

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: SCOTT McCARRON
August 16, 2017



CHRIS RICHARDS: Scott, welcome to Endicott and the Dick's Sporting Goods Open. You've won twice this season, including your first major. Can you assess your progress this season and how you feel like your season's gone?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, the season's gone very well. To win the first event here on the mainland in Boca and the way I did it at the very end, eagling the last hole, was really something special.

Then I had a good run there in a few tournaments, a couple majors where I finished second, fifth and second. Then almost defended again in Des Moines at the Principal Charity. Then to see my college roommate and one of my best friends win that tournament was -- even though I didn't get a chance to win, it was very special to see him win. Brandt Jobe has been playing so well for a long time and to see him finally that victory here in the United States was really something special.

Then going and playing at Caves Valley and battling it down to the end with Brandt Jobe again and our leader out here on the PGA TOUR Champions, Bernhard Langer, was something I'll never forget. We talked about majors on the regular tour. I never got a chance to win one, I had some opportunities, never got the job done, and to be able to do it out here really means a lot.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You mentioned Bernhard, you were facing off with him at Caves Valley. You'll be facing off with him the rest of the season --

SCOTT McCARRON: I'll been facing off with him for years to come.

CHRIS RICHARDS: With the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs coming up, what's it going to take to overtake him for the first time, for him not to win for the first time in a few years?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, the only way that any of us have a chance is just to stay in the top-5. I don't believe any of us can catch Langer with the way he's playing. He's got such a big lead on us right now in the Charles Schwab race, so if we can stay in the top-5, if I'm two through five and then win that last event, we can still win the Schwab Cup.

But certainly he has set the bar awfully high. He's one of the main reasons that I work out, I stay in shape to try to catch him. The guy is so impressive. I got to play a few holes with him yesterday in a practice round and just to see how he kind of takes apart a golf course and takes all the notes. Even though he's been out here for so long and played this golf course so many times, he's still approaching every day and a practice round like it's his first day at this golf course. To me, it's very impressive. I think he's turning 60 here pretty soon, which I give him a hard time about, but I don't see him slowing down anytime soon.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You're back in Endicott for the first time in a couple years. What's your feeling when you come to tournaments like this where the community embraces it as much as it does?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, it really was one of my favorite tournaments that I came to on the PGA TOUR just because the golf course is great and the support from the surrounding area, from the people here was just fantastic. I loved coming here. I came here my first year on the PGA TOUR Champions and played well, was in the final group and I think I had the lead for a little bit and unfortunately I didn't play that well coming down the stretch on Sunday, gave up the lead and didn't finish the way I wanted to.

This is one of the tournaments that really kind of changed the way I started thinking and approaching after being in the hunt and after talking with Hale Irwin, taking him out and picking his brain, and watching Bernhard Langer, the way he wins so many tournaments, that you've got to have patience. I was always trying to force the issue when I got in the hunt, felt I had to play great just to win. So after talking to those guys and some of my background being on-course announcer for Golf Channel and Fox I think also really helped. I saw some of the best players in the world not always playing their best but staying very patient. When they did that, then they would have opportunities to have a chance to win.

CHRIS RICHARDS: We'll open it up to questions now.

Q. You mentioned what it's going to take for you guys to catch Bernhard on the tour. Obviously he's a former champion here, he's had some success. What's it going to take to kind of turn him from the hunted into the hunter this weekend?

SCOTT McCARRON: You know, again, you've got to make a lot of birdies at this golf course. There's a lot of guys playing well. Bernhard Langer's playing well, he's won here. Brandt Jobe coming off some really high finishes, he's a guy that drives the ball very, very long and straight. Paul Goydos, who won here last year, defending champion just coming off a win last week at the 3M, he's a guy to look at. Also another guy, Kevin Sutherland, who's had some great rounds here, 59 after bogeying the last hole, could have shot 58. Hasn't won here yet on the PGA TOUR Champions but he's one of the most steady performers that we have out here. Once he wins one, I think it's going to open the floodgates.

So you've got a lot of guys that are in really good form right now, the golf course is in great shape. For me, I've got to take advantage of the par 5s and try to get 16, drive it on there, maybe make a couple birdies and an eagle, but I've got to take advantage of the par 5s here.

Q. Scott, Bernhard mentioned the rough being a little longer here than normal. Just talk about the course conditions coming into this week, something that you may have noticed about the course this week.

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, the golf course I played yesterday, late afternoon, it was fast, it was firm, the rough was up, so it's a premium on driving the ball straight. If you can drive it long and straight here, you can really take advantage of some of the par 5s. Some of these par 4s, 18 I hit a good drive yesterday and only had 85 yards to the hole. If it's fast and firm, it's a huge advantage, but you've got to keep the ball in the fairway.

I like the fact that this golf course has always been if you miss the fairway, you still have a play. You've got to be able to hit it low, you've got to be able to cut it, you've got to be able to draw it around trees, and you can always try to kind of bounce it up to the green. It's very playable even if you drive it off the fairway, but this year with the rough being a little bit higher, I think it's going to be a little more difficult and a premium to be in the fairway.

Now, I know we got a lot of rain yesterday because I was out there and saw it, but hopefully the golf course will still continue to dry out. Fast and firm is the way we want to play it.

Q. We've talked a lot about Bernhard. I asked him about the criticism that he received regarding his putting style. What are your thoughts on how he approaches his putts and his style on the green?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, he's one of the great putters of all time and he's gone through a lot of battles trying to figure out different methods to putt. He truly is one of the best putters I've ever seen, and for him to make that switch to non-anchored like I have also, it took a little bit, it took a couple months really to get it down.

The criticism he gets is from a very small minority. It's the same small minority that believes we didn't even land on the moon, so I really don't take too much credence into what some of these guys say. And some of the media that criticized Bernhard or myself, they don't know what we do, they haven't come out and seen what we do. They're just back there making their opinion based on what they just see from a picture. I asked them, like Brandel, come on out, let me show you how we do it. Once they see it, then they understand. So the criticism is mostly people that aren't educated on what we do.

Q. Another question regarding the rain yesterday, you said it sucked. I think that was duly noted after it just poured for about an hour. How has your experience --

SCOTT McCARRON: You said I said what?

Q. Didn't you say it stunk? How in your experience --

SCOTT McCARRON: I thought you said something else.

Q. How have your experiences of rain early in the week impacted the weekend?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, again, this golf course -- coming in, this golf course is fast and

firm so a little bit of rain like we had yesterday really won't affect it that much. It will drain off there and it will still play fast and firm. Sometimes when we come to a golf course that's already a little bit slow and wet, if you get a lot of rain, that can make a big difference. If it does get a little bit slower and wet, it just means that you can drive it far and not have to worry so much about running it through some of the fairways. If it's playing that way, I think it's even a bigger advantage to a guy who hits it farther. The fairways get a little bit wider when it's not rolling as much. But I don't think it's going to be the case. Looks like we're going to have great weather and this golf course will play fast and firm.

Q. A couple years ago you were up here, you were in contention?

SCOTT McCARRON: Yes, sir, final group.

Q. You sounded surprised back then that the course that you played on the PGA TOUR Champions is almost identical to the course that you played --

SCOTT McCARRON: Yardage-wise, yeah, from the tees.

Q. -- on the PGA TOUR. Do you find throughout the tour that the courses -- I think some people have the assumption, oh, you're on the PGA TOUR Champions so you guys must have easy courses to play. How much of a misconception --

SCOTT McCARRON: It's a big misconception. That was only I think my third event on the PGA TOUR Champions when I came here.

There were two misconceptions. One, people were saying, boy, you're going to love the PGA TOUR Champions because nobody practices, everybody just goes out and has a couple cocktails, this and that, and the golf courses are all short.

I got out here and I see all these guys practicing from sun up to sun down, working just as hard as they did when they were in their 20s and 30s. And the golf courses that we are now going back to that we played on the PGA TOUR play the same yardage, whether it was here, whether it was Houston.

So yeah, when I got here at this tournament, it was the first time we had come back to a tournament that I played on the regular tour and the distance was just the same. So I was a little surprised that it was that way, and I see why it's that way because these guys are still so good. I mean we've got 25 guys that can still play on the PGA TOUR. These guys are shooting low numbers every single week and it's just so impressive and a testament to what a great product this PGA TOUR Champions is.

Q. Is there anything in terms of course setup that you see that is different out here from the --

SCOTT McCARRON: I don't see much as far as course setup. We still tuck the pins and

we have tougher pins on Sundays coming down the stretch. But overall the yardages and some of the courses that they play on the PGA TOUR are longer than what we play on the PGA TOUR Champions, there's no question about that. But the courses that we used to play, when we come back to them, we basically play the same type of yardages.

Q. Are you a Bon Jovi fan?

SCOTT McCARRON: I am. Living on a Prayer, yeah. We're looking forward to Bon Jovi. My wife's a big Bon Jovi fan so we will definitely be there cheering on Bon Jovi. And I think again the way that they do this tournament and Dick's is what they put into that tournament, having that concert for the players and the fans, there's really no other tournament like it that does something like on the 18th green and the 18th fairway. It's quite a scene. And to be able to come back the next day and play and you can't even tell there was anything going on the night before, it's pretty impressive.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Thank you very much and good luck this week.