

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
October 31, 2023



MAVERICK McNEALY

DOUG MILNE: Maverick McNealy, thanks for joining us for a few minutes here at the 2023 Worldwide Technology Championship, first tournament back since June. We talked a little bit about it on the way in, about the injury. If you could, just kind of run us through kind of the Cliff Notes version of the injury and just how you're feeling as you're about to start back on the PGA TOUR.

MAVERICK McNEALY: Yes. So the second round at Pebble at the AT&T this year, I think there was a long wait on the seventh tee and made kind of a funny swing. I guess what happened is I tore the ligament that connects the collar bone to your sternum, the sternoclavicular joint, SC joint, and it just got progressively worse that day. I tried to play through it for a few months and it just wasn't getting better. Took some time off.

The main treatment I got aside from physical therapy and training was like I had a PRP injection. Then otherwise it was just mostly changing some golf swing mechanics to try and take pressure off the area, because it was the golf swing in the first place that hurt it.

DOUG MILNE: At what point did you decide that this would be a good week to start back? Was there a little bit of trepidation, a little bit of anxiety about trying to get back into competition?

MAVERICK McNEALY: There was a little bit. I was dreaming of coming back at Napa, but physically that wasn't going to be the right move.

And then I was hoping to play Shriners, which would be my home tournament 10 minutes down the road, but unfortunately that week would have made it a minor medical versus waiting one more week for the major medical. I'm sure everyone knows who that works.

Just kind of the uncertainty. I'm 121st in the FedExCup right now. I don't know if my number's good enough to hold up and I don't want to leave it up to chance to maybe not be able to get all the events to start 2024. So it was a hard business decision to not play Shriners, but I knew that Worldwide Technology was going to be an event I could play.

I'll have probably around 11 events on this medical, so probably no more than 20 points needed over those 11 events. And I always play well in Mexico and I was really excited to get back out here. Feels like two events I can ease my way, get back in the routine, see where my body and my game are at and then hit the 2024 season running.

DOUG MILNE: I did want to note the success you've had at this event, obviously not here, but you finished I think top-15 in each of your previous starts when it was Mayakoba.



What is it about golf in Mexico that you think suits your game so well? And part 2 of that is, how much have had a chance to see the course here?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I think I've had a good track record in international events partly because of my attitude. Starting back on the Korn Ferry Tour, things are just different, but you have to be adaptable to a different routine.

I can speak Spanish so that's always fun. I look at that as a bonus that I can practice my Spanish these couple weeks. Love the food. I joke that I eat Chipotle half the time when I'm on the road back home, so this is just a more authentic version.

I think this is going to be a good golf course for me this week. I just finished the other nine this morning. I tend to play well on courses that have a lot of bowls where I can -- I don't have to -- it's just not really a closest-to-the-pin contest. You think about where you're aiming, where you're trying to leave the ball.

My first impressions is that it's not very tight off the tee, it's very wide, but if you miss, it's a severe penalty. You don't need to murder the ball. Playing it 290 off the tee, 300 off the tee is going to be just fine. And then you really have to think about where you leave the ball into the greens. There's one side that's obviously not OK.

You kind of see a lot of parallels between the way Tiger plays golf and the way he designed this golf course. You have to think about it, play smart. Quintessential second-shot golf course and no short-siding.

Q. (No microphone.)

MAVERICK McNEALY: So I did get my pilot's license. Actually got my instrument rating as well. I got my pilot's license the week after Vidanta and then got my instrument rating I think in August I want to say, August, something like that.

That's just been a lot of fun. I am not -- I'm looking at it as something I don't want to add stress to my life. It's something that I enjoy and love doing, so I would never put undue pressure on making a trip for weather reasons, flying into a new, uncomfortable, complicated air space, whatever it is. It's something that if I haven't flown for a month and a half, I'm just going to go rent a plane, go up with an instructor and use it as a fun afternoon, which is what I did a couple weeks ago.

Since I've been back to full power, I've been not flying as much, practicing and playing a lot more golf, so it was kind of a nice break where I could actually knock out a lot of those instrument hours necessary to get that done. I still study and read up on different knowledge things that I might need.

It's a fun release away from golf, but it's been all golf lately. I may, depending on the



weather, fly to a couple west coast events, but it gets expensive renting a plane for extended periods of time. I'll be back and forth between Vegas and Palm Springs quite a bit seeing my family down there this offseason, just chasing some better weather, using it as something that's fun, something that helps find better practice and playing conditions for golf. But that's really what it is right now, it's a hobby, it's not really a means to an end.

Q. (No microphone.)

MAVERICK McNEALY: I've been planning to get in touch with Morgan actually. He's been busy getting back into it, too. The plane that he flew, the Piper, is a really, really cool airplane. It's a little bit more complex than the one I'm flying right now. I'm flying a Cirrus SR20.

That plane would be one that would actually make it more feasible to fly to a lot of tournaments. It's pressurized, can fly higher, farther, carry more passengers.

The Cirrus plane is great for me to be learning on and all the trips around the southwest, but if I want to start going farther east, probably need something a little bit bigger. I don't know if I'm quite ready to make an irresponsible financial decision of that magnitude. A couple tournament wins, that might change my mind.

DOUG MILNE: It was interesting what you said up top about how being away from the Tour and being back, you didn't realize how much you would actually miss the camaraderie and the people. What kind of reception have you gotten to far? I know you probably haven't been around much to see a lot of people. But just in the minute of two we were up there, a couple people welcomed you back out. How cool is that being a part of the Tour (inaudible)?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It's great. I think being away from the Tour has made me realize all the things I loved and missed about it. It's really easy to get caught up in the FedExCup rankings and try to make the Playoffs, trying to hit a certain world ranking, working on your game, stressing about all these different things.

At least for me, I kind of lost sight of the fact that it's just really, really cool to be on the PGA TOUR and be a PGA TOUR player. This is the greatest job on the planet. Sitting out for four months made me realize I missed the travel. Not that I love sitting in airport terminals for a layover, but I love seeing different parts of the world, the country, eating different foods, meeting different people, hanging out with 50 of the best golfers on the plant and playing practice rounds and \$5 birdie games with those guys, testing myself, pushing myself.

I love being outside for six to eight hours a day. I love the fact that we get to walk 50 miles. This is what people do for recreation and we get to do it for a job. And then I'm really excited to hit golf shots that matter, like really matter and really count, and test myself and play that way. It just puts things in perspective for me.

It's so cliché, you don't realize what you have until you don't have it. You always think about



it, your years on the PGA TOUR are limited and how do I want to spend them and I'm just going to love being here.

DOUG MILNE: The only thing you left out is being able to sit here next to me.

MAVERICK McNEALY: Total honor, total honor.

DOUG MILNE: I'll let it slide this time. Last question, may not be one you have an answer to, but what would you consider a success this week?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I had three goals for this week. First one was just enjoy it because it's something I haven't gotten to do for a while.

Second goal was to be smart about my body. I think once the adrenaline gets pumping, it's going to be real easy to want to swing 110 percent at it. Looking at this as a challenge to learn how to play at 90 percent and just develop different types of shots, think my way around the golf course a little bit more than just swinging as hard as I can. Ball's going a lot straighter, so that's been fun.

Then my third goal this week is just not be too hard on myself because I haven't done this routine for five months and you never know what golf could happen, but if I get out of my routine or things aren't quite as sharp, just give myself plenty of time to get back into it and get back to full sharpness. I've been working extremely hard at home and obviously have really high standards that I'm going to hold myself to this week, but just going to go out there, do my best and have fun.

Again, it's so cliché, but a little bit of time off gives you that perspective.

DOUG MILNE: Any other questions? All right, thank you so much.

