

**HAROLD VARNER III**

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**AMANDA HERRINGTON:** I would like to welcome in Harold Varner, III, to the interview room. Harold, you're from the area. How does it feel to be back here this week?

**HAROLD VARNER III:** It feels good, just ready to get the week going. I feel like I've been here a long time. Obviously missed the cut last week, so just ready to get going.

**Q. Talk about the Green Mile, 16, 17, 18, your approach to those holes, and do you do anything during your practice rounds to get ready for that once competition starts?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** Just those three holes? Nothing different. The craziest thing about 16 is if it gets real firm, it can obviously go through on the left down that hill, but nothing crazy. It's just three really good holes. If you hit good shots, you'll be fine. So nothing different than I usually do on tougher holes anywhere else.

**Q. You've obviously played your college golf at ECU. What's it like to come back to the state that you played your college golf in and to see the support from Pirate Nation out there?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** It's obviously super exciting to have them out there, but I know they're getting really wild sometimes. Hopefully on Sunday I'll be late and I like that. I kind of feed off that. If it was the other way around, I would be out here as well yelling something crazy.

**Q. You and the other guys make the game look pretty easy, but it's not as we know. What do you find most difficult about it, what makes the game so tough?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** At this level?

**Q. Anywhere, but yes.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I think golf in general, I just think it's hard to get out of a slump sometimes, just finding your way, figuring it out. But I think out here it's just managing your time. When you're a kid and playing bad, you could spend all day figuring it out. Now you've got to do the same thing but also manage the other stuff on the side. I'm not really good at that. It gets tough sometimes. But when you're playing good, it's easy to manage time, so let's just start playing good.

**Q. Can you assess your season so far, the highs and lows and where you are as far as the progress that I'm sure you're looking at?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I think I've played poorly, but for certain reasons. I think obviously the swing wasn't great, but there's a lot of things that made that not great. I think I'm moving in the right direction.

I don't know, I kind of put it in the past, but since you brought it up, I'm just trying not to think about it. Just things that happen, you just leave it there. I think I have a great opportunity this week. I mean, I love this place. I played well here two years ago. Just going to feed off of that. I'm driving it well, putting it well, I think I have a good attitude. I mean, I don't really know what more I need.

**Q. What's the key to playing this golf course?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I think you have to drive it well. I think that sets up everything because as soon as you get in the rough trying to hit it into these greens, it's just no good.

**Q. Two things. One, when you talked a minute ago about, quote, in a slump, Justin Thomas was up here earlier and he was talking about how he thought there was a very slim difference, probably a much more slim difference than fans appreciate between playing well versus results. He said you can be playing well, walk off the course and feel good about the way you hit the ball without necessarily having the results you want.**

**I wondered if you can talk a little about how thin that line is. And also because you're from here, I was curious, if we can get a little background about you being a Jordan Brand guy.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I think you have to ask the second question again because I didn't hear the end of it. The first part, I totally agree. The part where you're playing really well and not getting the results to getting the results is all attitude, all things that you can control. I think the best in the world take care of the things they can control, putting in the time because something good's going to happen. You just have to trust it because as soon as you give up on it, like oh, this isn't going the way I want it to go, I think that's when you get in a bad spot. I think if you can control your attitude, it will carry you over for the time that you're not clicking.

**Q. I was just curious obviously with the connection to you being here and also with Michael owning the Hornets, I was just curious what the connection is to Jordan Brand, how that came about.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** Fred Whitfield kind of did the whole thing. I played in his Hooptee event, I guess this would have been five years ago. He just kept up with me and I guess those two talked and they did their part. He asked me did I want to be in the brand and I was like, this is a no brainer.

**Q. Michael has done that a couple of times, I mean, with sort of natural organic relationships around here. Denny Hamlin's car, Jordan Brand's a minor sponsor of that and that literally just evolved from him sitting courtside and getting to know Michael and Michael had an interest in it. I'm just wondering about your relationship with Fred and how that went from there to here then.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** A guy named Andy Warlick, who's a member at Gastonia Country Club, I played with him at Hooptee. This would have been my first year out of school and I met Fred and Fred was like, You can't play in Hooptee anymore.

We just kept it touch. He's like, let me know if you ever want to go for a game. Obviously I was home for Christmas and I was like, Can I get some tickets, and me and my boys went to the game. It was unbelievable, I saw LeBron courtside.

And we just kept in touch, just nothing crazy. Whenever I was home, hey, can I come see a game? Then he would come out to this tournament and Greensboro and watch me play and I would say hello there. I guess last summer I spoke to the kids for his foundation, which is obviously here. About six month later he's like, hey, my boss is going to be texting you soon, and just that's pretty cool, I think.

**Q. You seem like a guy that doesn't mind talking.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** Nope.

**Q. Does that continue inside the ropes, and how does that play out? Do you have to know who you're playing against?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** The only problem I have inside the ropes is my language, or how I'm playing. I think if I'm playing well, I'm talking to everyone. I think you should acknowledge people, especially when you don't have anything else to do. We're out there for five hours so I think you should do that. Yeah, I talk a lot, for sure.

**Q. I mean what topics come up? Is it sports, is it family, just whatever, what is it with you?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** No. Some of it can't be told right here, but yeah, everything. We name it, we talk about it. Literally everything. Like whatever you talk about at work, I guarantee we talk about inside the ropes 100 percent.

**Q. Being from Gastonia, talk a little bit about your upbringing as well as kind of the influence that Tiger Woods had on your career as well.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** Nice, good question. Being from Gastonia, it's my favorite place in the world. That's a little biased, but yeah, I think it takes a village to raise a kid and that place has done me well so I'm super proud to be from there.

For Tiger Woods, the only thing I remember from this tournament would be coming to this tournament and him not signing my hat, so that kind of -- that stinks. But we've obviously crossed paths a few times. We've texted, pretty funny. Yeah, he's the best player I ever saw, so why would I not look up to the best player? I mean, even though he's black. I mean, I get he's black, but if he was green, I'd be like, How about Tiger, dude? That's just how I was raised, I don't know. But he's really good.

**Q. If you were putting together a composite player, best driver and iron player, different parts of the game, can you tell me some of the players that you really admire, what they're able to do?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I've played with Steve Stricker, I think he putts it unbelievable. I think Paul Casey chips it unbelievable. I've never played with Tiger, so I don't think I would want to drive it like him based off the TV. When I'm driving it well, I would want to drive it like me. That's just being honest. I've never played with Justin in a tournament.

Actually, I don't know. There's tons of guys you would want to model your game after, but it's just all about being hot at the right time. When those guys are doing that well during majors, that's when they win them.

That's a good question, I never really thought about it. It's weird how you look at it. You're like, I drive it really well, I hit it really well, but when you do something not as well, immediately two or three people come to mind about things you don't do well because you're always kind of looking at that trying to learn something. I played a good bit with Paul Casey and I think how close chips it in difficult spots is pretty good.

**Q. I was curious if you could talk about this course, anything you find particularly distinctive about the way Quail Hollow plays and also how much or little difference you think there will be the way the course is set up this week relative to the PGA as far as the bermuda versus the overseed and anything else that is particularly distinctive about this course.**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I didn't play the PGA here, but I've played a lot of golf courses with bermuda and rye and I think it's a huge difference. Anytime you can get the ball not running as fast and then just hard to chip out of bermuda, that very week just made it so hard because it's so soft, you know, on the fairways and then the greens are so firm, it's like you can't run it up. I heard a few things about that. I don't really know, I didn't watch much of the PGA, but I think when it's on rye, it's a huge difference.

**Q. Is there anything distinctive about this course that you think, boy, I need to be really good at this this week on this course?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** I just think you've got to -- you've got to hit it well. You've got to drive it well and you've got to hit it well. Obviously it's where you hit your bad shots. Like if

you hit a bad shot on 17, you know it's double. If you hit a bad shot on 15, you can still make par. It comes down to when you hit those bad shots. I like it, though. It's demanding. There's birdies out there, all the par 5s are good. It's in such good shape. When it hits the ground, it's not like it's spinning back and it's playing long, it's so good right now.

**Q. Being from North Carolina, how special would it be to have a good weekend and be in contention some Sunday if you were able to?**

**HAROLD VARNER III:** That would be awesome. Can't really put a word on it, but I like my chances a lot.

**AMANDA HERRINGTON:** I would like to thank you for your time and good luck this week.

**HAROLD VARNER III:** Awesome. Thanks for having me.