

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: MARK CALCAVECCHIA
Tuesday, June 9, 2015



MODERATOR: I would like to welcome Mark Calcavecchia into the interview room here at the Constellation SENIOR PLAYERS Championship. Mark won his third Champions Tour tournament at the Principal Charity Classic.

Mark, if you just want to start it off by kind of reflecting on last week and talking about your feelings coming into this week and the third major of the season.

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Yeah, last week kind of came out of nowhere. I hadn't really played any good this year. Steve Lowery and I had a good tournament at the Legends, but other than that I've been struggling a little bit. I had this hand injury at the end of the year and been fighting a hook left and whatnot.

Anyway, **played a lot of golf. Well, five rounds, I think. We got to Des Moines a week early during our week off. We're traveling around in the motor home. So went to the Indy 500 after I missed the cut at French Lick, which I had never seen before so that was a treat. Ended up in Des Moines on Monday. Just played golf with friends and just was working on it. I wasn't out there goofing off, I was trying to figure out how to hit good shots and make putts.**

Ended up early in the week, I think on Tuesday as soon as we got there, my wife needed to go to Dick's to get some running supplies. Of course, I went straight over to the putter department and looked at the PINGs and the second one I looked at just struck my eye, it just looked beautiful. It set perfect, wasn't hooked, right amount of loft, perfect. Hit 12 putts with it on the putting green and made every one of them. Some guy was in there and he goes, You haven't missed yet, and he was looking at putters. Anyway, bought the putter.

Putted good last week and hit a lot of good shots. It's a good course for me. I played well there the other two years also and just thought that I might have a good tournament. Threw the bacon pants on as a favor to a friend on Friday and of course had a pretty good round and he was all excited. Wore the belt Saturday. After I grabbed the lead I thought, well, I've got to continue, I've got to have something bacon going on Sunday so I threw the Friday outfit back on. My wife washed it, by the way. That was kind of the whole story. Just kind of out of nowhere all that happened and you win a tournament. So it was kind of a shock to me, too. Still trying to figure out how I did it.

Q. Mark, what's the prognosis on the hand as far as when it will be completely healed or when you'll be pain free?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I would say never. I think it is what it is. It was doing really well and then about a month ago these three fingers started going numb, and really numb. I woke up and it was completely numb and I couldn't bend my fingers or anything. That went

on for about a week. Once I get up I can start moving it. Then my doctor said, well, it sounds like you've got some sort of a carpal tunnel syndrome going on. Actually went to a chiropractor in Des Moines last week and he really yanked on my fingers and wrist and might have got -- might have fixed it a little bit. It's less numb than it was. Anyway, and these two fingers are pretty arthritic so I've got three different issues with my hand going on, so I'm pretty sure it will never be normal.

Q. Any adjustments as far as the grip, how you're holding the club?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: No, I'm holding it the same. I think what had happened was with my hand the way it is and my back not that great, either, the miss I was telling you about was what I did on 16 and 17 on Sunday, are pull draws because when your back hurts and your hand hurts, you take it back and then everything sort of stops except your wrists, your hands. And I think my hand would actually come off the club and would just -- easy to do that and shut the clubface down. So therefore, that's the shot I've been fighting all year, not my normal fade when I'm semi healthy. I've been hitting a lot of pull hooks.

So I texted Peter Kostis and kind of told him the situation. He said you've just got to try to straighten your left leg faster and clear and keep your right foot on the ground as long as you can. So those are the things I worked on and hit it pretty good.

Q. You won in Iowa with an off-the-shelf putter. Monty was just in here, said he won the Senior PGA the last two years, eight rounds of golf using seven different putters. You ever hear anything like that?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I was going to say he does change putters a lot. I noticed he won whatever tournament he won and then the next week I saw him he had a different putter. I'm like, wait a minute, he just won with this putter, now what's he putting with? I've played several tournaments in my career using four different putters on the PGA TOUR, a different putter every day and had Top 10s doing that. I don't think I've ever won using four different putters in one tournament, but yeah, I have heard of that because I'm probably the next other guy that's done something like that. Not many guys go and buy putters off the shelf either at a Dick's Sporting Goods, but I bought a putter at Edwin Watts actually in 2007 and won the PODS with it the next week. I've had good experience with something like that and I said, what the heck, it looks good to me. All these other pieces of shit I've got in the bottom of the bus aren't working. I have 40 putters in there and I hate every one of them, so let's try something else, let's try this one.

Q. What PING was it?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: It's an Answer 2 Cadence TR. It's their new Cadence line it's called.

Q. How often do you change? You said you're likely to change. How long have you had that putter that you just abandoned and how often do you change?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Well, the putter I've used most of the time the last four years, it's called an Anser 3. I would say I've used that putter probably 90 percent of the time. But then I'll try something else one day and it won't work and something else the next day, then I'll go back to the Anser 3. But I tried the first round at French Lick, somebody told me with my stroke, why aren't you using a face balanced putter? I'm like, I have no idea. So he tried to explain to me why I should be using a face balanced putter. Okay. So I text Christian Pena at PING, what do we have for face balanced putters? So he gave me the list, I looked at them online, and I said, well, send me this one, this one, and this one. So he sent me three face balanced putters. I used one the first round at French Lick and had three three-putts and two four-putts. That's the end of the face balanced putters, so now they're just clogging up space in the bottom of the bus. That's three of the 40 putters I hate and two of them I've never even putted with and I already hate them. Again, it's just a pile of putters down there that most of them -- well, I've used all of them except the new ones that he sent me. But I put fat grips on them, put medium grips on them, the Super Stroke extra fat grip, tried all kinds of crazy things.

The bottom line is my back hurts enough where I can't stand on the putting green for more than about 15 minutes, so practice is limited with me. That's why it's easier to go play because you hit one shot every five minutes. I can't hit ball after ball. When I warm up before I play, I literally hit 15 balls, that's it.

Q. In picking a putter, is it whim when you pick it out or is it this kind of course, maybe a heavier putter, the conditions or something like that, or is it just basically guessing when you pick one of those putters?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: It's basically just appearance to me and how it looks. It's got nothing to do with -- I do like heavier putters. I kind of always have liked heavier putters, like EO on the scale if you know what that means. But when it's time, when I just don't like any of my putters, you know, I'll just look for something else. Or a lot of times I'll be watching a tour event and Lee Westwood's out there making everything, which is a rarity, or some other PING player and I'm like, I'll text -- used to be Matt Rollins but Matt Rollins went to work for Parsons now. Anyway, now I'll text Christian Pena and go, What the hell's so-and-so putting with? Oh, it's a whatever. I'll say, You'd better send me one, he's making everything. So it's got to be the putter, right? If he can make putts with it, maybe I can. That's how stupid it is. It's just all psychological.

So when it's time to find a putter, I just had no intention on buying one, I just wanted to go over there and waste time while she was shopping. I put it down and I looked at it and it just looked perfect to me. Everything in golf with me is visual, and it is with a lot of guys. If you can't -- if the course doesn't look good to you or this hole doesn't look good or whatever, your chances of hitting a good shot are less, and same with putts. I've looked at some putters guys use that are good putters and they just -- I couldn't make a two-footer with some of these things they use. Like how does he putt with that thing? But it must look good to him somehow, so it's all how it looks really.

Q. Just a question about going to the Indy 500. Was it more to get away from golf for the day, or if you've missed cuts before, what else have you done to kind of take advantage of that sudden free time?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: A little of both. When you have a spare week off, it's kind of cool when we have the bus because we can go anywhere. We thought about going back down to Nashville for two or three days, we love Nashville. So what are we going to do to waste a week and a half before the Principal Charity starts.

Then a friend said he was actually going from Denver, flew to Indy to hang out and go to the race. They were going to come down and watch me on Friday. I said, I shot 81 the first day, don't bother, so they didn't come. He said, Well, if you miss the cut, we've got two extra tickets to the Indy 500 if you and Brenda want to go. I thought, Well, if we don't go this year, I'll probably never get there. It's like a bucket list thing, I wanted to go because I love racing.

Sure enough, he had a big huge driveway, he lived in northeast Indy. Pulled right in his driveway, backed in and went to the race the next day and just had a blast. And then got up the next morning and drove to Des Moines. You know, got there Monday. We've got a great place to park the bus there and we've got friends there and just played a lot of golf, played those five different courses and had a good time.

Q. Mark, have you seen the golf course yet, had a chance to play it at all? What are your initial thoughts?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I like it a lot. I think it's a pretty difficult course. The greens are tough. There's some good driving holes, some fairways that are pretty wide. I played 16 holes and then that was enough. You know, right by the range there I thought there's no need walking up that hill on 17, I'll see it tomorrow.

Yeah, I liked it a lot. I think it's a really good course. Depending on how they set it up with pins and what the weather's going to do, I don't think the scores will be super low. There's going to be a lot of three-putting going on. If you get above the hole here, the ball really just keeps -- it runs out. You've got to hit it way easier than you think you do. Same with the side hillers. The course is in perfect shape. The greens are super fast, so reading the greens and speed control's going to be humungous on the greens this week. All in all, I think it's great.

Q. Just talk about the popularity that the Champions Tour pros are able to maintain post 50 years and how has this tour helped you?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Well, that's a good question. I think, number one, the fans that come to our tournaments have heard of us. Most with the exception of a few guys, most of us have been on the PGA TOUR for, you know, some 25, 30 years. You have your John Cooks and your Mark O'Mearas and your Fred Couples whenever he plays, which isn't very

often. They've heard of us. We're approachable. We sign every autograph everybody asks us to sign. It's not like we don't have time to sign our name, scribble it twice and run to the locker room. None of us are in that big a hurry.

So I think our tour is just, you know, it's more laid back. When the golf starts though, everybody's trying as hard as they know how. I think everybody's generally happy for everybody when they win. Somebody brought that up to me today, it just seems like everybody's -- I was happy for Monty when he won, I was happy for Lee Janzen when he won, so on and so forth.

Everybody just gets along. You don't have one guy sitting here eating breakfast, another guy over here, another guy over here, another guy over here. You'll have all four guys at the same table. It's just not -- I don't think it's like that on the tour. Everybody is more to themselves and that's just -- I think that's what our tour brings and I think the fans kind of get that a little bit.

MODERATOR: Mark, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Thank you.