

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
June 26, 2018



DENNY McCARTHY

MARK WILLIAMS: Would like to welcome Denny McCarthy to the interview room at the Quicken Loans National 2018.

Denny, this is probably as close as it gets for a home game for you; you're a native of Takoma Park, you grew up this in area, you went to school at the University of Virginia. I guess the question is, how many times have you played this golf course? This is your first start at the Quicken Loans National.

DENNY McCARTHY: Yeah, obviously great to be here. This is a tournament that I've wanted to play in for a long time now and obviously getting the opportunity to this week, so I'm really excited.

I haven't played this golf course too much over the years, but over the last month and a half or so I made my way back from Florida and the off weeks I've spent some time here practicing and playing and getting most of my preparation done.

So really excited, looking forward to a good week. The course is in great shape, probably some of the best bent turf I've ever hit off of. It's really, really pure. So should be a really good week, I'm looking forward to it.

MARK WILLIAMS: This is your first year on the PGA Tour after graduating from the Web.com Tour. Looked like you had a fairly rough start to the season, first few events, missing a few cuts early, but you seemed to turn it around at the Corales Puntacana Resort event, you finished 4th there, and ever since then it looks like you've missed one cut. So what's been the key in your game to turn the game around?

DENNY McCARTHY: You know, I think just getting comfortable out here. It's a new golf course every week for me. Obviously this week's an exception. It's nice playing a course that I know, but every week it's a new difficult challenge to learn the golf course every week. It's my first time playing every golf course, so that's certainly been a learning curve, that's certainly been a step in the learning process. It's kind of one of the things you kind of -- the hump you need to get over as a rookie, learning the golf courses.

I did get off to a slow start, especially in the fall. You get your Tour card and then you play those five events. It was just kind of a quick turnaround and I didn't play those events well. There wasn't much of a break in there, I was kind of exhausted towards the end of the year, but everyone had to do it.

Then yeah, like you said, Corales Puntacana was a really big event for me to kind of get things going in the right direction. I've really worked hard on some of the things that I noticed as weaknesses, particularly driving the ball, driving accuracy and iron play. I've really, really worked hard on those in the offseason and the last couple months and I've really started to see that pay off in the last couple months. So really like where my game is right now, trending in a really good direction for this closing stretch of the summer and I'm excited.

Q. Having grown up here, did you come to this event as a kid, and if so, how often, and did you ever think, you know, one of these days I might be playing in it as a professional?

DENNY McCARTHY: I came out -- there was one time, I vaguely remember my uncle actually caddied for Mark Carnevale and I think the tournament was here. It might have been the Kemper Booz Allen, I don't know which one it was at that time, but my uncle Mike was caddying for Mark Carnevale. I remember coming out here as a little kid watching.

And then I don't really remember, but the U.S. Open that Ernie won at Congressional, my dad always tells me I was there but I don't really remember that obviously.

Q. You've said you've played this course before. How are you planning on playing that short par 4 14th hole this week and what are you doing to prepare for it?

DENNY McCARTHY: I plan on going for it every day. I think almost everyone in the field will plan on going for it every day. It's only 285 to the front edge from all the way back. You know, most guys, I mean even the longer hitters, you might be seeing guys hitting driving irons and 3-woods and stuff. For me it sets up for a nice little comfortable cut driver for me depending on the wind. If there's no wind, it's a comfortable cut driver. Downwind, it might be 3-wood. Into the wind, you might need to give it a little bigger hit with a driver. It's a really interesting hole. I think you'll see a lot of low scores there this week. If you hit it in the wrong spot, you can see some high numbers there also, so I think it's a good little short hole.

Q. Do you have a lot of family and friends coming out this week to watch?

DENNY McCARTHY: I do, I do, I have a lot of family and friends. So we as players, we get a certain number of tickets online and I registered this morning, I was like, I think I'm going to need a lot more. I'm probably going to need to start asking other players if they're going to use all their tickets, too, because I'm going to need a lot. I'm kind of getting them and then I'm just going to give them to my brother and my dad and I'm going to let them dish them out to whoever they want to give them to. Yeah, there should be a good crowd for me this week, I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Obviously a busy Tour schedule, but how much time do you get to spend back in the DC area where you kind of grew up, and having gone to Georgetown Prep, how often do you keep in touch with guys you went to school with, because I know guys

who went to ISC, they're really tight?

DENNY McCARTHY: Yeah, I keep in touch with my friends a good amount. When I come back home I try to get together as much as possible, but at the same time I'm also just trying to relax and, you know, prepare for the next week mentally and stuff, all that. I don't get to spend too much time here, not as much as I would like. I'm based out of Florida throughout the winter, most of the year. I kind of make my way up north the end of May, early June. So I'm here every now and then when the off week allows it, but for the most part I'm living out of my suitcase for the summer.

Q. Denny, I know you started playing majors in 2015, I think your first cut that you made was the U.S. Open and that was just three short years ago but you're a very young man. Since then, getting through the Web.com Tour, now here as a rookie, what is the part of your game that has most improved in those three years?

DENNY McCARTHY: My driving has really improved. The way I'm swinging at the driver right now is really, really nice. I used to be a very -- I used to have good weeks driving the ball, but it was very inconsistent week to week. I think this year I've seen dramatic improvements week in and week out. My driving has been there, it's one of the better parts of my game now.

I'm not the longest guy out here, I'm not the shortest guy out here, I would say I'm slightly above average length, but my accuracy's gotten a lot better and that's given me a lot more chances out of the fairway. And then I would say the strength of my game is putting. So the more looks you can get out of the fairway gives you more looks on the greens and that plays into my strengths. It all kind of feeds, driving the ball leads to my ability to really do well on the greens.

Q. Two years ago Billy Hurley III this tournament, a Navy guy, somebody who lives in Annapolis now. Last year when Kyle Stanley won, he said he's had some family who lives or is from or based in Bethesda. Does knowing that help you at all this week to know maybe there's some Maryland or some local luck?

DENNY McCARTHY: I think so, yeah. I would like to think so. Especially with this being the last year here, I would love to make the most of it.

At the same time, I need to -- it's going to be -- there's going to be some excitement out there on Thursday and Friday, for sure, having a bunch of people out there. I just need to make sure I stay committed to my game plan and what I'm trying to do out there and not think too far ahead. You know, you can't win the golf tournament in the first day or two, but you can lose it, for sure. Just got to go out there with a steady game plan and commit to that and keep my head down and just trust the process.

Q. Have you meet either Billy Hurley III or Tiger Woods this week or earlier this season?

DENNY McCARTHY: I met Tiger at a Nike dinner a couple years ago at the Honda Classic. It was actually my first year on the Web and there was a Nike dinner at his restaurant down in Jupiter, my first year living down there. Got to meet him, it was a great experience. I also play out at Medalist Golf Club down in Florida and that's where Tiger's a member, so I've seen him out there a good bit.

I know Billy pretty well. Obviously me and Billy played a good amount at Woodmont together. It's where the sectional U.S. Open qualifier was. I've played in it three years now, three of the last four years, and we always run into each other there. He's gotten in the two years I've gotten in. This year we both didn't get through. So I guess that sectional qualifier is a me and Billy Hurley thing, when he gets in, I get in.

Q. Speaking of Tiger Woods, other guys here have said that just him being around and his involvement, his foundation's involvement with this tournament from the start has made it a sort of tournament that a lot of people want to put on their schedule. Is that something you would agree with at all? Is it more prestigious in that way?

DENNY McCARTHY: Yeah, for sure. Anytime Tiger's name is in the field and his foundation is tied to it, I think that's going to draw a lot of people to the field.

I think this D.C. area's a great venue, too. TPC Potomac is a really great test of golf. I think just a combination of a couple of things, Tiger's name, the venue, the golf course is definitely going to bring a good crowd of guys here.

MARK WILLIAMS: You mentioned just a little earlier in this interview improvements in your game and identifying deficiencies. How much do you rely on the Shotlink data that's provided to allow you to make those improvements or identify those areas?

DENNY McCARTHY: Yeah, I definitely look at it pretty heavily. My brother's an accountant and he's a numbers guy, so he kind of looks at that, too. I've given him some access to it so he can look at it and he emails me spreadsheets and stuff not after every week, but every couple weeks just kind of getting a gauge of where I need to improve, where I have improved, what I need to keep working on, stuff like that. That's kind of gone along with driving.

Driving's really come a long way for me. Iron play was a weakness and that's starting to become a really solid part of my game. So I've used it to help me get better in all aspects of my game. It's a really great tool to have. I know a lot of guys, a lot of other guys on Tour use it. It's just a great resource to have to get your game better.

MARK WILLIAMS: Finally, before we let you go, last week you holed a pretty substantial putt on the last hole, on the 36th hole basically to make the cut on the number and get to play the weekend. How does that compare when you're on the cut line to finishing fourth in a tournament, how satisfying is it to advance to the weekend in that situation?

DENNY McCARTHY: It was nice, it was just really nice because I felt I was playing a lot better than the result was showing. I felt like the golf course really toughened up that Friday afternoon. The morning there wasn't much wind and you were seeing guys going low and it was soft, and then I got out there Friday afternoon and it started gusting and greens were firming up and I was just like, man, this golf course is not easy right now and I was playing great. I was playing well enough to shoot 4, 5 under that round. I gave myself a lot of really good looks and I just couldn't make anything.

I don't think I've ever fist pumped to make the cut, it was just kind of an emotion that just kind of poured out of me. It was just the kind of day it was. I just grinded and fought all day and never gave up, and there you go, that's kind of what you get. I holed a putt on the last hole, just rewarded myself for not giving up.

Yeah, that can happen out there. You can turn around on Saturday, you can play a great round, great round on Sunday and that putt to make the cut can turn into a great week. So you never know what can happen, that's why you really got to put 100 percent into every shot.

Q. I'm curious how much time have you had, if any, to kind of keep track of Virginia sports and did you follow particularly the men's basketball team this season?

DENNY McCARTHY: Of course you would ask that. Yeah, I followed. I played basketball through high school so I'm a basketball guy at heart. I would have loved to play basketball, too, somehow but 5'8" couldn't really work out in the NBA.

Yeah, I follow Virginia sports pretty heavily. I keep in touch with the golf team and my coach, Bowen Sargent, there, we keep in touch a good bit. Like you said, the basketball, yes, I did follow. I was crushed, but Tony Bennett's a really class act and a great coach. If you heard some of the things he said after that loss, they're going to be in a great spot for a while with him as their coach. And the last five years he's done some great things with that program. I'm a huge fan and I'm looking forward to what Tony's going to do with that team coming up.

MARK WILLIAMS: Well, you've got some good momentum going this part of the season, so all the best for this week, enjoy the hometown event.