

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW
November 18, 2017



AUSTIN COOK (-18)

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AMANDA HERRINGTON: We would like to welcome Austin Cook, our 54-hole leader here at the RSM Classic after three rounds. Austin, only one bogey after three rounds so far, really impressive stuff. What's going right for you this week?

AUSTIN COOK: A lot of stuff, mostly the putting. I guess everything, but putting is key right now. Been able to make a lot of clutch putts for the pars to save no bogeys. Hitting the ball pretty much where we're looking and giving ourselves good opportunities on every hole.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Previously on the PGA TOUR back at the Shell Houston Open you were in contention over the weekend. What do you think's changed about where you were then and now?

AUSTIN COOK: Mostly mentally. Back then my game was good as well, but mentally I've grown a lot and matured a lot and been able to kind of just let small things on the golf course roll off my shoulder instead of getting tied up in one little small mistake. So I think maturity.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: And going into tomorrow you've got two previous winners here in the top-5 who will be chasing you tomorrow. What's your mentality tonight?

AUSTIN COOK: Just go home. I've got my parents here and my in-laws are both here as well as my wife. Go home and just have a good home-cooked meal and just kind of enjoy the time and embrace the moment.

Q. Austin, good playing so far.

AUSTIN COOK: Thank you.

Q. I'm going through some numbers. Since they started the Web.com Finals system in the last three years, five guys have won in the fall half coming off the Web.com Finals and Ryan's done it this year already, and in addition to you, I've got seven other guys in the top 13 who got their card through the Web.com Finals or the regular season Money List.

I'm wondering what you think this says for in the last few years, I guess, the readiness or the ability of you guys to come in here right off the bat in the fall events and contend and win?

AUSTIN COOK: Yeah, I think the Web.com has done a really good job of kind of getting the field stronger and the purses are getting higher so people are wanting to play in them.

Playing in the Finals, bringing the guys down from the PGA TOUR as well as the top 75 from the Web.com, it's the guys playing out here week in and week out, so the competition's the same. And I think they're doing a really good job of just kind of making the Web.com -- they call it the Path to the PGA TOUR and they're doing a really good job of that. I know the new commissioner and the new president, they're doing -- from what I've seen and hearing, I think the Web.com is only going to grow and every guy that comes off of that tour is going to be even more capable and ready to win out here.

Q. One followup, how are you prepared personally? I know you had a couple chances. How did that experience prepare you for coming on the PGA TOUR and doing what you've been doing this week so quickly?

AUSTIN COOK: Like I say, the competition, it's the same guys. The guys out there playing, 75 percent of them are able to win out there as well, so the competition is the same. I think with an extra year on the Web this past year, I really grew mentally and with my game, just kind of more confidence. I was able to put myself in contention on the Web.com more this year than I have in the past. I think I've just, you know, learned from experiences on the Web to help me grow out here.

Q. Austin, personally, what do you see is the biggest challenge of a Sunday and trying to close it out?

AUSTIN COOK: Holding back the nerves probably. I know today it was a lot of deep breaths, a lot of trying to calm the nerves, just stay in the moment, let the anxiety go away. I think even tomorrow it will be a little bit higher on Sunday, so just trying to stay in the moment and just not really think about the possibility of what could happen.

Q. And secondly, just a couple key moments on the back nine, you made your bogey but answered it right away with a birdie. How big was that, and then how big was it to get the up-and-down on the final hole just to keep momentum in your favor?

AUSTIN COOK: Yeah, definitely bouncing back from any bogey with a birdie is nice and helps get the number right back. Being my only bogey of the week so far, it was really nice to be able to get that back on the next hole. On 18, going into tomorrow with a three-shot lead instead of a two-shot lead I think is crucial. It's a little bit more of a buffer, but I don't want to think of it that way, I guess. It was just nice to get a hard up-and-down. It was kind of up and over a hill, in the grain, down grain, just being able to get that up and down and going into tomorrow with a three-shot lead just kind of helps my confidence.

Q. How many times have you played this course in the SEC Championship?

AUSTIN COOK: I was here all four years, so I think it's three rounds, and then -- or the old format, three rounds and a practice round, so 16.

Q. The course setup is probably a little more difficult for a Tour event, but how is that

experience helping you this week so far?

AUSTIN COOK: Just being able to see the golf course and play it multiple times. I think it really does help the more rounds you get on a track, the more confident you are and comfortable you are on the golf course. It's playing a little different this week than it does in May or whenever SECs are. It's a little cooler but the grass isn't quite the same. We've got some overseed this week, but I just think that being able to play it as many times as I have just really helped me out.

Q. Do you remember what your best finish was?

AUSTIN COOK: No.

Q. The other thing is you played with a veteran in Brian Gay, he's been around for a long time, and tomorrow you're going to play with Chris Kirk, who's not only won on the PGA TOUR but he's won here. When you play with guys like that, I know you're wrapped up in your own game, but do you ever observe anything of what they do, how they carry themselves? Does it make you any more or less apprehensive about your day playing with guys who have proven they can do it out here?

AUSTIN COOK: It's nice playing with veterans, whether it's in the situation I am tomorrow or if you're in the last -- first group off in the day. You can always learn from somebody who's been out here for a long time. But as far as with Chris Kirk winning here and everything, I'm excited for the challenge tomorrow. I hope that would be me the next person that everybody's saying that about, but I'm just excited to be out there and play against him and go head to head against him but also the rest of the field.

Q. When you think about how equipped you are today to win and get it done tomorrow, how much different is that from when you had the opportunity at Shell? Is it night and day or is it just small things?

AUSTIN COOK: I think it's just small things. I think mostly it's just mentally right now for me. I'm a little more comfortable in this situation than I was at the Shell. I think overall my game is just a notch better right now than it was then as well, a little more confident. And my brother was on the bag then and he did a great job, but I think it says something about having a veteran who's been out here and been in the moment. He's won four times with Brian Gay and once with Vijay on the Champions, so I think him being out here and just helping me stay in the moment, I think that will help out a lot.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Austin, thank you for your time, enjoy the rest of your evening and good luck tomorrow.

AUSTIN COOK: Thank you.