

**FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW**  
**March 4, 2018**

**PHIL MICKELSON ( -16, won playoff)**



**MICHAEL BALIKER:** It's a pleasure to welcome Phil Mickelson to our interview room, our 2018 World Golf Championships-Mexico Championship winner. Phil, your 43rd PGA TOUR victory, third World Golf Championships victory. Just describe the emotion of this day for us.

**PHIL MICKELSON:** This is a very meaningful win. I can't really put it into words given the tough times over the last four years and the struggle to get back here and knowing that I was able to compete at this level but not doing it and the frustration that that led to. To finally break through and to have this validation means a lot to me. I'm very appreciative of the people that have supported me through the tough times.

Coach Loy there has been through thick and thin with me. Having a support system with Amy and the kids, and Callaway Golf, who's been with me through tough times, and Andrew Getson has helped get my swing back and my game back to where I wanted it to be. And to share this moment with my brother Tim on the bag, all this has just really meant a lot given the tough times the last four years. I'm very optimistic and believe that this is just a steppingstone of some more good things to come. I feel like I'm starting to play some of my best golf again.

**Q. You spoke with a lot of confidence even at Pebble Beach about good things in store for you this year, but after a year like last year and four-plus years, were there any doubts that crept into your head about a moment like this again?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Sure, there's always doubts, but I'm a pretty optimistic guy and I get past that. You need to have some validation, and I knew that it was going to happen soon. The last three weeks I've played well, but I was starting four, five back on Sunday. To put myself in a little bit better position this week, I knew it was going to happen soon. I didn't know if it would be this week, I didn't know if it would be today, but I had confidence it was going to happen, and it means a lot to me to do it now, especially before Augusta. As I said earlier, I needed to get a win before Augusta so I wasn't trying to win for the first time in four and a half, five years at that event. This certainly boosts my confidence and gives me a lot of encouragement on the things I've been working on.

**Q. What specifically gave you confidence?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Just the way I've been playing. I've been able to see the difference in the way I've been playing. I've had a lot less stress throughout the rounds, a lot fewer mistakes, and just overall improvement in ball-striking and chipping and putting and all those areas. I feel really good about my game, or I had coming into this week. I believe it's going to continue to get better each week, too. I don't think that this is the apex or the peak, I think

I'm going to continue to get better, I think I'm working on the right things. I knew it was going to happen, but having validation means a lot.

**Q. You've been saying for quite a while that you were close. Did frustration ever become an issue that you weren't getting there?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Well, over the last four and a half years I've been extremely frustrated knowing that I've been able to play at this level and I haven't been doing it. Knowing that I'm able to hit shots and I haven't been doing it, hitting some of the crazy shots that I've hit, that's led to a source of frustration. But knowing where my game was at heading into this year and believing in the fact that the results would come and then being patient and letting it happen, all of that has been an important part.

**Q. Phil, being back in this position, how was it on at 47-year-old nerves?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Well, I love -- I love that nervous feeling that you get when you're in contention, I just haven't felt it that often. I was certainly nervous heading into today's round, the pre-round warmup, all that stuff. That's all part of it, though. That's what's exciting and that's what's so fun and that's what I've missed. I've truly missed that nervous feeling coming into a Sunday. I've been starting to feel it a little bit lately, but to really be in the last group and see what the guys are doing and know what the final score is and know what I have to do, that's a great feeling to have. It's just been too long.

**Q. Two questions, very quick questions. The first one, it looks like you already had a bond with Mexico and we will have you here a lot of years I expect. So the other one is you're getting closer than ever to the Ryder Cup. What does it mean to you?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Well, first of all, this week has meant a lot to me. I loved the reception coming to Mexico City last year. I love the way the people are supporting the best players in the world in this golf tournament. It's been incredible. And Grupo Salinas, to bring this tournament here, we're very appreciative of that because this broadens the scope of the game of golf. To see how much support at this tournament by the people here has meant a lot.

And with the Ryder Cup coming up, certainly I've made it known that one of my big goals is for me to be a part of a winning team in Europe. It hasn't happened in my career. It would mean a tremendous amount to me to have us succeed over on European soil. I certainly respect and know how good the European side is. I've played a lot of golf with Jon Rahm and he is an incredible talent as is McIlroy and Sergio and all the great players on the European side. If we were able to break through and win, I think it would be a real special moment of my career that I would cherish forever. But we've got a lot of work to do to get there, and I've got a lot of work to do to get on the team but I have a little less now.

**Q. Phil, you mentioned the Presidents Cup, Ryder Cup. You've played some terrific golf in the last two of those where you've had -- piled up the wins. Where was the**

**disconnect between playing that well in those events and the individual events?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** So there's been a lot of things that have kind of taken -- that have led to me playing less than my best, and certainly mental focus day in and day out has been a factor as well as technical aspects. So I've been able -- I've been inconsistent because of some technical flaws in the past four years and I feel as though those are in the past where I will play consistently well each week with an occasional off week as opposed to playing poorly every week with an occasional on week.

**Q. You played with the youngest player in the tournament. I mean, along those strategy lines, what did you do? And also you'll be playing with the youngest player and probably the youngest player in the Masters, Joaquin Niemann, so a little comparison of the strategy, what do you use?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I didn't really think much of it, I just viewed him as a competitor. I saw how well he struck the golf ball. He hit a beautiful tee shot on 1, you can tell he can really play. I saw some of the putts, some of the highlights with the putter. I know he's a very talented player and I believe he's leading the Order of Merit on the European Tour, so I know what a great player Mr. Sharma is. I probably shouldn't say that, he's 26 years younger than me.

But I just view it as a great opportunity for me to compete against these great young players, whether it's today or whether it's watching Justin Thomas shoot 16 under on the weekend and knowing how good Dustin Johnson and Jordan Spieth and Jon Rahm and McIlroy and all these guys are. For me to be able to compete against them is a challenge that I cherish and it's nice to have some success.

**Q. Two things, on the 11th, your shot from -- could you see the ball when you struck it from the bushes?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** The hole for my third shot?

**Q. Yeah, actually the ball.**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I could see the ball, yeah.

**Q. Did it hit a tree or a person?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I hit that shot right at the pin and it hit a tree and shot 50 yards dead right into the bushes. If it hit a person, it would have really taken them out.

**Q. I'm sorry, I'm talking about the third shot.**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Oh, the third shot. Oh, a bunch of people, yeah, as it was going back to the fairway. But I didn't know exactly what line it was and I couldn't really see to have

everybody back up and so they didn't quite back up enough and it hit somebody, prevented it from getting to the fairway.

**Q. Secondly, what kind of awareness did you have on the course -- you might have been too far away for JT's hole-out. Did you hear anything? Did you have any reaction when you saw the next board?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I didn't know that he holed out, I just saw that he finished at 16 under when I was playing the 15th hole and that meant that I needed to birdie two to get even with him.

It actually brought me back to the '04 Masters when I was one back with three to go against Ernie. I figured if I birdied 15, which was a driver, 6-iron today, I'll be one back with three to go and need to make two coming in. That putt on 16 today was a huge putt for me because it got me back to his score, but Tyrrell Hatton was the same score also, so you just don't know what the final outcome is going to be.

**Q. Congratulations. After your win four years after the last one, how much important is this trophy for the upcoming U.S. Open and the only major you are missing?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Well, certainly the U.S. Open is always on my mind, but it's not something I'll think about until after the Masters. It's important I think to have a win in a tournament, especially a big tournament like a World Golf Championship before the majors because you don't want to feel that type of pressure coming down the stretch of a major having not won in a while. You want to remember what it feels like to win. Making those putts on 16 and hitting some of the putts I hit on 17, even though they didn't go in, those are shots that I'll look back on and build momentum heading for the big majors and events. So this is an important week.

**Q. Phil, congratulations. Going back to the 11th hole, after you hit that ball that hit some people, your face you could see were a little upset after that. What changed, what aspect -- how did you do to maintain the calm and keep going throughout the holes because after that obviously came --**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Yes. Well, I guess fortunately I'm used to hitting a lot of people, so it didn't surprise me. It's just kind of part of the game. Unfortunately, this was a bad bounce for me as opposed to a good one. I almost made par there, I had about an eight-, 10-footer for par. Had I made a par, that would have been a mini victory for me. But I gave one back with a bogey there, knew I had some work to do coming down the stretch.

**Q. Phil, first victory with Tim on the bag. Can you just give your thoughts on that and how special it is?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Yeah, that means a lot to me. I was hoping and wanting for us to share these moments. He was awesome. He said just the right things coming down the

stretch. He noticed I was walking a little fast, he said slow down on 15. That three-footer on 18, he told me to -- we have this little thing where he just says just connect with the hole, just like when we go shooting. He just knew how to resonate, get the best out of me and calm me down in those tough situations coming down the stretch. This is a moment that I think we're going to look back on and appreciate and cherish together.

**Q. Congratulations. Does it make it more special for you that you won with the pressure with the playoff, such a close score?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I was hoping not to have a playoff, I was hoping to win outright, but I'll take it any way that I can. I knew that with Justin Thomas at 16 under, I would have been appreciative of a playoff at that time being two shots back. So I was fortunate to get into the playoff.

**Q. Phil, do you feel that the streak, the winless streak was to some degree just unlucky because you would have won every British Open but something like one or two against Stenson. Did you feel like you had to keep knocking on the door and eventually right place, right time?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I think that's a part of it, I do. I just had a couple of bad breaks, if you will, where I played at a level that was good enough to win. But now I'm starting to play at a level consistently that's good enough to win and that's what's fun, that's what's exciting. I feel like entering each tournament I'm going to have a good opportunity for the weekend and that makes each event fun. It's something to look forward to, whereas the last four years I had those sporadic weeks where I played great but I wasn't playing at that level every week. That's what the goal has been and I'm starting to do that. I still have a lot of work to do but the last month it's been evident that I'm getting there.

**Q. Phil, you're such an optimistic guy but had you ever allowed yourself to think what if I got my last one already?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** No, I knew that that wasn't going to be my last one, no. And this isn't either.

**Q. Could you pinpoint maybe the lowest point you felt during your winless streak? The lowest point?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Can I pinpoint it?

**Q. At Troon?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** That wasn't the lowest point because I was playing really good golf. That was encouraging. I don't know exactly what the lowest point was, but the frustration builds when you know you can play at a certain level and you know that you're able to win and compete and you're not doing it, you're not achieving what you know you can. That

level of frustration builds. It's not been easy getting out of it, but having a little taste of success like this makes it worthwhile.

**Q. People are almost certain to mention 47 years old at some point early on in talking about you today. Do you feel that way?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I don't, I don't feel that age. I mean, I like it. It's cool that -- because not many people at this age are able to play at that level, but I don't feel that age. My body feels great. My game's -- I'm starting to play some of my best golf. I'm actually hitting some shots better than I ever have in my career, I'm starting to putt better than I ever have in my career, and I'm actually starting to drive it better than I ever have in my career, which is not great but it's average and that's all I need.

**Q. Do you feel you play the same way you did when you were in college, your approach to the game?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Probably, yeah, probably, although I make -- I actually have a different philosophy. I used to be aggressive, aggressive, aggressive, and now my thought is I will be more conservative on this current shot so that I can be more aggressive with my next shot. That's helped me make some better decisions.

For example, it didn't show today on 11 but on the tee I hit a hybrid off the tee so I could get there and I hit another hybrid at the green. It was right at the pin; unfortunately there's a big tree in the way and it hit and kicked it into more trees. And that stuff happens, but the point was I was able to be more aggressive with my second as opposed to, if I try to hit driver and put it in a bad spot, now I'm playing for 5 or 6.

**Q. You're seven away from 50 PGA TOUR wins. Do you think you can get there?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** Oh, I will, I'll get there.

**Q. When?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** I don't know. Seven more wins and I'll be there. I don't have the month or the time, but I will get there.

**Q. Do you see the biggest challenge getting there your own game or the youth that's coming up, what you saw today with Justin?**

**PHIL MICKELSON:** No, my own game. I know how great the young players are, I appreciate their skill level. I also know the level I'm able to play and I'll get there.

**MICHAEL BALIKER:** Phil. Congratulations.