

AI – TEASE & SETUP

DEANE BEMAN: We're building the Tournament Players Club which is really a new dimension in tournament golf. It's what I call "stadium golf."

NATS: Pete Dye will go for a swim today.

JON RAHM: THE PLAYERS Championship is a tournament unlike any other.

ADAM SCOTT: It is the ultimate test.

ANNC: Adam Scott survives!

NATS: Be the right club today!

ANNC: Henrik Stenson – the first Swede to win THE PLAYERS Championship!

PAUL CASEY: The intimidation factor at TPC Sawgrass is level ten – scary, intimidating, imposing.

TIGER WOODS: It really doesn't cater to any one style.

ANNC: Better than most...better than most!

LEE WESTWOOD: You have the chance for success and disaster on nearly every hole out there. It's exciting to watch; it's exciting to play.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a tournament I've wanted to win – a tournament that I truly did feel like I was going to win at some point.

ANNC: And Justin Thomas is your latest PLAYERS Champion!

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: If you were to ask anyone what tournament would you want to win, it would have to be THE PLAYERS.

ANNC: Rory McIlroy is a PLAYERS Champion!

RORY McILROY: It's awesome to be able to call yourself a PLAYERS Champion. It's a who's who of golf over the last 40 years.

OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES, TPC SAWGRASS HAS PRODUCED SOME OF THE GAME'S MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS...

ANNC: Oh man! Fred Couples – eagle!

REVERED FOR IT'S FAMOUS 17th HOLE...

ANNC: Rickie Fowler owns the island green!

AND THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONS ITS CROWNED ALONG THE WAY...

ANNC: This is way more aggressive than I anticipated!

AND WITH THE GOLF COURSE PRIMED FOR THE BEST FIELD IN GOLF...

THE 40TH PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP AT TPC SAWGRASS...STARTS OFF ... WET.

A2 – THURSDAY GOLF

ANNC: Even though we have a little rain, it does not dampen one of the biggest weeks on the golf calendar.

FOLLOWING A ONE-HOUR DELAY AT THE START OF THE DAY, THREE HOURS OF GOLF AND THEN A 4-HOUR SUSPENSION OF PLAY...ROUND ONE RESUMES.

ANNC: It is a beautiful time right now to play golf. The greens are going to be very receptive.

NORWAY'S VIKTOR HOVLAND BEGINS HIS CHAMPIONSHIP ASPIRATIONS WITH A 1-UNDER, 71...

WHILE AN EAGLE ON THE 16TH HOLE HELPS FELLOW SCANDINAVIAN ALEX NOREN TO AN OPENING-ROUND, 69.

ANNC: Eagle three for Noren.

JON RAHM MATCHES THAT NUMBER AT 3-UNDER – FINISHING WITH TWO BIRDIES IN HIS FINAL THREE HOLES.

JON RAHM: It gives me confidence because I was playing good golf. I was hitting a lot of good putts out there. So, happy I could finish this strong.

SOUTH AFRICA'S LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN JOINS THE CLUB AT 3-UNDER...

AS DOES CAMERON SMITH – A NATIVE OF AUSTRALIA, BUT A LOCAL IN NORTHEAST FLORIDA.

ANNC: One of the premier putters on the PGA TOUR.

AND FELLOW PRESIDENTS CUP HOPEFUL, ANIRBAN LAHIRI, CARDS A 5-UNDER, 67...

ANNC: Get in! It does!

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Obviously a big bonus when you see a ball disappear from the middle of the fairway. I've been working hard on trying to clean up my game, so it was nice to see it come together today.

WHILE THE LAST TWO PLAYERS CHAMPIONS GET THEIR ROUNDS UNDERWAY – BOTH EVEN PAR THRU TWO HOLES...

OTHER HEAVY HITTERS ARE MAKING EARLY MOVES WITH TWO BIRDIES THRU THREE.

ANNC: Alright so DJ, Great start for him. Very quickly gets it to 2-under par.

Commented [JW1]: Some repetitive lines

TWO OF ENGLAND'S VETERANS, JUSTIN ROSE AND LAST YEAR'S RUNNER-UP LEE WESTWOOD, ARE BOTH 2-UNDER THRU TWO AND SEVEN HOLES, RESPECTIVELY.

ANNC: Lee Westwood for birdie...ok!

WHILE TWO MORE ENGLISHMEN ARE 2-UNDER IN THE CLUBHOUSE – PAUL CASEY...AND TYRRELL HATTON.

ANNC: Tyrrell Hatton has this birdie putt...Ho! How about that!?

ALL OFF TO PROMISING STARTS, REPRESENTING A COUNTRY RICH WITH GOLF HISTORY, AND HUNGRY FOR ITS FIRST PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP.

A3 – ENGLISHMEN AT THE PLAYERS

WHILE THE ENGLISH APPLAUDED A WIN FOR THE ISLAND OF IRELAND IN 2019...

ANNC: Rory McIlroy is a PLAYERS Champion.

AND WITH SANDY LYLE'S WIN 35 YEARS AGO BEING A TRIUMPH FOR SCOTLAND...

NICK DOUGHERTY: We haven't seen any other players from Britain win since Sandy Lyle.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Probably is a little bit of a surprise because we produced some very good players.

PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF ENGLISHMEN – 10 MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS, 40 PGA TOUR VICTORIES...NOT TO MENTION A FEDEXCUP, AND COUNTLESS WINS ACROSS THE GLOBE...

IS WHY THE SHOCK FACTOR THAT THEY HAVEN'T BEEN THE ONES TO FOLLOW SUIT...IS SO HIGH.

TIM BARTER: It's difficult to pinpoint why that might be, we've had half a dozen runner up spots. It just happens that the English players have not done so, so far.

HENNI KOYACK: It's more of when, not if, and just a matter of time.

JUSTIN ROSE: But, there's no reason why not...

WELL – MAYBE NOT...

CONSIDER THIS...IN THE FIRST 26 YEARS OF THE PLAYERS – THE AVERAGE OF ENGLISHMEN TEEING IT UP PER EVENT...IS LESS THAN TWO.

JUSTIN ROSE: Back in the day, 20, 30 years ago, there were much more of a limited amount of players that could win The Players Championship.

MATT WALLACE: Nick Faldo would have had a chance.

ANNC: Pressure putt right there. Gets him within one shot for the time being.

MATT WALLACE: All of our hopes lied with him and he didn't get across the line.

JUSTIN ROSE: For quite a period of time, there might have been relying upon two or three of us in the top 50, so the numbers weren't stacking up in our favor. They're beginning to stack up a bit more in our favor.

HENNI KOYACK: The tournament has just grown so much in stature over the course of the last 20 years. And that's obviously attracted the best players in the world.

PROOF SHOWN IN THE LAST 17 PLAYINGS – AS THERE'S AN AVERAGE OF SEVEN PER EVENT IN THAT SPAN.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We're seeing a lot more success and a lot more top 10s from the British players in general.

TIM BARTER: And we've had a glut of great English players over the last 20 years. They really have been world class.

AND THAT'S ONLY HEIGHTENED BY THE RESULTS – ESPECIALLY WITH THREE IN THE TOP 10 IN 2021.

NICK DOUGHERTY: For a nation, it inspires.

HENNI KOYACK: We've had so many players come close.

ANNC: Matthew Fitzpatrick finds the bottom.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Eddie had a good finish in 2019.

HENNI KOYACK: Tommy Fleetwood.

ANNC: Tommy Fleetwood – just showing off now.

JUSTIN ROSE: You had Lee Westwood through the years.

ANNC: And made it! What a putt!

JUSTIN ROSE: T4 has been my highest result to date.

ANNC: 5-under par for the U.S. Open Champ.

JUSTIN ROSE: Luke Donald we've had as world number one; he's had looks at it. Ian Poulter has done very, very well there.

ANNC: Oh ho, Wow! What a shot! I did not see that one! What a shot by Poulter!

HENNI KOYACK: A lot of English players have come really close over the years – the Stadium Course held off so far...

FINE POINT...PROVING THE VOLATILITY OF THE STADIUM COURSE.

LEE WESTWOOD: There's no reason why the golf course shouldn't suit Englishmen. I think it's a golf course that really doesn't favor anybody. I'm not a massive hitter anymore and I finished second. Justin Thomas beat me; he's what you would say is a long hitter.

IAN POULTER: I've had a mixed bag. I've had two second place finishes, I've missed cuts. I've kind of had some mediocre weeks there.

WEBB SIMPSON: You would have thought one of these great players of the last 20 years would have won, but Phil has one win there and Tiger has two. In all their years, you would have thought they would have won it more, I think it just shows it's such a hard golf course to win on.

NICK DOUGHERTY: At THE PLAYERS in particular, if you give yourself a chance, inevitably you're going to get across the line.

ENGLAND COLLECTIVELY HAS 23 TOP 10'S IN THE EVENT – SECOND ON THE LIST OF ANY COUNTRY OUTSIDE THE U.S. TO ONLY AUSTRALIA.

JUSTIN ROSE: They've seen some of their icons win that tournament. Greg Norman, Adam Scott, Steve Elkington. Maybe we need an Englishman to get that vibe going amongst the rest of us.

AND THE ENGLISH STALWARTS – TO THOSE WAITING IN THE FOLD – COULD HELP CHANGE THE TIDE AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

WAYNE RILEY: English golf is so very strong right now. Coming out of terminal five at Heathrow is a conveyor belt of players.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Once the gates open, they'll come flooding on through. Whoever that person is will certainly pave the way for future generations. So it will be pivotal for our nation.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: You can name the events that are the big ones in world golf, THE PLAYERS is right up there. And to be the first Englishman would be amazing.

A4 – THURSDAY GOLF CONTINUED

WITH A HOT START, TOMMY FLEETWOOD LOOKS LIKE HE'S READY TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE FOR ENGLAND.

ANNC: He's got a nice record around here.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: It's very much a ball striker's golf course. My strengths over the years have always been hitting it in play off the tee, hit a lot of greens with my irons and have a very sort of patient attitude and mindset. I love this golf course. I really, really do. If you play well, you get rewarded.

AND THE REWARDS CAME IN BUNCHES...

ANNC: Three-consecutive birds for Tommy Fleetwood!

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: It's a great first day. I'm chuffed to be in on that score. I drove the ball well and I felt like I chipped and putted great. Days like that are very, very pleasing.

ALL IN ALL, IT'S A 6-UNDER, 66 FOR FLEETWOOD...TIED FOR THE CLUBHOUSE LEAD WITH JUST UNDER HALF OF THE FIELD COMPLETING ROUND ONE ON THURSDAY.

B1 – SIETE

MITO PEREIRA: Siete!

SEBASTIAN MUNOZ: Siete!

ABRAHAM ANCER: Siete!

JHONTTAN VEGAS: Siete!

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Siete!

EMILIANO GRILLO: Siete!

Commented [JW2]: A little late now, but the English lyrics won't work well for different languages we are sending to...something to think about next time.

B2 – LATIN AMERICANS FIRST ROUND

WITH SEVEN PLAYERS REPRESENTING FIVE COUNTRIES, THE 2022 PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP FEATURES A RECORD-BREAKING NUMBER OF LATIN AMERICANS...

WHO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR ROUNDS ON THURSDAY.

ANNC: One of the newer members of the PGA TOUR.

CHILE'S MITO PEREIRA YIELDS AN EVEN PAR ROUND IN HIS TOURNAMENT DEBUT.

WHILE VENEZUELA'S JHONATTAN VEGAS BEGINS HIS ROUND EN FUEGO...

ANNC: Jhonny Vegas with three birdies in the early going!

POSTING 3-UNDER, 69...

JUST ONE BEHIND MEXICO'S ABRAHAM ANCER...

ANNC: Abraham Ancer records 68.

ABRAHAM ANCER: Hit my irons well, hit a lot of greens and made some putts, so, happy with the round.

Commented [JW3]: Just think we need to re-establish Thursday since we pay it off in the segment ahead

BUT IT'S CHILE'S JOAQUIN NIEMANN WHO LEADS THE LATIN AMERICANS IN THE CLUBHOUSE AT 5-UNDER...

ANNC: Good course, good field – he's gonna be in the mix.

HE IS IN THE THICK OF IT THANKS TO 3-CONSECUTIVE BIRDIES TO CLOSE HIS OPENING ROUND.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: I was hitting the ball nicely, giving myself a lot of chances. I was able to finish in a good way, making good putts and hitting great shots. It was nice.

BEGINNING ROUND ONE ON FRIDAY, ARGENTINA'S EMILIANO GRILLO ADDS HIS NAME TO THE LIST OF LATINOS UNDER PAR...

GOING 2-UNDER IN 11 HOLES ON A DAY EFFECTED AGAIN BY RAIN.

B3 – FRIDAY GOLF

ANNC: The weather has grabbed the headlines in the first two days here at TPC Sawgrass.

GARY YOUNG: We've received about 2.5 inches of rain in the last 24 hours. We battled through some pretty tough conditions.

WITH MORE CHALLENGING CONDITIONS ON THE HORIZON, PLAYERS LOOK TO GET IN AS MUCH GOLF AS POSSIBLE...

JUSTIN ROSE IS IN PURSUIT TO MATCH FELLOW ENGLISHMAN, TOMMY FLEETWOOD, AT THE TOP OF THE LEADERBOARD...

ROSE ANNC: Justin Rose off to a red-hot start.

HE'S CURRENTLY 2-UNDER WITH 4 HOLES TO PLAY.

AS IS AUSTRALIA'S MARC LEISHMAN... WHO PLAYS 13 HOLES ON FRIDAY IN 2-UNDER PAR...

WHILE FELLOW COUNTRYMAN AND 2016 CHAMPION, JASON DAY, CARDS A ROUND OF 69 TO PUT HIMSELF THREE SHOTS BACK OF THE LEAD.

B4 – AUSSIE SUCCESS AT THE PLAYERS

ANNC: Wire-to-wire champion, Jason Day! 2016 PLAYERS Champion!

JASON DAY: Being announced as a Player champion is always special. I know that my name is down in history now.

AUSTRALIAN SUCCESS IS NO STRANGER AT TPC SAWGRASS...

ANNC: Steve Elkington, from New South Wales – his second PLAYERS Championship.

SANDWICHED IN THE MIDDLE OF ELKINGTON'S TWO TITLES, GREG NORMAN SET THE 72-HOLE SCORING RECORD AT 24-UNDER EN ROUTE TO VICTORY...

ANNC: Wow! This is almost indescribable.

ADAM SCOTT: I grew up watching that event being played. To win it early on in my career is amazing.

ANNC: Adam Scott survives! The youngest champion in the history of THE PLAYERS Championship!

CAMERON SMITH: (01:15:48) There's been a few Aussie winners here. When it's playing firm and fast, it reminds us a lot of home.

ADAM SCOTT: There's been such a strong presence since the 90s, 2000s. And that trend is continuing and it gives the next generation behind a group of guys that aren't too far in front of them.

LUCAS HERBERT: For our population and for how many guys we have up there in the world, it feels like we're going into a nice, exciting period. There's always guys to cheer on.

B5 – FRIDAY GOLF CONTINUED

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AUSTRALIAN SUCCESS, LUCAS HERBERT IS THREE SHOTS BACK THANKS TO THREE BIRDIES ON FRIDAY...

WHILE SEVERAL TOP AMERICANS RISE TO THE OCCASION DESPITE THE TOUGH CONDITIONS...

INCLUDING REIGNING CHAMPION JUSTIN THOMAS – WHO BATTLES BACK FROM AN OPENING BOGEY WITH A TRIO OF BIRDIES.

ANNC: He is hoping to be the first player to ever successfully defend a title at TPC Sawgrass.

AFTER A HOT START ON THURSDAY, DUSTIN JOHNSON FINISHES FRIDAY AT 4-UNDER THRU 16 HOLES.

JOINING DJ AT 4-UNDER ARE KEVIN KISNER AND SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER, CAPPING OFF THEIR FRIDAYS JUST 2 BACK OF THE LEAD...

ANNC: He is feeling it with the putter!

DANIEL BERGER LEADS THAT TRIO BY ONE SHOT THANKS TO SIX BIRDIES THRU 16 HOLES.

ANNC: A lot of experts thought he could have a really good week and he's off to a good start.

A MARATHON WEEKEND LIES AHEAD, AS 47 PLAYERS STILL NEED TO FINISH THEIR OPENING ROUND.

GARY YOUNG: Unfortunately, the weather conditions are not providing us any relief. So, we have suspended play for the day. Our plan is to resume play tomorrow no earlier than 11 a.m.

AS THE RAIN SHOWS NO SIGN OF LETTING UP, THE ESTEEMED STAFF AT TPC SAWGRASS IS HARD AT WORK TO ENSURE THAT THE CHAMPIONSHIP HAS A FINISH LINE IN SIGHT.

GARY YOUNG: If our calculations on everything hold together. We certainly expect to be finished with the championship on Monday.

CI – SATURDAY GOLF

AFTER MORE THAN 54 HOURS...

AND NEARLY 5 INCHES OF RAIN...

ROUND ONE OF THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP WILL FINALLY COME TO A CLOSE ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON.

ANNC: It's the third day and it's Day 1 of THE PLAYERS.

THANKS TO A HARDWORKING GROUNDS CREW – CONSISTING OF 185 MEMBERS...

TPC SAWGRASS DRIES OUT ENOUGH TO GET THE TOURNAMENT BACK ON TRACK.

ANNC: It changes from wet, to windy.

BUT THE WIND IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD... SLICING THROUGH THE GAME'S BEST PLAYERS...ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

ANNC: The challenge at the famed island green 17th will be extraordinary.

AND IT DELIVERS, WITHOUT AN OUNCE OF MERCY – AS 10 TEE SHOTS RINSE IN WATER DURING THE COMPLETION OF ROUND ONE, COMPARED TO ONLY FOUR ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, COMBINED.

RORY McILROY: It's brutal out there. Hitting those tee shots on 17 and 18 and just keeping them dry and walking forward is nice.

ANNC: He may have a wood left; that's how hard the wind is blowing.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: I hit 9 iron from 95 yards and then couple holes later hit 9 iron from 208 yards. There's no yardage. It's just the trajectory of your ball. Whatever club you can get to fit that window, that's your shot.

BROOKS KOEPKA IS ONE OF THE 17TH HOLE'S VICTIMS, MAKING DOUBLE BOGEY DURING ROUND ONE SATURDAY MORNING...

ANNC: That's not even close.

AND AS ROUND TWO BEGINS IN THE AFTERNOON, THE CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE KOEPKA, WHO SHOOTS 9-OVER, 81...TYING THE HIGHEST SCORE OF HIS PGA TOUR CAREER.

BROOKS KOEPKA: You're talking about an extreme day today. It's not meant to blow this hard normally. It's just one of those days.

THE 17TH HOLE COLLECTS 19 MORE GOLF BALLS...

ANNC: And the numbers are adding up fast.

PLAYING AS THE SECOND TOUGHEST HOLE IN ROUND TWO, ONLY BEHIND NUMBER 18...

AND THE SECOND-ROUND SCORING AVERAGE SPIKES 3-AND-A-HALF STROKES OVER PAR.

AUSTRIA'S SEPP STRAKA WAS CONTENDING FOR THE LEAD...

ANNC: Nicely done for the big Austrian. And he gets it to minus 5.

UNTIL A QUADRUPLE BOGEY ON THE 17TH HOLE DROPS HIM TO 1-UNDER FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP...

ANNC: That's got too much spin! No – what a shame!

BUT A SELECT FEW PERSERVERE THROUGH THE GRUELING CONDITIONS...

OUT OF 68 COMPETITORS WHO PLAYED MORE THAN FIVE HOLES ON SATURDAY, ONLY FIVE WERE UNDER PAR ... INCLUDING THE DEFENDING CHAMPION, JUSTIN THOMAS.

ANNC: Just picking his spots and he picked another one right there.

WITH ONE BIRDIE ON HIS OUTWARD NINE, THOMAS IS 1-UNDER FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND BACK AT TPC SAWGRASS TWO WEEKS AFTER HE WAS CELEBRATED IN HIS FIRST RETURN TO THE VENUE AS A CHAMPION.

C2 – JUSTIN THOMAS MEDIA DAY

JUSTIN THOMAS: Woo! Let's do it. New locker room this time. To the left!

JUSTIN THOMAS: I've been playing in this tournament for however many years now, and you always wanna be able to go left at some point when you walk in this lockerroom to use the champions side. I will be very sure to remind some of my peers as I'm walking past them in the other locker room of that. It's really, really cool any time you get to be a part of a champions locker room, especially at a place like TPC Sawgrass.

NATS: Only one guy can defend at the PLAYERS Championship, which is why I'm hanging with my man JT.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's really hard to do. It's hard to win any golf tournament at any point. It's really difficult to win a tournament back-to-back and defend your title.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Feels good to be back.

C3 – SATURDAY GOLF CONTINUED

THOMAS MAKES TWO MORE BIRDIES TO FINISH HIS BOGEY-FREE SECOND ROUND AND STANDS 3-UNDER THRU 36 HOLES.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm thrilled with how I played and how I competed today. It was a very, very tough day, and I just stayed very patient and executed well.

BUT NOBODY TACKLES THE DIFFICULT DAY BETTER THAN BUBBA WATSON...

ANNC: Yeah he runs that one in to get into red figures.

CARDING 68 IN THE ONLY OTHER BOGEY-FREE SECOND ROUND ON SATURDAY...

BUBBA WATSON: It was one of those days you had to be committed to your shots, even if they go wild. I hit some wayward shots, maybe not because of me, but because of the conditions, but I made the putts and that's really what kept the whole round going all the time.

JUST 48 PLAYERS HAVE COMPLETED ROUND TWO... LEAVING 94 MORE BEFORE THE CUT IS MADE AND ROUND THREE BEGINS ON SUNDAY.

D1 – SUNDAY – SECOND ROUND FINISH

ANNC: What a week of fits and starts it has been. It's breezy; unseasonably chilly. Three days of delays, but now we've got a green light.

AS THE SECOND ROUND CONTINUES, FIRST ROUND CO-LEADER TOMMY FLEETWOOD MOVES IN THE WRONG DIRECTION, CARDING A 1-OVER, 73...

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: The game actually felt better in certain areas today. I felt a lot more in control of my irons. I would rather shoot 66, but I would rather my long game feel better than it did on Thursday, so it's a strange game and you just take what you get on any given day.

BUT FELLOW ENGLISHMAN PAUL CASEY IS HAPPY TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY, FIRING A SECOND ROUND, 69 TO CLIMB INTO CONTENTION.

ANNC: Carrying a lot of pace...hit the flagstick...it does! Paul Casey is bogey free in this second round.

PAUL CASEY: We're only halfway through, which is crazy to think. There's a lot of golf left. It's been a long week, but I'm rested. I've had two days of sleep.

TIED WITH CASEY IN FIFTH PLACE SITS ABRAHAM ANCER...WHO BACKS UP HIS FIRST ROUND 68 WITH ANOTHER ROUND UNDER PAR...

ABRAHAM ANCER: I watched a little bit of the telecast yesterday and it was carnage. I feel I haven't been in a good wave for a long, long time, so did take advantage of that.

AND SITTING ONE-STROKE BEHIND IS CAMERON SMITH, WHO'S ROLLERCOASTER ROUND INCLUDES FIVE BOGEYS AND SIX BIRDIES...

ANNC: 71 for Smith. In at 4-under at his halfway point.

HE ECHOS ANCER'S THOUGHTS ON HAVING LUCK ON THEIR SIDE...

CAMERON SMITH: With how the conditions were yesterday, I was glad I had the day off. I think we got quite fortunate on that side of the draw, not to say it wasn't hard this morning, but we definitely got a lucky one there.

A TRIO OF AMERICANS OCCUPIES THE TOP OF THE LEADERBOARD...

HAROLD VARNER III TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE DRAW, WITH A SECOND-STRAIGHT, 69...

ANNC: That is a little masterpiece.

WHILE TOM HOGE HOLDS ON TO A SHARE OF THE LEAD...JOINED BY SAM BURNS AT 7-UNDER PAR.

ANNC: Sam Burns, from miles away. Oh you're kidding...I was kidding...ohh! Wow!

BUT THE STAR OF THE SECOND ROUND IS SOUTH AFRICA'S ERIK VAN ROOYEN, WHO ENDS HIS ROUND WITH A BANG...

ERIK VAN ROOYEN: 62 to the pin, trying to land it about two past it.

ANNC: The South African...his third shot at the par 5, 9th...

NATS: Let's go baby! That was an early call!

ERIK VAN ROOYEN: Ended up perfect.

HIS 5-UNDER, 67 IS THE LOWEST SCORE OF ROUND TWO, AND VAULTS HIM ALL THE WAY FROM A TIE FOR 50TH, TO A TIE FOR THIRD..

HE'S SEARCHING FOR HIS SECOND PGA TOUR VICTORY IN SEVEN MONTHS, AS THE NEXT WAVE OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOLFERS HAS ONCE AGAIN HIT GOLF'S BIGGEST STAGE...

D2 – STATE OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOLF

GARRICK HIGGO: South African golf's in a really, really good place.

ANNC: From South Africa, Garrick Higgo is the champion at Congaree.

ERIK VAN ROOYEN: Really healthy; really good.

ANNC: What a way to finish for Erik van Rooyen!

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: We've just got sport blood in our country.

ANNC: And how clutch is Brendan Grace.

ERIK VAN ROOYEN: For a relatively small country and a small population that play golf, it's phenomenal to see the amount of players playing at such a high level.

GARRICK HIGGO: I think it's got to do with who you kind of look up to, I guess, in a way.

THE EVERCHANGING TIDE OF SOUTH AFRICAN'S ON THE PGA TOUR IS OFTEN TRACED BACK TO THE PATRIARCH, GARY PLAYER...

ANNC: Oh my word!

YET, THE BLACK KNIGHT IS WELL AWARE OF THE PROPER WAVELENGTH.

GARY PLAYER: Bobby Locke was the godfather – I gotta give him credit. He won four British Opens and he came over here and he won seven out of the first 11 tournaments; he beat Hogan and Snead and Nelson.

ERNIE ELS: Harold Henning, Simon Hobday, Nick Price after that and then David Frost is also in the generation before us and now the next generation comes to mind.

ERIK VAN ROOYEN: It was guys like Ernie and Retief Goosen and Trevor Immelman – those kind of guys that inspired me and then Louis came along and Charl.

RETIEF GOOSEN: Garrick winning in Europe and over here. Bezuidenhout's been pretty solid. Erik has been playing very well.

TREVOR IMMELMAN: In the last 10 or 15 years there's been a few people down in South Africa that really focused on grassroots building of junior golf. We're starting to see the benefit of that now with these players coming through the ranks.

ERNIE ELS: We introduce youngsters to the game through the South African Golf Development or numerous different organizations. I've got a foundation where we nurture young players, Louis has a foundation now, and Gary Player has a foundation.

GARRICK HIGGO: Everyone in South Africa does such a good job motivating all the juniors. And our tour back down there is also very strong. I think that gives us a nice platform to start on if you didn't come to the States early on.

ANNC: A victory for another rising star of the South African game.

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: We've got others knocking on the door and playing some good golf. It's great to see the guys coming through and we will always be a big golf country.

D3 – SUNDAY – THIRD ROUND START

AS ROUND THREE COMMENCES SUNDAY EVENING...

ERIK van ROOYEN LOSES HIS MOMENTUM FROM THE MORNING AND DROPS A SHOT ON BOTH NINES...

BUT IT'S A DIFFERENT STORY FOR LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN, WHO CARDS A BACK-NINE, 32 EN ROUTE TO A THIRD ROUND, 69.

ANNC: Alright, to 5-under.

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THURSDAY, THE COURSE IS FIRM ENOUGH TO PLAY THE BALL AS IT LIES.

KEVIN KISNER: The course is in fantastic shape for all its been through in the last five days. Greens are still pretty receptive...there's gonna be some low scores this afternoon, I'd imagine.

AND KISNER TAKES ADVANTAGE WITH THREE BIRDIES ON SUNDAY ON HIS WAY TO A THIRD ROUND, 68.

ONE STROKE BETTER IS IRELAND'S TOP RANKED PLAYER...

ANNC: Shane Lowry on the tee.

WHO PROVIDES THE MOMENT OF THE DAY...

ANNC: Line's good. Oh its coming back! Ohhhh here we go!

HE'S GOT A 4-UNDER THIRD ROUND GOING THRU 14 HOLES.

CAMERON SMITH IS ONE OF SEVERAL PLAYERS TO START ROUND THREE WELL, WITH THREE BIRDIES IN HIS FIRST NINE HOLES...

AS DOES PAUL CASEY, WHO'S 2-UNDER OVER THE SAME SPAN...

PAUL CASEY: The greens are very receptive so you can certainly be aggressive with those approach shots if you've got a right number, but you'll get bitten if you're not careful.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN IS 4-UNDER ON THE LEADERBOARD THRU 10 HOLES, THANKS TO A HIGHLIGHT ON NUMBER NINE...

ANNC: Oh go down after that!

SEBASTIAN MUNOZ CARDS THREE BIRDIES IN HIS FIRST FOUR HOLES...AND ADDS THREE MORE OVER HIS NEXT 10 MOVING HIM TO 7-UNDER FOR THE TOURNAMENT.

ANNC: He's just snuck on in there, this is what can happen.

ONE SHOT AHEAD, A PAIR OF AMERICANS HOLD FIRM ON THE FIRST PAGE OF THE LEADERBOARD, AS BOTH TOM HOGE AND HAROLD VARNER III SIT AT 8-UNDER PAR.

BUT IT'S INDIA'S ANIRBAN LAHIRI, THE 322ND RANKED PLAYER IN THE WORLD, WHO TAKES CHARGE...

ANNC: Lahiri with a great look, read it perfectly.

GOING 5-UNDER THROUGH 11 HOLES SUNDAY NIGHT...

ANNC: Anirban Lahiri moving up the board.

TO PULL ONE SHOT CLEAR OF THE FIELD AT 9-UNDER.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: It would be huge. It's not every week that you play well, but you play well in a week where people can actually see golf shots, they can see you play, it makes a bigger difference.

AS THE DAY COMES TO A CLOSE AFTER 12 HOURS OF PLAY, THE THIRD ROUND IS FAR FROM COMPLETE...THERE'S STILL PLENTY LEFT TO BE WRITTEN, AND A PLAYERS CHAMPION TO BE DECIDED ON MONDAY.

EI – MONDAY – THIRD ROUND FINISH

ANNC: It's a Monday. One of the most prestigious prizes and titles on the PGA TOUR to be handed out here today.

WITH A CHAMPION SCHEDULED TO BE CROWNED ON MONDAY EVENING, THE FIREWORKS RETURN FIRST THING IN THE MORNING...

ANNC: Viktor Hovland...hole in one at the 8th!

HOVLAND SHOOTS 2-UNDER IN SEVEN HOLES MONDAY MORNING, KEEPING HIS HOPES ALIVE AT 4-UNDER PAR FOR THE TOURNAMENT.

ANNC: The players who have been there and done that starting to creep up that board.

BUT NOT ALL OF THE VETERANS FOUND THEIR GROOVE ON MONDAY MORNING, AS DUSTIN JOHNSON PLAYS HIS FINAL FIVE HOLES 3-OVER...

AND SEVERAL PAST PLAYERS CHAMPIONS ALSO FAIL TO PLAY THE MORNING UNDER PAR.

ANNC: UGH! My goodness, and all the momentum stops just that quickly.

BUT CAMERON SMITH CONTINUES HIS MOMENTUM ON THE ISLAND GREEN AT 17 WITH A BIRDIE THAT PUTS HIM IN POSITION FOR A FINAL ROUND PUSH.

ANNC: This is for par...third round, 69, 7-under, two shots back of Lahiri.

ONE BEHIND THE AUSSIE IS SHANE LOWRY, WHO CLOSES ROUND THREE WITH A BIRDIE...AS DOES SEBASTIAN MUNOZ, CAPPING OFF AN IMPRESSIVE THIRD ROUND, 65 TO CLIMB INTO A TIE FOR SECOND.

SEBASTIAN MUNOZ: I started hot, and I just kept plodding along, and it was a good one. I'm really happy where I am.

JOINING MUNOZ AT 8-UNDER IS ENGLAND'S PAUL CASEY – WHO NOW HAS HISTORY WITHIN REACH.

PAUL CASEY: What an opportunity. There's still eighteen holes of golf left and a lot can happen around a Pete Dye golf course. Try to go out there and play a wonderful round of golf and if you come out on top, great.

AT THE END OF THE ROUND THREE, ONE MAN STANDS ALONE...

ANNC: Anirban Lahiri...

WHO CONVERTS HIS OVERNIGHT LEAD INTO THE 54-HOLE LEAD...THANKFUL THAT THERE'S NO TIME TO SLEEP ON IT.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: There's not much to get too far ahead of yourself. I'm just trying to stay in the moment and do what I need to do next. I think the short turnaround time actually helps because you don't really have time to do anything else.

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN LAHIRI'S CAREER, HE HOLDS THE LEAD AFTER THREE ROUNDS...SEEKING TO CAPTURE HIS FIRST CAREER PGA TOUR WIN – AND ALL THAT COMES WITH BEING A PLAYERS CHAMPION.

E2 – ANIRBAN LAHIRI PROFILE

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: For me, this is home, this will always be home. My folks are here, my wife's folks are here, all our friends that we grew up with are here. So yeah, I miss home, I miss the people, the culture.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI IS A STAR OF INDIA, AND NOT UNLIKE THE *FAMOUS* “STAR OF INDIA”, A 563 CARAT GOLF BALL-SIZED SAPHIRE, HE TOO, IS A RARE GEM.

WITH MORE THAN 1.3 BILLION PEOPLE, THERE ARE ONLY 196 REGISTERED GOLF COURSES IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, 50 PERCENT OF WHICH ARE LOCATED ON MILITARY BASES AND NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

FORTUNATELY, ANIRBAN IS THE SON OF A DOCTOR; MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE SON OF AN ARMY DOCTOR.

DR. TUSHAR LAHIRI: Being in the army, most places you have a golf course very close to where you are assigned. He used to come along with me. And while I used to get the lessons, he used to putt around the greens and stuff like that.

Commented [JW4]: Any way to check this is still accurate?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: If I wasn't born into an army family, into a defense family, I would never have played the sport.

BUT DESPITE HIS LOVE FOR THE GAME, CHOOSING GOLF AS A CAREER IS EVEN MORE THAN RARE IN INDIA...IT'S THE EXCEPTION.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: To say "dad, or mom, I wanna play golf or I wanna pursue it seriously," it comes at the cost of pursuing mainstream education. And that was a very difficult decision, not for me but for my parents.

DR. TUSHAR LAHIRI: So, we just let it evolve on its own. The plot with him was go ahead, give it a bash.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: It was tough. I think the first two, two and a half years I really struggled. I came close a few times but I never closed the deal. As soon as I got that first win, it kind of opened up a few blocks for me.

BETWEEN 2011 AN 2014, ANIRBAN WON FIVE ASIAN TOUR EVENTS... AND BROKE LOOSE THE FOLLOWING SEASON.

ANNC: He's done it. Anirban Lahiri wins his national open championship.

HIS SUCCESS IN 2015 EARNED THE RISING STAR A SPOT ON THE PRESIDENTS CUP INTERNATIONAL TEAM, THE FIRST PLAYER FROM INDIA TO ACHIEVE SUCH A GOAL...

ANNC: Anirban Lahiri now...another win at the 14th for the Internationals.

THE NEXT LEVEL FOR ANIRBAN IS, OBVIOUSLY, THAT FIRST PGA TOUR VICTORY - NOT FOR WHAT IT WOULD MEAN TO HIM PERSONALLY, BUT RATHER, TO HIS COUNTRY AND THE GROWTH OF THE GAME WITHIN.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: To win on the PGA TOUR, that would be a big shift. You'd see more kids play the sport because for any sport to become really popular, you have to create heroes and you've gotta have people do things on a global stage.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: It's weird, because I feel like it wasn't very long ago that I was on the other side of the ropes looking in. I feel very honored, very privileged, but I also feel the responsibility to do it not just for myself.

AT 34-YEARS YOUNG, ANIRBAN LAHIRI CONTINUES HIS QUEST TO THE NEXT LEVEL. AND REGARDLESS OF WHAT LEVEL HE DOES ACHIEVE, HE IS ALREADY A TRUE GEM... A STAR OF INDIA.

E3 – MONDAY – FINAL ROUND EARLY

ANNC: We have finally made it to the final round!

54-HOLE LEADER ANIRBAN LAHIRI GETS OFF TO A STEADY START THRU HIS FIRST THREE HOLES...

ANNC: Stress-free par for Lahiri right out of the gate.

BEFORE HIS FIRST BIRDIE ON NUMBER FOUR...

ANNC: He moves it to 10-under par.

PLAYING ALONGSIDE LAHIRI, SEBASTIAN MUNOZ BEGINS THE FINAL ROUND 1-SHOT OFF THE LEAD, BUT SUFFERS A DOUBLE BOGEY ON THE FIRST HOLE...

ANNC: That's a nervy start.

AND DOESN'T REBOUND, MAKING A BOGEY ON THE PAR-5, 2nd...

ANNC: You have a couple bad shots and then you think to yourself "how am I going to get it back together."

MUNOZ NEVER DOES, SQUANDERING HIS CHANCES EARLY...

PLAYING AHEAD OF THE FINAL GROUP, MORE PLAYERS SEE THEIR CHAMPIONSHIP ASPIRATIONS SLIP AWAY...

INCLUDING, SHANE LOWRY, WHO GIVES TWO SHOTS BACK IN HIS FIRST SIX HOLES...

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN, WHO PLAYS HIS FIRST FOUR HOLES 4-OVER PAR...

AND SAM BURNS, WHO MAKES THREE BOGEYS THRU SEVEN HOLES EN ROUTE TO A FINAL ROUND, 76.

BUT IT'S AUSTRALIA'S CAMERON SMITH MAKING AN EARLY CHARGE...

ANNC: Smith! Gets his day started with a big birdie!

WITH FOUR BIRDIES IN HIS FIRST FOUR HOLES...

ANNC: Wow! What a start for Cam Smith!

NEEDING JUST FOUR PUTTS TO DO SO...

ANNC: 33rd one-putt this week!

KEEPING HIS FOOT ON THE PEDDLE WITH A FIFTH BIRDIE ON NUMBER SIX...

ANNC: Just an amazing start for Smith!

CAMERON SMITH: I just knew I had to make plenty of birdies. I was a few behind, I think, going into the start of the round, and just needed to get after it basically.

SMITH TAKES A 2-SHOT LEAD OVER ANIRBAN LAHIRI WITH 12 HOLES LEFT TO DETERMINE THE 2022 PLAYERS CHAMPION.

FI – FINAL ROUND MIDDLE

WITH FANS FILLING THE COURSE ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, THE ELECTRIC ATMOSPHERE IS TANGIBLE...AND THE PLAYERS RAISE THEIR LEVEL OF PLAY TO MATCH...

MOST NOTABLY BY DUSTIN JOHNSON, WHO SHOOTS 63 – THE LOWEST ROUND OF THE TOURNAMENT BY TWO SHOTS.

ANNC: That is a pretty remarkable score. And that ties the course record!

AND THE THIRD RANKED PLAYER IN THE WORLD, WHO GETS INTO A TIE FOR THIRD AFTER FIVE BIRDIES THRU 13 HOLES.

ANNC: Viktor Hovland sitting in a great spot.

A PAIR OF AMERICANS MAKE THEIR MOVE...

KEEGAN BRADLEY TIES HOVLAND AT 8-UNDER FOLLOWING BACK-TO-BACK BIRDIES ON NINE AND TEN...

ANNC: He's on a little roll here as he makes the turn.

WHILE FOUR BIRDIES HAVE DANIEL BERGER SITTING 1-SHOT BEHIND BRADLEY AND HOVLAND THRU 13.

ANNC: You're never out of it here.

PAUL CASEY LOOKS TO BREAK THROUGH AFTER SIX-CONSECUTIVE PARS TO START...

ANNC: If he were to make this putt, he's gonna send Cam Smith a little message...

ANNC: Looking for the birdie that finally lands for Casey at the 7th! He has locked his eyes on Cam Smith.

HIS FIRST BIRDIE COMES AT THE PERFECT TIME, AS CAMERON SMITH COOLS DOWN FROM HIS BLAZING START WITH BOGEYS ON 7 AND 8...

ANNC: Making bogey here at the 8th – it's not the worst thing in the world. Been the fourth most difficult hole on the golf course today.

IN THE GROUP BEHIND, ANIRBAN LAHIRI GIVES TWO SHOTS BACK WITH A DOUBLE BOGEY ON THE PAR-3, 8TH...

ANNC: Fore left! Uhh! Just a double cross there; trying to keep it down. Oh my goodness! That is serious trouble.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: I made a really bad decision on the tee. I should've hit 5-wood. I tried to force 4-iron and paid the price for it.

AND AFTER A BOGEY FOR CASEY ON NUMBER 8, HE CLOSES HIS OPENING NINE WITH A BOUNCE-BACK BIRDIE...

ANNC: Out in 35. 9-under. Tied for the lead.

HE'S NOW NECK-AND-NECK WITH SMITH AFTER THE AUSSIE MAKES A THIRD-CONSECUTIVE BOGEY ON NUMBER 9...

ANNC: That is a huge bonus for the rest of the field when they look up at the top of the leaderboard.

SMITH'S STUMBLE OPENS THE DOOR AS 24 PLAYERS ARE NOW WITHIN THREE SHOTS OF THE LEAD WITH NINE HOLES LEFT TO DETERMINE THE PLAYERS CHAMPION...

AND JUST AHEAD LIES A CHANCE TO RESET AS HE MAKES THE TURN...WITH A TREK TO THE BACK NINE.

F2 – "THE WALK" FROM 9 TO 10

ANNC: It's a long walk from nine over to 10 and it will be a moment of reflection.

RORY McILROY: It's sort of a time to gather yourself. Hopefully you've just made birdie on nine and you're walking to the 10th.

TONY FINAU: Whether it's a par save or if I'm walking off with a birdie, I feel great. I feel great about myself. I birdied the hole I needed to on a par five. Walking to number 10 – all good vibes.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: If you make bogey, you're really going to have time to hopefully reset and go on to 10 and change the round around.

TONY FINAU: It's the two extremes with attitude. I'm happy to say I think I've walked off nine with more birdies than bogeys.

RORY McILROY: Once you get to that little putting green before the 10th tee, it's time to sort of switch back on to thinking about your round and going again. It's a lot going on in a 400 yard walk.

F3 – FINAL ROUND CONCLUSION

WITH TIME TO RESET, CAMERON SMITH ARRIVES AT THE 10TH TEE WITH A REGAINED SENSE OF FOCUS...

CAMERON SMITH: It was just kind of knuckling down and kind of knowing what I had to do.

AND SMITH TAKES BACK THE LEAD WITH A BIRDIE ON NUMBER 10...

ANNC: Oh wow! Stuff it in there!

THEN FOLLOWS IT UP WITH TWO MORE BIRDIES ON 11 AND 12...

ANNC: He works his way back to 12-under.

AS DOES PAUL CASEY...STAYING A SHOT BEHIND SMITH AT 11-UNDER...

ANNC: There's a lot of people rooting for Paul Casey.

BUT SMITH TAKES A 2-SHOT LEAD WITH HIS FOURTH-CONSECUTIVE BIRDIE ON 13.

ANNC: Smith does it again... 13-under par.

CLOSE BEHIND IS ANIRBAN LAHIRI WHO FOLLOWS A BIRDIE ON 9 WITH A THREE ON THE PAR-5, 11TH TO GET WITHIN TWO SHOTS OF SMITH.

ANNC: Eagle putt on the way...is good for Lahiri!

AND WITH A BRIEF CHANGE IN CLIMATE, KEEGAN BRADLEY CONTRIBUTES TO THE STORM...

ANNC: Keegan Bradley to 10-under par! Four birdies in a row!

AND PULLS WITHIN ONE SHOT OF THE LEAD WITH TWO MORE ON 15 AND 16.

ANNC: Yes! What a putt!

AS THE CREAM RISES TO THE TOP, NOT EVERYONE IS ABLE TO KEEP UP...

DANIEL BERGER MAKES TWO BOGEYS IN HIS FINAL FIVE HOLES...AND VIKTOR HOVLAND DOES THE SAME IN HIS FINAL FOUR...

ANNC: Disappointing. Good opportunity.

CAMERON SMITH HOPS OFF THE BIRDIE TRAIN WITH BACK-TO-BACK PAR SAVES ON 14 AND 15...

ANNC: Clutch! Another one putt!

CAMERON SMITH: The putt on 14 is not really a putt you expect to make, to be honest. You're just trying to hit a good putt, and if it goes in, it goes in.

BUT ON THE PAR 5, 16TH, SMITH FINDS TROUBLE OFF THE TEE...

CAMERON SMITH: I typically like to move my driver left to right, and that hole kind of sits awkward for me. It was a horrendous drive. Had a chip-out and still had 240 meters to the hole...I think that's where it could have got away from me a little bit.

WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO POUNCE, PAUL CASEY CATCHES A TERRIBLE BREAK...

ANNC: Ugh! Oh you're not serious. Oh no! I have never seen that!

PAUL CASEY: Oh, you need a little bit of luck sometimes, don't you? That wasn't very good luck, was it? But it's a shame. It was the best drive I hit all day.

ULTIMATELY, A PAR FOR CASEY DASHES ENGLAND'S HOPES OF A PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP...

BUT A PAR FOR SMITH KEEPS HIM IN THE DRIVERS SEAT...

ANNC: Nerves of steel! What a par save that was!

JUST AHEAD ON 17, A TEE SHOT AWAY FROM THE HOLE LEADS TO BOGEY FOR KEEGAN BRADLEY...

ANNC: You play a little too conservatively, you get it on the wrong side of the green...easy to three putt.

AND A DOUBLE BOGEY TO FINISH ENDS HIS HOPES OF BEING THE PLAYERS CHAMPION.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: I played so good. It's a bummer, but it's a big event that I was up near the lead with a chance to win on Sunday, so that's always good.

WITH LAHIRI MAKING 4-CONSECUTIVE PARS BEHIND HIM, CAMERON SMITH MAKES THE WALK TO THE FAMED 17TH WITH A 2-SHOT LEAD...

STARING DOWN ONE OF THE GAME'S MOST DAUNTING TESTS, BUT ARMED WITH THE COMPETITIVE FIRE TO TACKLE IT.

ANNC: He's looking over there. You just gotta really be in control of your breathing; slow down your heartrate a little bit.

ADAM SCOTT: Cam is a real competitor. He's a real bulldog on the golf course. That's a false sense of security thinking he's as relaxed as his image is.

MARC LEISHMAN: He's just got that killer instinct that you need to have to be really successful. He seems to be able to switch that on a lot easier.

CAMERON SMITH: Just never give up. I grew up watching rugby league and watching the Queenslanders come from behind, and even when it got gritty they'd somehow manage to win.

GRIT – PERFECTLY PERSONIFIED BY SMITH...NOW ON THE 17TH TEE WITH 9-IRON IN HAND, AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO GRAB HOLD OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER.

ANNC: Oh my goodness, this is way more aggressive than I anticipated...Oh man! What a shot!

CAMERON SMITH: I'd be lying if I said I was aiming there. I was probably aiming 10 feet left of that. But still wanted to stay aggressive, still wanted to make birdie.

ANNC: That's the 10th birdie, matching the most in any round on the Stadium Course.

SMITH HEADS TO THE 72ND HOLE OF THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP WITH A 3-SHOT LEAD...

BUT AFTER A CONSERVATIVE TEE SHOT AVOIDING THE LAKE THAT LOOMS ON THE LEFT...

HE MAKES AN UNTIMELY MISTAKE ON HIS SECOND SHOT...

ANNC: One more little twist we've got!

CAMERON SMITH: I just thought it was going to come out tumbling and just roll out on to the fairway. Yeah, but just kind of come out nice, and it was unfortunate.

WITH SMITH IN THE PENALTY AREA, THERE IS A GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR LAHIRI PLAYING THE HOLE BEHIND...

ANNC: Hit it! Hit it! Hit it! Yes! This is not over yet boys!

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: At one point on 16 I thought it was kind of out of reach, but then again, birdieing 17, Cam kind of opened the door.

HE'S NOW TWO BACK, AS SMITH TRIES TO ESCAPE WITH A BOGEY...

ANNC: Clutch. Up-and-down for five. 66 for Smith. He'll wait and see what Lahiri does.

AND WITH THE LEAD DOWN TO ONE, LAHIRI HITS HIS SECOND SHOT FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE FAIRWAY...

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: The ball was above my feet, which is like a hook or a draw lie. The wind was off the right. Again, perfect. Pin is left. I'm not trying to hit it – I'm trying to hole it.

ANNC: Now Lahiri – must make to tie Smith.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: I had to pick myself up and try and make that chip. I hit a really good chip.

ANNC: Good try...but Cam Smith is a PLAYERS Champion in his back yard!

F4 – TROPHY CEREMONY & ROLLOUT

CAMERON SMITH: I feel as though one of these ones is a big step for me, I knocked on the door a few times and I just felt like it was my time.

ANNC: The 2022 PLAYERS Champion, Cameron Smith!

JAY MONAHAN: Cameron doesn't live far from here, every time he pulls the car up the main road, he's gonna receive a heroes welcome.

Commented [JW5]: This is confusing...I know what you're trying to do, but it's not "safe".

RESIDING IN NORTHEAST FLORIDA, IT WAS A PAIR OF SPECIAL VISITORS FROM SMITH'S BIRTH HOME THAT MADE THE WEEK EXTRA SPECIAL – HIS MOTHER AND SISTER.

CAMERON SMITH: It was unreal, I haven't seen them for two-and-a-half years. Golf really took a back seat the past couple of weeks and it was nice to get this for them. It's just really nice to have them here, give mom a hug.

CAMERON SMITH: I'm playing the best that I've ever played. I feel I've put in the work. It's nice to see all that stuff pay off.

JAY MONAHAN: This was signed by every past champion of the players.

CAMERON SMITH: Lots of great Australian golfers have won here. The best that have ever lived have won here as well so it's pretty cool to have the name on the same trophy as them.