

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
28 November 2018

MARC LEISHMAN



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Marc, thanks for joining us ahead of the pro-am this afternoon. Can you talk to us what it's like to be back here at the Australian PGA Championship?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, it's awesome to be back. Have a lot of great memories here from previous Australian PGAs and spending holidays as a kid. The Gold Coast is a great place, and looks like the weather's going to be a little nicer than it was last week in Melbourne, too.

Yeah, excited to be back. Obviously got a purpose to be here, I want to try and win one of those, or win this event. I haven't managed to win one of the three big Australian events yet, so that's very high on the list, probably a missing part of my resume. Yeah, happy to be here and hoping I can have a big week.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: You joined us last night at the Greg Norman Medal. It was great eating, but I'm not -- you didn't enjoy it as much as last year when you were the winner. Minjee Lee winning as the first female, can you give us your thoughts on her season?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, I think it was amazing that she won. She's had a great year, really stamped her authority on the LPGA Tour with a win and a lot of other good finishes, winning the Vic Open, clearly had a great year and deserved the medal. And to be the first female as well, I think it was a great thing. It's not just the best male golfer but the best golfer of the year, and I think she really deserved it.

Q. Marc, Is there any pressure or expectation about being a tournament headliner?

MARC LEISHMAN: I mean, every tournament I go to I want to obviously do as well as I can, try and win the event. That's no different whether I'm sort of an underdog or on the posters all around town. That's pretty cool driving around and seeing that.

Yeah, I don't think it's any different. Once you get out there, the pressure that -- if you feel pressure, the only pressure you feel is from yourself, that you put on yourself.

It's a great field this week. Obviously there's me, Cam and Beef on those posters, but there's so many other guys that are very, very capable of winning the event. It's a pretty strong field I feel like, and whoever wins the event is going to have to play great golf. It's not going to change my mindset apart from having to do that.

Q. Marc, I guess to touch on what you just brought up, really good other blokes like Rod Pampling and John Senden have won an Australian tournament, they cherish

that very much. Do you have any dialogue or any sense of how much they do really cherish their biggest moment?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, it's something that every Australian wants to do. My first golf memories were at the Australian Masters in Melbourne, my parents took me down there. I was probably watching those guys play then. So yeah, it's something to see your idols lifting that trophy and you want to do that as well.

That's probably one of their most memorable wins, I'm sure. They've both won on the PGA TOUR, but I'm sure they cherish that one as much if not more than those wins. I hope I get a chance to contend this week, that would be great. You know, you've got to start with winning one obviously. I've won some big tournaments, but that is the missing part of my resume is the Australian tournaments.

Yeah, it would mean a lot to win it, but, you know, there's a lot that has to go right to win a golf tournament no matter where it is, whether it's on the PGA TOUR, Australian tour, European Tour.

Q. You started really strong here last year, 67-65. Do you see lots of birdies out here, and when you get into a run of pars like you did I guess in the third round last year, what are the tricks around the course that can sort of trip you up?

MARC LEISHMAN: I think, I mean, every week putting is the key, but I think more so here because of the little bit of grain in the greens. The greens are quite severe, and whether you're putting for birdie or pars, those putts have to go in.

So it seems like one of those courses that if you start to see a few go in, you get confidence and you can really get on a run, but on the other side of that, if you miss a couple, which I probably did Saturday last year, it's easy for them to keep missing. I think making the putts is massive for confidence. Going into greens, if you're thinking about a way not to miss the green rather than trying to work out how to make birdie, that's a bad thing. Yeah, putting's definitely the key.

Q. (Question about Cam Smith.) How far can he go? Geoff talked about him being a top-10 player. How far do you think Cam can take his game?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, I think he can take it as far as he wants to take it. I actually read the article this morning in the paper and I think Geoff hit the nail on the head, he's certainly got the talent, he works hard at it, it's just a matter of giving himself the opportunities.

He's got the drive. I don't think big situations are going to faze him too much. Yeah, I think he can take it as far as he wants to take it. He's definitely a massive talent and it's pretty exciting for Australian golf that he's on the radar.

Q. Have you had much to do with Lucas Herbert? (inaudible). Have you had much to

do with him and have you been aware, I guess, of his year in Europe and what he's accomplished?

MARC LEISHMAN: Well, I haven't actually had much to do with Lucas, but I am aware of his year. I did the Monday qualifiers on the Nationwide Tour at the time. I think he started out with, what, conditional status in Europe maybe?

OLIVIA McMILLAN: No status.

MARC LEISHMAN: No status, sponsors' exemptions, so that's pretty impressive to have the year he did, get to the final event in Dubai off no status.

He's clearly a pretty big talent as well. You've got the guys on the PGA TOUR, Cam Davis, Curtis Luck this year. I think you have to throw Lucas Herbert's name amongst one of the guys to watch out for in the future for sure.

Q. Do you see that group stepping forward this week as well, and I guess coming into a generation, this new one led by Cam and Lucas, do you feel like they're kind of guys that are pushing you into senior status?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, I definitely feel like I'm one of the older guys now. It's been a few years since there's been a batch of guys come on to the tour like that. Yeah, it's exciting for golf. Spending as much time with Cam as I have and playing as many practice rounds with him has really made me work harder and improve my game as well. Seeing those guys come through, it's as motivating for us as well to try and I guess not show them how it's done, but to kind of lead the way, I guess.

Q. Just one more. You talk about each year I guess not winning one of the big ones. Does it add pressure mentally to you? Do you sort of feel the wave of that want to win one of these growing? Or I guess you've been asked the same question the last few years, does it affect you? Does it add any weight to you as years go by?

MARC LEISHMAN: I mean, that pressure definitely grows, for sure. As far as pressure, I don't know if I feel pressure to win, but I'm definitely I'll say a lot more determined to do the right things and try and give myself the best chance to contend when I'm at home. I think the first few years that I came back when I was on tour for the events, it was almost a bit of a holiday, like a bit of a deep breath and all right, we're done for the year, let's enjoy this week, hopefully we play well.

The last few years it's been more of, you know, go through the correct process that I do on tour. Not that I didn't do it those first few years, but really make sure I'm doing the right things because I don't want to get another five years down the track and still be getting asked the questions as well.

I'm determined to do very well. I feel like last year was a big step getting off to the start I did.

Obviously it was a disappointing third round, but I think I finished fourth, which is not what I was after, but it's more how I want to play in these events rather than, you know, shooting 5 under in the last round to finish eighth or something like that. I think last year was a big step in the right direction just with doing the right things, and hopefully I can improve on that this year.

Q. You mentioned the difference in the weather last week, obviously different golf course as well. What are the changes like this week as compared to last week? Is it ball flight, getting used to the grasses, or what's the big difference for you?

MARC LEISHMAN: It's just the stuff around the greens. We do it every week on tour as well playing in different parts of the country on different grasses. It's just time on the chipping green, seeing how the ball's reacting on the greens. Obviously the speed of the greens is a little slower this week being the bermuda and the elevated and exposed greens that they are.

The biggest thing is getting used to the grain on the greens again. In Queensland you have to read grain as well as slope. Last week it's just slope. Yeah, like nothing we don't do every year -- I'm sorry, every week on tour, but I think it's just a little bit extra putting and chipping.

Q. And although you come from Victoria, from the Sandbelt and everything like that, and how much you've played in the U.S., does this course almost suit you better than last week's course?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah. I mean, I think it's -- I think there's a bit more trouble on this golf course. I think iron play, good iron play is very important here with the severity of the run-offs around the greens. So yeah, it could, especially if it blows like is now. I enjoy playing in the wind. Yeah, I'll say yes. We're here this week, hopefully I can prove that right.

Q. And you mentioned Cam. You've spoken during this year about how good his short game is, wedge game is. When you guys are playing, do you pick his brain about how he goes about it? Do you watch what he does, or do you just know that he's --

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, a little bit of both. Pretty much watching. I'll ask him a few questions here and there. Obviously changed my wedge setup in Malaysia, so Malaysia was the first week that I went to four wedges. For the last five years my highest lofted wedge has been a 57. I put a 60 in the bag and had to move around the wedges a little bit, the lofts, just to dial them in. That's really helped me seeing him -- I normally like shaping shots and taking spin off it or adding spin for distance. He seems to hit a lot of -- he seems to have a lot of really good numbers and he'll hit a lot of full shots in. So watched him, thought I would try it out and it worked pretty well in Malaysia, and then last week as well hit a lot of good wedge shots.

Yeah, I think as a golfer you've always got to try and keep learning, whether that's off an older guy or a young guy who's really good at something like Cam is at his wedge play. I'm always trying to get better and I feel like we can learn off each other.

Q. And are the Aussies better than the other guys out on the PGA TOUR at doing that, do you think? Are guys closer and help each other out?

MARC LEISHMAN: I wouldn't say we're closer. I would say the Americans, they have their team events every year, so they're pretty close to each other. But I think the Australians are very willing to help each other out, that's I think pretty clear with guys who are coming onto the tour and us older guys sort of trying to do whatever we can to help out in any way we can. As John Senden and Rod Pampling did to me, happy to do it to the younger guys as well.

Q. Marc, Cam did say last night that you're a bit of a (inaudible.) Can you give us an estimated time (inaudible)?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, I honestly don't know. It's been pretty tough to get, to be honest, with being struggling to make enough of it. I couldn't get it for about a four-month period this year. We just, we're starting to make more of it now. It's not my brewery, it's someone else's brewery who makes it for us.

Yeah, hopefully within the next couple years we'll be able to get some back here. It's sort of, as I was saying last night, it's more invested in golf at the moment, trying to do that as well as I can rather than worry about all the other stuff. Obviously eventually we'll probably do something a bit bigger, but at the moment, yeah, it's more golf.

Q. Just on the young guys, what can you tell them and how can you help them sort of transition, and B, will you seek them out for practice rounds, dinners together? How do you sort of help them transition?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, more practice rounds. Just if they've got any questions, it's just nice to bounce them off someone really that's been there. This is my 11th year on tour now, and it doesn't even have to be anything big. It's just talking to someone about something helps, whether it's about where to stay or a tactic on a certain hole, why you hit a certain club off this tee rather than another one, just little things like that.

I think for those boys it's just a matter of realising that they're obviously great players to get to the tour, they don't have to change anything to keep improving. They'll do that naturally over time by learning.

It's a fun process. You'll have good weeks and you'll have bad weeks. I remember one of the best bits of advice that I ever got was actually from Nathan Green. He said, "You'll make the 90 percent of your money in 10 percent of your weeks."

I always think about that when you're having a bad week, you know, as long as I keep doing the right things, the good weeks are going to come. Just on those ones where you are near the top of the leaderboard, you need to really make sure to make hay on those weeks, I guess you could say.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Any final questions for Marc? Thank you so much for joining us, best of luck this week.

MARC LEISHMAN: No worries, thank you.