

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: GRAEME McDOWELL**  
**Wednesday, November 11, 2015**



**MODERATOR:** Graeme McDowell, thanks for joining us for a few minutes prior to the start of the 2015 OHL Classic at Mayakoba making your second start. On the way in you mentioned you were a sponsor exemption in I guess the first one back in '07. Just a few comments on how you're feeling heading into the week.

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** Great to be back here. It's a beautiful part of the world. Like you say, first time here since 2007. I think the golf course is a golf course which sets up well for me. You've got to drive it well here. Some of the tee shots are pretty intimidating. It's fairways and rough, and then obviously you're going to lose your ball after that. It's a really good golf course, I really enjoy it. A little hot out there for me but definitely conserving energy and getting ready for the weekend.

But really it's been a tough year. I was up top a few times in the last few months but this is really the beginning of the 2016 season for me and I'm keen to try and get some FedEx points on the board as soon as possible. I typically don't play on the PGA TOUR until the Honda Classic and you're a long way back by the time you do begin. So my plan is to try to play a little bit more early on and try to get off to a faster start this time around and stop having to chase come the summer.

**MODERATOR:** I was talking to Colin on the way in and he mentioned you've been literally all over the world playing. Is there anything you're bringing into the week that you're feeling particularly comfortable with as far as your game goes?

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** Yeah, the game's been in good shape the last few months. I think since about probably the Scottish Open, right before The Open Championship and Firestone I had actually been hitting the golf ball really well. Put myself in the mix a few times going into Sunday. Not really a chance to finish high enough up where I would want to be, but putting myself there I guess is step one and really starting to close a few out is going to be step two. Like I say, immensely looking forward to the new season. Trying to put this year behind me I suppose. That's one of the big keys. Really happy with the way I'm hitting the golf ball. I'm driving it better which is a big key. The two things that have let me down this season have been my driving and my putting, which are normally strengths for me, so those two things are looking up. I'm playing here this week and McGladrey next week. They sort of feel like home events this time of year rather than being in Shanghai and Hong Kong and Turkey and Dubai. An hour and a half flight beats a 10-, 13-hour commute. This is a certain element of freshness I guess from my point of view.

**MODERATOR:** My last question, the entrepreneur in you is staying busy. I know you've got Nona Blue location number two in Ponte Vedre in the works, I guess hoping for a spring '16 kickoff?

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** Yeah, we just announced today via social media in some bits and pieces that we are opening up a second restaurant right by TPC Sawgrass and obviously PGA TOUR headquarters up there in Sawgrass Village in Ponte Vedre Beach. We're very excited. I've got some great business partners there in Orlando who are doing a great job and we decided that we're ready to go and ready to open number two. So excited to expand and be up in that part of the world. The PLAYERS Championship opening would be our dream, fingers crossed. You know how those things go. It's a new-build construction and we're hoping to be ready for the PLAYERS Championship and we'll see you guys there.

**Q. I guess you are looking forward to the Ryder Cup. What do you think about your expectation for your team against the U.S. next year?**

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** Yeah, I guess we're in the Ryder Cup qualifying for the Europeans. That is one of my big goals for 2016 is to make sure I'm on that -- to be on that team. My four Ryder Cup experiences to this point have been the best experiences in my career and I think Hazeltine is going to be a very special Ryder Cup. I think the American team will be pretty juiced up and fired up. It's going to be quite the battle. It's such a fun event. Definitely I'm very motivated to be part of that. I think it will be a very close match again and who knows who's going to win. It's exciting. I'm just so glad to be part of an event which has gone from strength to strength. It's pretty exciting for the game.

**Q. What was your decision to coming here this week, was it getting a head start and getting FedEx points for this season or getting the taste of last season out of your mouth?**

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** A little bit both, a little bit of both I suppose. It was tough for me to not go to Dubai probably for the first time ever. It's not my favorite golf course in the world, I've got to be honest. I don't play well around there so that factored into my reasoning. I typically do play sort of four, five times on the European Tour this time of the year. That's something I've always done. But having had a very average season this year, I suppose I've got to put things in perspective and get my priorities straight, and my priorities are competing on the FedEx points and money lists on the PGA TOUR, on the European Tour. So I've got to play golf. I've got to put this year behind me and start moving forward. Waiting until the Honda Classic, not being in the majors and WGCs is too long to wait for me on this side of the Atlantic. So I've got to get some numbers under my belt, I've got to start playing a little bit. That was probably my main motivation. Being outside of the top 50 in the world, of course I want to play well these next two weeks and get myself back in there, but if it doesn't happen I've got to be realistic with the start of my year and know that I'm perhaps not in Doral and the Masters and World Match Play and I'm going to have to start playing more mainstream events, which I'm cool with because -- I don't even like the word mainstream; events outside of the WGCs and maybe the invitationals like your Bay Hills and stuff like that. Your tough events where you're playing against top players in the world week in and week out on tough golf courses. I need more golf courses where I feel like if I play well, I will contend. Events like Mayakoba, McGladrey, and into the new year, L.A., Honda, Tampa, stuff like that. That's what got me to the position to win a major championship and that's

where I've got to go back to basics and start playing more golf and competing and winning tournaments again and get my confidence back.

**Q. How do the windy conditions of this course, are they affecting you playing?**

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** I guess the last time I was here was in 2007 back when it was played in February. I think it's a little windier in February than it is this time of the year. I do remember it being difficult when I was here in 2007. That 15th hole I had a really hard breeze coming in off the ocean and it was a pretty tough little shot. I don't think the breezes are going to be quite as major a factor this weekend. They are going to be there and they are going to be part of this golf course and I think this golf course is designed to be played with that easterly breeze, but it's not going to be as much of a factor as it was last time I was here. I think maybe blowing maximum 10, 15 miles per hour, and with the heat that we have, it's not a massive factor. I think it's going to be good conditions. I hope we can stay dry and the thunderstorms miss us this weekend. The golf course is in great shape. I think it's going to be a good challenge and I'm hoping to be in contention.

**Q. What was your status when you played here the first time?**

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** So it was opposite the World Match Play so I wasn't in the World Match Play. I guess I had no PGA TOUR card because I was on sponsor exemption. I was in rebuild mode a little bit then, you know? I was definitely -- I certainly wouldn't compare it to where I am right now, but I'm probably in a similar situation eight years on if you like with a major championship under my belt and multiple tournament wins around the world and I feel like I'm -- better player. But there's no doubt I'm in a slightly rebuilding back-to-basics type mode and this could signal the start of the beginning of something again. I'm hoping the road isn't going to be as long as it was then in 2007 to winning the U.S. Open in 2010. I mean, not sure I can wait three years. My patience levels aren't maybe what they are.

**Q. Would you take the 2019 U.S. Open right here?**

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** Yes, please, definitely, for sure.

**Q. What would make you come back this year to Mayakoba?**

**GRAEME McDOWELL:** I'm already -- well, you know, myself and my caddie got here on Monday and we said why haven't we played here in the last few years? This is a great golf course for us. I guess the problem is the clash with the final series in the European Tour. That's the problem for me. I would love to be in the top 10 on the money list in Europe right now and going to Dubai with a chance to play for the bonus pools, but I'm not. Like I alluded to in previous questions, I have new priorities where I've got to play some golf, I've got to get some FedEx points, I've got to get off to a faster start, and without the WGCs and majors to rely on next year, I need to play more events like these, more of the regular PGA TOUR events where I can compete and hopefully put some numbers on the board.