

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW
November 18, 2018



CHARLES HOWELL III (-19, won 2nd playoff hole)

JOHN BUSH: It's my pleasure to welcome Charles Howell III into the interview room, our 2018 RSM Classic champion.

Charles, welcome back to an interview room on a Sunday afternoon, I know it's been a while.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah. I've walked through them on Sunday afternoons to do drug testing, I think.

Man, I don't even know what to say. The way I started today, bogey-double the first two holes, I just honestly thought I had shot myself in the foot again. You know, somehow I was able to sort of settle the round down a little bit from there. I thought that was pretty much over. Being how many birdie holes, et cetera, the guys that were chasing, so I thought I was then into, okay, let's just have a really nice rest of the day and just see what happens here. But if you had asked me after that second hole would I be sitting here right now, the answer would be overwhelmingly no.

JOHN BUSH: You move to No. 1 in the FedExCup standings. Talk a little bit about the journey to get back to this spot.

CHARLES HOWELL III: You know, golf is a brutal game and the highs of the high, it comes with a lot of really lows. You know, you work and then you practice and you prepare and you think you're doing all the right things and the results don't quite show that. So then you start to question everything really. You know, just -- it's a wonderful lesson to be learned that if you truly believe in what you're doing, to stay the course.

If no one else proves it but me today, then it does prove it. It's been 11 years since I've won a golf tournament and quite honestly, I didn't know if I would ever win one again for the obvious reasons that I had come up short so many times and the fact of how the game is changing.

I just spent 36 holes with Cameron Champ, who hits a 3-iron 290 yards off almost every tee and it gets your attention how golf's changing. Every time one of these guys comes out like that, there seems another and another and another.

Yeah, the fact I'm sitting here with this trophy, it's still a bit of a dream.

JOHN BUSH: Before questions, to do it in Georgia, specifically at Sea Island, I know makes it even more special to you.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah, so our family, I grew up in Augusta, which is about three hours from here, and my family, we spent quite a bit of time down here growing up. My very first experience with Sea Island, albeit a very sad one, is I had a golf lesson scheduled with Jimmy Hodges and it was scheduled for the week after he passed in the plane crash with Davis' father.

So my lesson got moved to Gale Peterson and I came down here and I worked with her as a kid and our family continued to come down here and vacation, et cetera. Yeah, this is a spot that's been awful special to us, but I never thought it would end this way.

Q. Birdied three of the last four to get in a playoff and birdied the second playoff hole. Did you think you had it in you to do that?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yes and no. I thought I had it in me, but I had never seen me do it to prove it to myself if that's a fair answer. But it's kind of like the guy who thinks he can dunk, but if you can't dunk, you just can't do it. So I thought I had it in me, but it took me a bit to actually do it.

You know, I hit it close on 17 and when I walked up to the green I thought the putt for birdie was to take the lead. Prior to me hitting the putt, Patrick birdied 18 and that almost made that putt easier because then I knew, well, you have to make this to have a chance on 18.

So in a weird way, by Patrick birdieing before I hit my putt, it made it easier. I assume that's what he did because the board changed and I assume he birdied the last.

But then I had a putt in regulation to win and I had a putt in the first playoff hole to win and they both grazed the edges and I thought, man, I've seen this movie before and I know how it ends.

Winning in the playoff for birdie there, I actually thought the ball was probably going to lip out on the right side, and as much as it excited me, it shocked me that the ball actually went in the hole. I couldn't believe it did it.

Q. And what was different this time than the other times?

CHARLES HOWELL III: You know, after the way I started, I really don't know. It's not that you needed to go out and start hot to make a bunch of birdies, but just a nice, stable start would have been good.

I don't know. The man upstairs is all I can say because that's -- you know, I knew my game was good, I knew I was playing well, but when you start off the way I started off, sometimes you wonder, well, maybe you just don't have it in you. Maybe today is just not the day. So let's start back over, let's have a nice day today, let's see what happens. More than likely I won't be winning the golf tournament, but we can have a nice day out of this and a nice

week, and slowly clawed my way back.

Cameron never could quite get anything going as well, he missed a lot of putts on the edges. But I saw Webb pop his name up there, which I knew he would, and just thought, well, these guys are going to get to 20 and it's going to be a bit insurmountable.

Yeah, I didn't know if I had it in me the last four, to be quite honest. I'm glad now that I've seen me do it.

Q. Can you talk about how well you played the back nine? Looked like you made all the shots you wanted to. And secondly, your caddie, he's never won before, you've been with him since January?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yes, sir.

Q. You hadn't won in a while, but he had never won at all?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah, it's a bad combo, isn't it? Yeah, yeah.

You know, the back nine, I knew 10, 11 and 12 were big holes. Nos. 10 and 11, the tee shots there are really important, and then the 12th hole, the long par 3, was playing back into the wind, so I knew that.

Okay, so I get through those and I did it in 1 under par. Then I thought, well, who knows what may happen, but seemed like the guys in front of me just kept on, kept on. Birdieing 15, although it is a reachable hole, you still have to do it. If I don't do that there, then my day's over with.

My caddie, Nick Jones, been together as you said almost a year. Sometimes it's funny, like when I haven't won in forever and it seems like a career and he never has, you kind of get caught, okay, let's just keep plugging along, plugging along. There's none of these great epiphanies out there, there's nothing that he's going to say to me or I'm going to say to him that let's say may come from a Steve Williams or whatever because we've just never frankly done it. So let's just figure out how to do this again and fortunately today it worked.

Q. In the immediate aftermath when the ball dropped in and you dropped to your knees, was it disbelief that the putt went in or was all the emotion of kind of 11 years boiling over?

CHARLES HOWELL III: All the emotion of the 11 years. The putt I hit in regulation, I thought I made it. It looked eerily similar to the putt I missed on the 72nd hole at Robert Trent Jones at Tiger's tournament, not this past summer, the summer before when I lost to Kyle Stanley in a playoff. It looked just like it and it missed just barely on that edge. Yeah, I just -- but that was just the emotion now. It was initially shock and then the relief.

Q. And this one was more emotional than anybody, but you have two children who weren't even born the last time you won?

CHARLES HOWELL III: That's correct.

Q. What does that mean to you?

CHARLES HOWELL III: They were hardly even considered at that point, yes.

It means a lot because they're now of the age than they know what's going on. He follows the PGA TOUR app more than I do, he knows the FedExCup standings and the world golf rankings, his favorite golfer is Justin Thomas. Yeah, exactly. So yes, it means a lot to me because they're now old enough to understand it and appreciate it. They can see now what I do.

Q. And quickly, thoughts about going back to Augusta, getting there by winning? You've been off world ranking, there's other avenues, but is getting there by winning sweeter in a lot of way?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Well, at this point I would -- I would go to watch him in the Drive, Chip and Putt. I'll go there any way I can get. But the tournament is so special. Obviously it means a lot to me being from Augusta, but it means a lot to every player, right? Every golfer in the world knows what the Masters is, so I'm nothing special on that. But that tournament, that atmosphere, just everything, it's tough at home to sit back and watch that on television. So to get back there, it's funny, that's one of the first things that popped in my head, was getting back to the Masters.

JOHN BUSH: I'm assuming you have new plans for the first week of January as well, right?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yes, yes, sir, which I haven't been back to, what is that Sentry Tournament of Champions since it was four sponsors ago, so it's been a while. But no, I'm thrilled to get back there. Hawaii, Sony Open I've played well at many times and I love that golf tournament, I love that place, but to get back to Sentry there at Maui is just a great way to start the year.

Q. Charles, was there ever a point before the final putt dropped that the doubts went away in your mind, that you said you've seen this movie were?

CHARLES HOWELL III: You know, it's funny you ask that. I went back to read the putt and, honestly, it was the easiest putt you could have to win a golf tournament. I mean, it was -- it was straight uphill, the grain was straight back into me and it broke ever so slightly right to left. If there's ever a putt you're going to have -- I mean, I'll take a tap-in any day, but that was the putt to have.

And my last thought before going into it was, just don't leave this putt short. It wasn't a

difficult putt to get the line on; more than likely if I were to miss it, it would have missed on speed. But yes, the doubts at that point did go away where it was okay, just hit an aggressive putt here and let's not leave this short.

Q. You really love the game. What do you love most about it and what do you hate most about it?

CHARLES HOWELL III: I love most about it because it's all on you, it's all on the player. Golf is never about one competitor versus another and it never will be. It's against the player versus himself and versus the golf course. At no point today or whatever was I thinking it's me against Cameron or it's me against Webb or whatever. It's just you against you, and as crazy as that sounds, it's the way that it is.

What I hate about it is that you can work and work and work and get absolutely no results from that, and I know that there's a lot of industries and a lot of areas where that also applies, but golf for certain. You can speak to any Tour player out here past or current and I think they would tell you the same thing, that you can go down a rabbit hole and work and work and work and literally on the back end nothing come out of it, and I think that's the hardest part to swallow.

Q. You mentioned earlier that after the first two holes that you were kind of doubting your chance to win?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Oh, sure.

Q. When did you find again that you had that chance, then you felt like you had an ability to get back in there?

CHARLES HOWELL III: I honestly never thought I had a chance to win the golf tournament until I birdied the 16th hole after the way I started. Being that Patrick had already gotten to 18 by the time I played the 15th hole or right in there, so me getting to 17 under still didn't -- it obviously helped, but it didn't even tie me. So, yeah, I didn't think I had a chance to win until I birdied 16, that was when I thought, okay, now I have a shot.

Q. This might make you sound technical, but you seem enthralled with the process of improvement.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yes.

Q. Can you describe, is that the way you always loved about it and keeps you going when you're not winning as you're turning over stones to find something that will win or work?

CHARLES HOWELL III: No doubt. And I've often thought one of my flaws is I enjoy practicing and preparing more than playing. That's just who I am and it's -- so yes, like when

I've struggled or when I don't play well or don't get the results I want, et cetera, et cetera, I always go back to, okay, how do I improve, how do I get better, what do I need to work on. So I actually find a bit of comfort in that and I enjoy that. That's the part I really, really enjoy.

But yes, so with that said, it probably helps me a little bit. But I do love trying to improve and trying to get better. Part of the drive for that is this next wave and generation coming up. I mean, how good these guys are, et cetera. That's a massive push to do that.

Q. So is more gratifying today beating everyone or that the swing and everything you worked on held up under pressure?

CHARLES HOWELL III: No, the latter on that. The things that I've been working on and practicing held up, that in the playoff I was able to hit nice drives off that tee in a left-to-right crosswind, that I was able to hit a nice 8-iron on 17 in regulation to make birdie, things of that nature. Like that bit means more to me than, let's say, beating somebody because that's so fleeting in this game where you could go tee it up again tomorrow and have a completely different result. Probably would.

So it's the fact that the other held up when I really needed it to meant more.

JOHN BUSH: All right. Congratulations once again to the RSM Classic champion, Charles Howell.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Thank you.