

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 28, 2017



HAROLD VARNER III

MODERATOR: Harold, welcome back to Australia. It's great to have you here on the Gold Coast again, defending champion this week at the Australian PGA Championship. How are you feeling?

HAROLD VARNER III: Super excited. I've been out of the country for now this will be three weeks, so I played Dunlap Phoenix and I played Hong Kong last week. Just excited to get going again. Starting to play well again and hopefully we can rekindle some of the flame from last year.

MODERATOR: Are you feeling some positive vibes? You've just played some holes out there. Were all those memories coming back to you?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah, for sure. It's just crazy, I was thinking about the first time I came here and how I didn't know anyone, didn't know where to hit it, and now I feel like I have an idea what to do. And how different the course has matured the last three years because the first time I played it, I think that was the first time they opened the course since the redesign. Just seeing how it's easier, but I think I just played really well, so just excited for the challenge and just ready to compete.

MODERATOR: Excellent. Questions from the floor?

Q. Can you tell us a little bit how did the win (inaudible)?

HAROLD VARNER III: Just waiting. I hadn't won on any tour before this event, so it's just I didn't really change as much as I thought. I felt really bad the next day, super obviously hungover, but it was just a great experience just knowing that you can win.

I think everyone needs confirmation that they can do it because I think everyone can win but doing it's a different thing. But I think it's helped me the last couple weeks just knowing that I can win when I need to -- I need to play well to keep my card on the PGA TOUR, just having that, I just don't see how that can hurt.

Q. What was it like, the Tour? It was a little tough for you this year, wasn't it? You got things going late?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah, I think life happened, happened a lot sooner than I thought it was going to. Just family and stuff like that off the golf course, and when that stuff's just not -- some stuff we don't control, when we lose loved ones. Just it happens and I didn't do a good job of controlling it. I probably shouldn't have played a little bit, just take some time

off, but I didn't.

I just thought as a kid when you're on the golf course, you get away from all that. That's how I've always -- that's why I've loved golf so much because when I was on the golf course, whatever was happening off of it, I didn't care.

But yeah, I played really well coming down the stretch and that's -- I think you're going to have years like that. I wouldn't be surprised if I have another year like that before it's all said and done. That's a part of it. I just need to get back to what I was doing. I feel like I'm doing it now. I'm playing really solid, just haven't driven it really well the last six months. So to play that well and drive it that bad, I'm actually really excited because I know that eventually I'm going to drive it well, it's just a matter of time.

Q. Can you elaborate on what you said, stuff happened off the course? In what sense?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah, literally right after the tournament I flew back on Monday and my girlfriend lost her brother on Thursday or Friday. So never really -- I didn't think much of it, I just thought, yeah, you know, it's sad but things will get better. Just didn't get better like as fast as you'd think.

Obviously I didn't really understand losing a sibling. I mean, I love my sister. Like if I lost my sister, I'd lose my mind. She's awesome. So just something you don't really understand until it happens and you can't really relate.

Even though I love my girlfriend, you can't really relate to her because that's never happened to you. At the time I thought I'm a very positive person and sometimes you don't need to say anything, and I have a hard time doing that because you just want to help so much.

But it happens, you know? Everyone in this life is going to go through something like that and how you handle it is what makes the difference.

Q. How does winning and having that expectation coming back change how you approach the golf here? (Inaudible.)

HAROLD VARNER III: No, so my girlfriend, my caddie, his family and her parents are here, so we got a house. I wish I was at a casino, but I'll make a run over there eventually. I like having a good time.

But no, it hasn't changed. I know I need to play well. The course sets up pretty well for me obviously. I've played well here, so I just need to keep doing what I've been doing and that's compete. I just want to have a chance to win with nine holes to go. That's what you want to do every tournament and I've been fortunate enough to do that the last two years and you can't really live in the past. I mean, it's a new year, a new me and I feel like I have another

great opportunity.

Q. Is there anything that's (inaudible) strong finish to the PGA TOUR season?

HAROLD VARNER III: Things got better off the course. It just makes it so much easier to play. When she started doing a little bit better and she got to travel a little bit, just so I could be there for her. I thought I really loved her before, but I think loving someone when they're at their worst is when you truly do. I learned that, but usually it doesn't happen to you like until you're older. It doesn't really happen at 26.

But yeah, things got better off the course, so like when I go practice, I'm not worried about anything except how I can get better, and I'm at that state right now and don't get caught up in so much of the result. It's easy to do, to get caught up in the result when your back's against a wall. Well, I've got to finish this. No, you don't, you just have to play golf, something good's going to happen. The last six weeks, that's what I did. I just knew I was trending in the right direction and obviously it kept going once I got in the Playoffs. That's what it's about, just trying to find a way to get better and I'm doing that.

Q. With just what's happened with your partner off the course, do you think there is that extra drive or extra motivation to really defend that PGA Championship?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah, this is my last tournament of the year. I want to play well because I want to get some momentum going into next year. Last year after this tournament I obviously didn't play much golf. This year I'm going to stay in Australia for another week, and then I'm going to go to California. I'm going to play, I think that's the biggest thing I think is to keep playing. I didn't play any at all last year afterwards.

But has it given me more motivation? I don't think so. I think I just want to do well all the time, period. I think after I got my card, she looked at me and she said, well, it's going to be all right no matter if you had your card or not. And that's what it's about to me because at the end of the day, golf's -- it's not always going to be there. I'll play it, but she'll always be there and that's the most important to me. That's how I grew up, that's how my parents are. They're going to love me if I finish dead last in this tournament. If I win it, it doesn't matter.

So people like that, those are the people I want around me. And just to see her hurt like that last year, it was tough but I didn't handle it well. I don't know, I'm just very, let's figure it out, fix it, and you can't fix those situations. So I learned a lot, I grew up, and I just want to have a chance to win this week and I'm just really excited. It feels good to be back, though.

Q. Actually just on that, I was going to say what does it feel like when you first step back out there and hit that first ball having won here last year? Does it make you like give you that confidence just automatically, or do you just try to sort of forget about the fact that you won and start again?

HAROLD VARNER III: I'm not sure if I have so much confidence because of the golf course

and how I played here. I think I have a lot of confidence because I'm starting to play well. Like it doesn't matter what course I play, I feel like something good's going to happen.

I played well the last day in Hong Kong and drove it better, found some stuff. Just working at it, that's the stuff I enjoy, and to see the result like off the tee.

I played with Mike Weir nine holes this morning. Obviously he's been through some stuff, and seeing him be the age that he's at right now to just keep going, that's more motivating to me. Like hey, you're not the only one going through it, just keep on pushing. I get excited about that challenge, that little friction, that problem because life is a problem and we're here to like make it easier on ourselves.

Q. Can you tell us your partner's name and her brother's name, and was it a sudden thing or something that just --

HAROLD VARNER III: He just had trouble obviously with addiction. Her name's Amanda Singleton and his name was Elliott. So it's just everyone fights their battles. Obviously all our battles are different. Stuff like that I learned. I had never been around it, but everyone's -- even though if you don't know it, everyone's fighting their battles and sometimes it's just hard to help them.

Until then I didn't know what to say, what to do because obviously I'm pretty happy go lucky. I used to think when bad stuff happens, you deal with it for a couple days and you find a way to live your life, live it, and some people just don't react like that and that's just the way it is. Can't really -- as much as I would like to, control it, you can't.

Yeah, it's just I still believe in people, I still believe that there's a lot of good out there, believe that good things are going to happen. I've always thought that. I think good things are going to happen this week, and as long as I focus on that I think I'll be fine.

It's just hard, like I'm sure you probably know people that are fighting battles that you'd like to help and you can't, and I had never been put in that position. Usually you don't get put in those positions until I feel like when it's your kids, someone -- you're so much wiser, you're so much older and you know you can help them. But being 26, I was like, umm, didn't really know what to do, you know?

Q. You and your partner have been together a long time?

HAROLD VARNER III: I've known her since I was 17 but we've been together, it will be two years next week. Just like, you know, a sad situation but we're going to get better from it. If we can help people, that's what I want to do. Just because he passed away, you've got to still know that you can help someone from that situation. That's sort of the -- I feel like the direction I want to go with it, but it's hard when it's not you, it's not your brother, you know what I mean? You're just there to support them.

Q. When you first came here two years ago, you were terrified of the animals?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yes.

Q. Are you still? Which ones scare you the most?

HAROLD VARNER III: Snakes, oh, my gosh. And then sharks. Just can't -- then the fricking alligator or the crocodiles. No, still freaked out about that.

Q. What scares you most about them?

HAROLD VARNER III: Because they can kill me. I can't do much to them. In America we shoot them, but here you guys like love them. And, I mean, I appreciate it but you can keep it a little away from where I am.

Q. Harold, you seemed to get a lot of goodwill from fellow players after you won the Australian PGA last year. Can you tell us a little bit about the (inaudible) getting recognized after winning it last year?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah. Obviously I was asked, Are you going back down? I was like, Yeah, why would I not? I've had a blast every time I've come down, and obviously it helps to play well but I still want to come here. I think it's a great country and I like to travel, I like to see the world.

I mean, the guy who helped out the most was a teammate of mine named Jackson Stuckey. He's actually having his buck's day in Sydney in two weeks, or next week, and I'm going to go to that so that should be entertaining to say the least. So I've never done that. So just meeting him in college and the whole experience of how I met my caddie. He caddies for me full time, I have a close -- I'll forever be indebted to this tournament, for sure.

Q. Jackson is an Aussie?

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah, he's from Canberra. We went to school for two years together at East Carolina and he's getting married the 17th. Obviously I've been out of the country long enough so I'm kind of ready to go back home, but I've been the most excited about this tournament. I've never really been able to defend a tournament yet and to have that opportunity is, I think that's what we play for.

Q. Is there something about the course that suits your eye? Different players come through and scratch their heads or don't like it. Did you have a good positive attitude right from the start and the 18th hasn't bothered you? What do you like about the course?

HAROLD VARNER III: Did you say the 18th? The only problem being the (inaudible.) I don't know, I've played so well, I've been driving it really well here. Every time I've come I've

driven it so well and you get so many more opportunities, and if I get more opportunities, I like my chances a lot.

Q. I'm going to ask you a Tiger Woods question. He's coming back this week.

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah, crazy. I think he's going to play well. I heard he's hitting it far. I mean, it's Tiger Woods, you can never say "I think he's going to play like crap" just because it's Tiger. I think he's going to play really well.

I think it's going to help that a lot of people aren't going to be out there because I think media's going to criticize only his bad shots. I feel like every shot's just magnified. Where if I hit a bad shot they'd be like, Oh, you hit a bad shot. Who cares. But you're going to be like -- when I hit a good one, you're going to be like, Dude, do you remember that shot?

But with Tiger it's going to be, Do you remember how bad he hit that, can you believe Tiger hit that? That's just unfortunate for him.

I was actually talking to Mike about that, how like every shot's like -- it's not life or death but you're definitely -- it's going to replay on TV all day. Like if I hit a bad shot, it's never going to be on SportsCenter top-10 or not top-10. If Tiger hits a bad shot, it's probably going to make SportsCenter's top-10, you know?

Like it's just that the media is good, but for him the media, I think it can be a little too harsh. It's surprising I haven't heard anyone say that. He's had the media around him a long time, but think about how the media's like, it's changed his life. You know, like if some people go through divorce and cheat or whatever they did, it's always under the rug. His got played out in front of the whole world and I think that makes it -- I mean, I wouldn't wish that upon anyone. Like if I had a divorce, I'd be like, all right, back off.

But I would like to see him play well. I would like to see him play a whole season and play very well.

Q. How do you think he'll do? (No microphone.)

HAROLD VARNER III: How many people? He moves the needle. You can sit here and say that golf's like -- Aussie golf's in a good spot, there's a lot of top-name players, but I think every sport is a lot better when there's one dominant player. I've always thought that because you need someone, you know, that moves the needle and he does.

I mean, when he signed up for Napa two years and didn't play, the amount of people that were just there. Obviously they left once he didn't play, but the fact that just him signing up, how that changed, I thought that was -- I couldn't believe it.

I just can't wait to play -- I've only played one tournament with him and that was Torrey Pines this year, but I couldn't crack an egg so it didn't matter. I just wanted to play well so I have a

chance to beat him so I can say, oh, I went toe to toe with Tiger. I think that would be the coolest thing in the world, like that's what I grew up thinking about. Even though he was the best, I was like, man, dude, I went neck and neck with Tiger and hopefully I beat him because I would never forget that.

Q. Have you met him?

HAROLD VARNER III: One time at his tournament, so two years ago at Congressional. I had all these snacks in my hand and I was pointed this way and he walked up kind of behind me and I turned around. He's like, Hi, I'm Tiger. I was like, I know, I'm Harold. I know who you are, man.

So yeah, that was the only time. We haven't crossed paths again, but I'm sure we will eventually.

MODERATOR: Harold, thank you so much for joining us and we wish you best of luck with your title defense.

HAROLD VARNER III: Awesome, thanks for having me.