trees. It gives me a lot of definition. I see the shots better. So straightaway, I feel a lot comfortable, or very comfortable, on a golf course like this.

You know, it's all right up in front of you, most of it. You can see what you're doing. So I really do enjoy playing these sort of courses.

Q. You've got some big shoes to fill in the sense that Ernie Els and Retief Goosen and even Gary Player have won at this course.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: So good. Yeah, I mean, it's obviously something that would be nice to follow in their footsteps. They have had good success out here, so you know, I suppose no pressure then.

Q. You said you started the year No. 6; what changed?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I mean, you know, to be honest, if you follow this game, you play this game for a long time, it's just golf, I suppose.

You have your up-and-downs, and I haven't been playing that badly. I've just been finishing 30th and 20th and 40th most of the time. I've just not been finishing or I've been playing sort of three rounds good and then one round very

average or bad. Just not putting four consistent, good rounds together.

And you slowly fall back in the World Rankings and the World Rankings are so volatile that you move up-and-down very easily. So you know, I don't know -- I can't pinpoint exactly what it was. It's just slowly moving backwards.

You know, anything where you can have a week like last week where you can maybe sometimes spark something, all of a sudden feel like you actually are building some confidence, something going your way, can change things around very quickly.

Q. You've got a swing that's well established and the envy of a lot of other players; when you are not getting results, does that persuade you to maybe start tweaking, or do you think your technique is in a good place and it's not necessary?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I personally never -- I hardly ever touch my golf swing. Even if it was going bad, I know when I'm hitting it well and when I'm not. It's very, very small things normally with me.

I would say most of the time, it comes more down to mental side of it when you are going through bad patches. It's hard sometimes to go from high up, achieving just about everything you put your mind to, to not achieving it. You feel like you are all of a sudden pushing for things. It's hard to accept.

And once you get your mind to accept something, accept the game for what it is, and get over it and start enjoying it again, that's when you start playing better. But it sometimes takes a while.

Q. Did you actually have a brief injury?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I did. That was also part of it. That took me out for about two months this year at the U.S. Open. I actually tore my intercostal muscle. I was told to take off seven weeks or so. I came back after four.

It sort of healed but it still bothered me. Those things do play a factor, it really does. It put me back two months.

Q. And I suspect probably now, you feel that you have left a bit in the tank during the year; you sound very fresh.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, I mean, middle of the year, I hardly -- I could hardly play.

So it was bad for my golf to build on to something, but it was good in a way where I had some rest.

Q. The Ryder Cup, we are still talking about it here; is there talk among, say, Rory and Tiger? Are they still talking about it?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: They didn't talk much about it in Turkey.

Q. Was it unspoken? Is it tense?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: No, I don't think so. I don't think it's such a thing between the players, because you see each other week-in, week-out. You're competing and then you go from the one week where they are almost enemies to the following week where you're friends.

Q. But if you see the reaction, it obviously means something that week.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I think everyone gets involved in it so much. The fans get involved, so you get sort of built up in this bubble. It makes you act like that.

Q. Will we ever have that in The Presidents Cup?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I hope so. I think there's a few things that might have to be changed a little bit in The Presidents Cup to make it that special. You know, the internationals need to start -- when we can start winning a little bit more; because at this stage, the Americans have just won so many that it's just assumed and it sort of makes it die out a little bit. There needs to be a format where the internationals can be a little bit stronger.

I think the American side, you take it year-in, year-out, every time they play, their World Ranking hardly ever goes past 20th. Where the International No. 12 player sometimes is 60th in the world, 50th. So they are definitely still stronger. There needs to be a way to make it more even. I think we need to have that sort of competition and it will make it very exciting.

Q. That may never happen with the strength of America?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: But golf is also turning. Golf is going more worldwide. It's getting introduced to China and all of these places more often so eventually there's going to be a lot stronger players coming out.

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Q. What will you take out of coming to Perth at the end of the year? I don't mean to be rude but what's in it for you to come here? Is it a desire to be a world player?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Well, you know, I haven't played much in the middle of the year. I've never been to Perth. So when Perth came up, also being a co-sanctioned event with The European Tour, it means that it can count towards The Race to Dubai for me. That was one reason.

The other reason, I've never been to Perth; always wanted to come here. And I've been falling in the World Rankings, so if I come out here and have a good week, I can start climbing back up.

Q. There's a big South African following in Perth. Do you expect a vocal gallery?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, I actually spoke to my dad last night. I said I think it's going to be like playing in the South African Open this week.

Q. It's a strong field in your eyes?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, of course it is, you have Jason and Bo and a whole bunch of other guys. It's not just the two of them; there's quite a few Europeans out here, Australian players. It's never -- no tournament is ever easy. You've still got to play proper golf to win a golf tournament.

That was my philosophy with the Masters. At the end of the day it's a tournament. Maybe the field is stronger than most but you still have to play a certain calibre of golf to win that tournament, too. It's no different here. If you can't think you're going to play average and win, you're not going to win. You've still got to play really good golf to win.

Q. You grew up in a small town, if you look at South Africa's best players have grown up in different regions, why does a player like you coming from Vereeniging become a world-class star, what does Vereeniging have that Johannesburg or Pretoria don't have?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: That's a hard question to answer. I would say most of South African's good golfers have come from the Gauteng area, the northern Johannesburg sort of side. Even the guys born in Cape Town, they used to come up and play most of their golf up in Johannesburg, and it's no different for me. All of

the tournaments we played was only an hour away from our house where I used to live. Growing up I was only an hour from Johannesburg. We used to play a lot of golf up there and the weather is so good, you play 12 months of the year on great golf courses. We had a fantastic system, junior tournament, amateur tournament system.

So there was never a lack of competition play. And I think that's a big plus to have is to be able to compete from a very young age.

Q. Simon Hobday used to be my assistant golf pro many years ago, a long time.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Before I was born.

Q. And you probably met Simon?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, yeah, I have.

Q. I think there's a lot of programmes in South Africa on junior golf, as well, isn't there, junior golf teaching?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Yeah, that's what I was saying. There's a lot of good that goes on in South Africa with starting right at the bottom, and that's the main reason why there's so many good players coming out of South Africa is that they get to play on really good courses and you are able to compete. You learn that winning instinct from a young age. They are competing -- I think it's very important, and instead of just playing -- it's so different to play than actually playing for something to win.

Q. Last year's compelling victory -- do you think about it much? Are you aware of how much hopes you dashed of the locals here, knocking three of us off, Scott, Ogilvy and Jason Day, pretty cruel when you think of it.

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I didn't think it was cruel (laughing).

It was such a tight finish. It was always going to come down to someone that made a race to the end there at the last few holes. There was ten guys that could win it. I was the fortunate one to make all of those birdies coming in.

There was guys that was chipping in on Thursday, too --

Q. Did you feel it was your day,

obviously?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: I mean, starting the way I did, yes, of course. Chipping in on 1 and then holing the second shot on 3, you know, little voice in the back of your head is saying, this might be your day. But it still was obviously such a long way to go. Those last 16 holes was quite something where I had to really dig deep and still grind it out.

Q. Do you reckon winning a major is peaking at the right week, timing at the right week -- do you think that can help you in a major if the week is there?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Of course it is. That's why most guys try to find a way to be able to peak certain weeks. Some guys have got methods where they would train, for example, in a gym, two weeks in advance, hard, so their bodies are at their best that week and you would practice a certain way in the golf so that you can maybe -- it's all a learning curve, how to figure it out, which way works for you. Not everyone is the same.

So of course, that's the secret. If you want to try those four weeks a year, see if you can be at your best for those weeks.

Q. And that's what you do?

CHARL SCHWARTZEL: Of course I do.

STEVE TODD: We wish you the best of luck this week. Thanks for joining us.

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