

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**July 17, 2019**



**TROY MERRITT**

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**JOHN BUSH:** We would like to welcome Troy Merritt into the interview room, our defending champion here at the Barbasol Championship.

Troy, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. First of all, if we can get your thoughts on defending this week.

**TROY MERRITT:** Yeah, it's great to be back in Lexington. The course is -- it's a lot drier than last year. We played it pretty much in a swamp last year and it's playing a lot different this year. After we left last year, we were kind of wondering what it would be like to play it dry. It seemed like it would be a much sterner test when you've got to control your ball a little bit more and I think we're going to get that this week. As long as we don't have any super heavy rains this afternoon, I think we're going to get a firm test on the golf course and it should be a good week.

**JOHN BUSH:** A little bit of work to do this week. You're currently inside the Top 125 in the FedExCup standings, but with just a few weeks left in the season. Just talk a little bit about your mindset as you try to make sure you're in the Playoffs.

**TROY MERRITT:** I'm pretty sure I locked up my goal for this year, that was to get 20 events. I had surgery, I was out for three months at the start of 2019 and I just want to get 20 events, and a couple weeks ago at the 3M we had a top-10 and I think we locked up our playoff trip and that will be my 20th event this year. So goal achieved.

But looking forward to some good golf, reliving some fun memories from last year out here and moving on forward from this point.

**Q. How was it playing with Eddie Gran, the UK football offensive coordinator, in the pro-am?**

**TROY MERRITT:** He opened up with about a 40-foot birdie putt that he hit right in the center of the pin and went in, so we had high expectations from him. After that, he kind of petered out, but he was a lot of fun. We had a great group out there and he was just one of the guys out there that had a lot of fun.

**Q. How much pressure is there going into the tournament this year after winning last year?**

**TROY MERRITT:** Last year when we came into the event, I think I was sitting at 131 on the list, so I was still trying to fight for my job. Not only that, had the health scare last year.

Couldn't figure out why I couldn't lift my arm up last year while I was playing here. It was a lot more stress last year, that's for sure.

This year, just kind of playing stress-free golf. Like I said, it's fun to come back to a place where you have good memories. Last year was awesome being able to win, but yeah, it freed up this year. I don't know. Hopefully the golf's as good as last year for me, but we'll have fun regardless.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the health scare, and you're minus a rib now?**

**TROY MERRITT:** Yeah. Last summer I played all summer not being able to raise my left arm over my head, but I was able to make a golf swing. It hurt, but I was trying to keep my job. About 10 days after I won here, my wife made me go to the hospital and they diagnosed me with a large blood clot from my chest down to my elbow. So they took it out that day and then diagnosed me with thoracic outlet syndrome, where the top rib is too close to the clavicle, and in my case it pinched a vein and caused a clot. So I elected to have my rib taken out in January. Hence, I was rehabbing for about three months. Yeah, one less rib and the golf's actually been a little better.

**Q. Troy, question about the course. So what do you see out here in the rounds you played this week and how does this course suit your game?**

**TROY MERRITT:** The greens are the biggest change right now. Last year it was easy to get the ball in close to the pins because it was so soft. This year it's so much firmer, it's hard to control the ball on the greens. Sometimes you get a little bit of a softer bounce and sometimes you can land it on the front edge and run it over the back of the green. So if you're not playing from the fairway this week, you're going to have a hard time finding greens. And chipping around here isn't the easiest. If you add all that up, you're not going to see 23 under par, I don't think. Somebody's going to have to play some really good golf to get to that.

**Q. Was there a time that you ever felt like you might not get back to the level that you were after the health scare?**

**TROY MERRITT:** You know, I never had any surgeries before, so I had no idea what to expect. I was just listening to the professionals, or listened to what they said, following their advice. They got us out a lot quicker than was previously planned. Never did I think that my career was going to be over. I don't know if I ever thought that I wouldn't be back competing at the highest level, I was just trying to take each day as they came and listen and work as hard as I could, and it paid off.

**JOHN BUSH:** We've got a junior reporter with us today.

**TROY MERRITT:** All right.

**JOHN BUSH:** Let's take a question from Conner.

**Q. What sport would you play if you didn't play golf?**

**TROY MERRITT:** That's a really good question. I played a lot of sports growing up. I really liked baseball growing up. I was a shortstop and a lead-off hitter and had to choose between golf and baseball. I stopped playing baseball in about eighth grade. I continued to play basketball as an all-state honorable mention in basketball in Minnesota my senior year, but I wasn't going anywhere for basketball. I would have chosen baseball.

**Q. What did the 3M Open finish do for your confidence?**

**TROY MERRITT:** That was a fun week. Having a new PGA TOUR event up there and having gone to high school 15 minutes from that golf course and having a bunch of family and friends and local support, it was just fun to play good golf and listen to a lot of people cheer. That's why we're out here, we love to make people happy.

Just moving forward, I didn't play great last week, it might have been a little bit of a hangover from the week before, but it's always fun to know that you can come out here and hit a lot of good shots and people really come out and enjoy seeing golf.

**JOHN BUSH:** All right. Anything else? Troy, thanks for your time and best of luck this week.

**TROY MERRITT:** Appreciate it. Thanks, guys.