

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: BILLY HURLEY III
June 27, 2017



JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Billy Hurley III into the interview room here at the Quicken Loans National. He's making his sixth start at this event, three top-10s, including his first PGA Tour victory last year.

Billy, welcome back. I know we're at a new golf course, but still talk a little bit about defending your title from last year.

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, you know, it's kind of weird. The last two years have been quite a ride when you think back two years from now sitting in this media center and not knowing where my dad was, to then sitting here a year ago having just won the tournament, and now coming back and defending the tournament.

We certainly wish it was at Congressional because I finished 1st, 4th and 8th there, so there are courses for certain players and that's one of mine. But this is a familiar place to me. I do practice and play out here when I'm home a good bit, so it's a great spot and it will be a great event this week.

JOHN BUSH: I know you carried that win last year on to our third FedExCup Playoffs event. I know you want to carry that one step further this year. Talk a little bit about your current position in the FedExCup standings and as we come into the home stretch of the season.

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, we've got some work to do to get to that fourth event. I played consistently mediocre this year, I think I'm 100th, or 102nd right now, made a lot of cuts but only one top-10. Just trying to kind of get back consistently in the top-10 kind of thing and leapfrog up the FedExCup here in the summer.

JOHN BUSH: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Billy, what are your impressions of the redesign here, obviously a very different course then they used to have here for the Kemper and the Booz, those tournaments.

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, they did a good job, I think. The routings are generally the same. Most of the holes are the same except for the start of the back nine, kind of 9 through 13, 9 through 14 are quite different holes. Everything else is generally the same, tees in the same spot, greens in the same spot kind of thing. What they've really done here, I think, is elevated the condition of the golf course. I played the Booz Allen Tournament in 2006, kind of the last year before they blew it up to redesign it. Like I said, being here, kind of over the last five years of being here and practicing here, they do a really, really good job, the staff and the superintendent. It's in great shape this week, but it's in great shape 52 weeks a year really.

Q. Billy, do you have memories, did you go to like Kemper as a kid and stuff like that?

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, I did a Drive, Chip & Putt, like regional final kind of thing here one year in high school, maybe my junior, senior here in high school. And I caddied in the pro-am one year in high school, just kind of an amateur caddie through that.

Q. How important do you think it is for kids growing up if there's a PGA Tour stop around, is that something that is meaningful where you can get your eyes on guys who do it for a living and maybe get inspired by them a little bit?

BILLY HURLEY: I think inspired is probably the right word. I think that that's kind of how you do it, especially being up close and personal in-person. It's a very different vibe, it's a very different feel than watching it on TV. I do think that that's a really cool thing for kids to be able to do. Most tournaments on the PGA Tour, we've worked pretty hard to make it accessible for kids to come watch and have special autograph sessions where it's just them, and they get kind of that interaction with players there, too.

Q. So you talked some about the redesign of the course but what is in your mind the key to attacking it and getting a low score?

BILLY HURLEY: There are no low scores here. I think that like 8- or 10-under won the Champions Tour SENIOR PLAYERS. I think 7-under won a Web.com and maybe 9- or 10-under won a Web.com here. So it's a hard, hard golf course. The key, I think, is to -- I think the key out here more than anywhere else, there's a lot of tee shots where you've got to be in the fairway. The rough's really thick and the rough is definitely going to be penal this week, more so this week than other weeks on tour.

Q. What does it mean to you to have this tournament and so many other events across golf giving back to the military?

BILLY HURLEY: Well, when you add it all up, I think that this tournament does the most to at least honor the military. I don't know financially how many dollars tournaments give to military charities exactly. From an honoring and highlighting and saluting the military, this is the flagship event, and that's certainly something that has been near and dear to me obviously and one of the reasons that I love the event so much.

Q. You're in a position you've never been before, Billy, defending champion. Any pressure that goes along with that title?

BILLY HURLEY: Only when you guys tell me there's supposed to be. You want to play well, you want to defend well. It is a different golf course, so I've got that excuse going for me. I think the pressure actually for me more so comes from actually like last year, I felt a lot of pressure just because people, like friends and stuff, they kind of say, oh, you finished top-10 at Congressional twice last couple years, you're a shoe-in to finish fifth again this

year. And I'm like yeah, because it's that easy. I did better than that, I guess. I think sometimes there's the casual golf fan creates the pressure because the people who are on the inside realize how difficult it is and it's not just that simple to finish well in a PGA Tour event. I don't feel any extra pressure. There's a lot of extra pressure on my schedule, though.

Q. Were you a couple years ago thinking about moving to Florida where you could practice year round?

BILLY HURLEY: No.

Q. So what goes into playing year-round in this climate? How do you get your work in, how much are you here, do you work in Annapolis as well?

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, I do practice a little bit at the Naval Academy course. It's certainly a lot closer to home than here, easier to get here. Don't have to traverse the Capital Beltway. But we built a house a couple years ago so I have kind of a studio in the basement, putting green, gym, hitting bay kind of thing in the basement, so that's where I do a little bit of work in the winter. And I also will take little trips to Orlando and play and practice down there. A number of years ago Mr. Palmer gave me a membership at Bay Hill so I've been fortunate enough to -- was fairly close with him through the last five or seven years of playing. That's kind of where I spend wintertime, take two-, three-day trips down there in the winter.

Q. Being that you're from this area, you obviously have experience in the Naval Academy and in the Navy. How important are those interactions with the military service members who will be here this week, how important is it to talk to them and share that experience with them?

BILLY HURLEY: Well, I always love getting to talk to service members and veterans throughout tournament weeks. I see somebody every week kind of with a Navy hat or military or whatever that is. More and more I get a lot of "Beat Army" cheers on the course and the Army guys kind of got a little feather in their caps, they're starting to say "Go Army" since they won the football game last year. It's really something that I take really seriously is honoring and really representing the military well on the PGA Tour.

Q. Billy, I saw you tweeted not that long ago about going back to Navy and there was a parking spot reserved for you but someone was in it. You can't even get a parking space at the Navy when you go back?

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, I don't know what to tell you. You would think at the Naval Academy they would follow rules.

Q. I think you tweeted earlier about being at a coffee shop wearing a Masters shirt and someone came up to you and asked you if you were actually there or did you get

it as a gift?

BILLY HURLEY: Yeah, yeah. I think those are so funny. I enjoy those interactions really. I wish I would have the wherewithal and the time to kind of take those to the next level. Yeah, it's been, hey, I'm not, you know, Dustin Johnson, Rickie Fowler. I'm not top-10 in the world like really, really recognizable players and I'm fine with that. I guess it's humbling. I walked into a coffee shop the day after I won and walked right by two of these guys talking about me winning and that sort of thing. I enjoy it, it's kind of humorous to me.

Q. You mentioned your results at Congressional. That's not a typical track that you guys play every week, it's a major championship course, a difficult course. This is a difficult course. Where do you kind of find that balance between wanting a challenge, having par as a good score, and having 20 under be the winning score? What do you find more fun and what do you think most guys out here do?

BILLY HURLEY: I think somewhere in the middle. Like you look at last week at River Highlands, the 12-under. I think when you're in that low double digits, I think that's probably where it's most fun. Shooting 7-under and making birdies, I mean, that's fun for sure. I tend to play a little bit better on hard golf courses where par is a good score. So for whatever reason I enjoy that challenge. I think that being not a longer hitter can make getting it to 20-under more difficult. I think that when you're in that low double digits, that's probably when it's most fun. It's a good challenge, but the winner's still going to make 20 birdies for the week or something like that.

Q. Do you think that's probably what you'll get out here?

BILLY HURLEY: I think it depends. I haven't actually played the course this week yet. When I played it the last couple weeks leading up, the rough was really, really penal. So it all depends on weather. I haven't looked recently, but I think it's supposed to be pretty good. That means that we can make the winning score whatever we want to make the winning score. So I think yeah, I'll sign 10-under and sit in the clubhouse for four days.

JOHN BUSH: Anything else? All right. Billy Hurley III, best of luck this week. Thanks for stopping by.