

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 12, 2020



HAROLD VARNER III

DOUG MILNE: I would like to welcome Harold Varner III to the virtual interview room here at the Wyndham Championship.

Harold, thanks for joining us. I know this is a nice place for you to come back to with your ties to the area. You're making your fifth start here with a top-10 in the past. Just some thoughts on being back here at the Wyndham Championship this week.

HAROLD VARNER III: Obviously super biased on my part. I grew up in North Carolina, went to East Carolina, so yeah, it always feels good to come back, especially coming from the other side of the country last week. So it's another great opportunity. Once again, just being at home, try not to try too hard. You know, it's easy to do when you just want to play so well in front of -- well, no one right now, but people watching.

DOUG MILNE: Coming off of that top-30 finish last week at the PGA Championship, just kind of the state of your game as you're heading into the week?

HAROLD VARNER III: Like I've always said, I'm getting better, getting more experience, so I like where I'm going and just got to keep doing that. Obviously a different type of golf course this week, but the coolest thing about being on the PGA TOUR is the courses you weren't very good at, you will see them and you'll be able to prepare better each time and that's what I think's happening here. The first time I came here I couldn't crack an egg, but slowly but surely getting better.

DOUG MILNE: Okay. Well, with that, we'll take a few questions.

Q. Hey, Harold, how are you?

HAROLD VARNER III: I'm doing great, and yourself? Good to see you.

Q. Good to see you, too. Seems like you've had an awful lot of good tournaments, but you lack like one really good round --

HAROLD VARNER III: Yeah.

Q. -- to get over the hump. Can you talk a little bit about that?

HAROLD VARNER III: I sure can. It's terrible, it sucks a lot, but it's a part of my journey. I've always told you this, I just have to run my course, but every time I feel like I'm getting better. I went from -- perfect example was last week was a big week for me just improving

from last year. That's just a part of my process, my growth and I'm obviously super excited to be on that journey. Yeah, it stinks. Obviously Colonial, that was obviously being there. It is what it is. I just want to keep getting better, that's about all I can elaborate on that. I don't really have much to say because obviously if I could shoot 65 on the days I shoot 74, I would be super excited.

Q. Harold, thanks for doing this and welcome home. Your Instagram from a few weeks ago was inspiring on so many levels. I'm just curious what you were thinking about as you wrote it and how important was it to you to deliver it the way you did with like kind of both sides of a situation. It was actually pretty cool.

HAROLD VARNER III: Like I said in there, I've said in the last two months, I find it weird that if you're a black athlete, you had to say something.

You know, the best way you can explain it is to tell someone your journey or your story and elaborate on your opinion afterwards because then people can tell where you're coming from. It was important for me because I believe there's a lot of good. It turned out great. That's just what I believe and I've always believed that before, you know, all the George Floyd stuff happened. So I'm kind of really just putting my foot down and I guess just doing what's right, believe in the good and just keep doing that, you know.

Q. Harold, thanks for joining us this morning. Something the Wyndham did this year was have some of the frontline workers introduce you guys. What did you think about that? Have you seen it? I think it was a firefighter that introduced you?

HAROLD VARNER III: Obviously before COVID I've respected people -- my mom's worked as a day surgery nurse for a long time, longer than I've been alive, so I've always respected people that are service people that need help. So it's pretty cool. I have some friends that are firefighters, but it was well done to do it for basically a good portion of the field. Yeah, I watched it about five times, I thought it was pretty cool.

Q. Harold, when you guys came back from a month off or whatever, did it take you a while to, when you made like a 25-foot putt, not to tip your cap or give that golfer wave when you look around? You're like, why am I doing that, there's no one here?

HAROLD VARNER III: No, I did it anyway. Fans are coming, we're going to get through this, so I'll be prepared when they come back out. Yeah, it is what it is. It's not like that many people are watching me play anyway. Didn't change much for me. I like having fun, so it was a very sarcastic tip of the cap. I don't even tip my cap anyway, I just go (indicating.)

Q. Harold, you just mentioned you like to have fun. What is it about golf and you and why do you seem to have been having more fun out there than everybody else?

HAROLD VARNER III: Because I could be -- if you really want to put it in perspective, I think I could be in a place where I had a normal job and I got laid off, but the opposite

happened. I played for the same amount of money, I get to do what I love, so I always keep it in perspective, so why not have fun. We have all these great opportunities. It's kind of hard to walk around with my head down or not smiling. We're super fortunate. If you have a job right now, you're in a better position than a lot of people in this world. So why would I not smile? I'm back home, I get to talk to you. You think I'm important. I get to tell people about my story, so like it's easy. I always just try to do that in general, but right now it's just easier to find things that we relate with. Like hey, I have a job, just the simple things in life.

Q. And what's the most fun part of your day playing golf?

HAROLD VARNER III: Most fun part of the day is waking up because a lot of people don't get to do that. Then I get to do what I love. It's icing on the cake all day. Other than that needle going up your nose or whatever that thing is, I'm just so fortunate. I just smile, enjoy people. They're important to this world. Yeah, it's pretty awesome.

Q. And who other than you is the most fun to be around at the PGA TOUR, what player?

HAROLD VARNER III: Man, that's a tough one. I just like messing with everyone. You know, like let me see. I like messing with Carlos Ortiz and Joaquin Niemann. I've played a good bit of golf with them. And obviously Bud. I just hung out with them the most, so yeah, I try to mess with them as much as possible.

Q. Harold, I just have a quick question about short iron play especially around this golf course with Sedgefield being the only Donald Ross original that serves as a regular PGA TOUR venue. The course features Ross' signature small and undulating greens which require accuracy. I'm just wondering what are the keys to accurate short iron play and distance control?

HAROLD VARNER III: Aim small and miss small. I fire at every pin. If the pin's like five from the right and I try to aim at the middle of the green and you hit just to the left of it, it will roll off the green. Growing up in North Carolina, I've played a lot of Donald Ross courses. Over the green is usually screwed.

I don't mind it. I don't know any secret to it other than you just need to be in the fairway. That's the biggest thing. People always talk about you've got to be accurate with your irons, it doesn't matter how good you are, if you hit it in the rough, it's just hard to get it close to the hole.

Q. Of course over the few weeks before the PGA Championship you had a chance to go to different events and host different events and chat with young golfers. What were some of those conversations about and how refreshing was that for you?

HAROLD VARNER III: It's crazy how kids think about golf considering how I think about it now, and I need to get back to more just being a kid. I'm pretty good at it most of the time,

but we overthink it a lot out here on Tour.

The coolest part is just giving back, giving people an opportunity. That's kind of been my message since I got on Tour because someone else gave me opportunities. So yeah, Daniel Meggs' tournament was a little special obviously. Cried a little bit, laughed a little bit, just it was important to me. So like of all the events I've ever done, that one just touched me a lot more because Daniel's parents were there and his wife and his kid. It's just very, you know, you want to help the best you can and you just -- sometimes when you're helping, you're touched more than actually you helping someone, you know what I mean?

Q. I was listening to your answers to Adam's questions. I just wondered who in your background helped make you so wise?

HAROLD VARNER III: I would say, I mean my parents probably. They just taught me right from wrong, which was awesome.

One thing I try to do is just always ask -- if there's someone who's been successful or they've done something important in this world, I try to ask them as many questions as possible when I get around them. I'm sure it's annoying sometimes, but I just pick people's brains and just kind of, you know, obviously I'm super opinionated, so I try to learn how to articulate that so you don't offend people. I just learn ways. I don't know, I just keep trying to learn. That's the goal in life, I think.

Q. Harold, the last four finishing scores, winning scores at Sedgefield's been 22, 21, 22, 21 under. Do you like that where it's like, man, I've got -- we've got to get some birdies here, we're going to fall behind?

HAROLD VARNER III: No, I hate it but it is what it is, everyone's playing the same course. If you play the best, you're going to be at the top. I look at it as a challenge, but if it was my choice, I would say no.

Q. Give me a sense, obviously not going to have any fans in the gallery, you're from Gastonia, you went to ECU. Is there any sense of familiarity with the golf course that it's going to feel like home playing at Sedgefield?

HAROLD VARNER III: Most certainly, I think there's a girl who lives on No. 4, Macey, who's going to East Carolina. There's always a tent on 15 that is an East Carolina tent. So yeah, it feels like home. I drove up this morning, took me an hour and 30 minutes, I'm in my own car. Yeah, most certainly.

DOUG MILNE: Harold, as always, we appreciate your time. You'll be glad to know I just dropped my daughter off for her sophomore year at East Carolina.

HAROLD VARNER III: I know it's not how she wants it to be, but if I could be anywhere during this, I would be doing what I'm doing right now.

DOUG MILNE: She was all smiles when we left here. We appreciate your time as always and wish you the best of luck this week.

HAROLD VARNER III: Thanks.