

## PURE INSURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

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MARK O'MEARA



**Q. Your favorite kind of putting green, poa annua, what makes it special for you?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** I don't know, I just grew up on poa annua greens so I feel like -- I feel at home on poa annua greens. Poa annua greens, not necessarily the ball always rolls smoothly so you have to be I think understanding of that, and sometimes because poa annua's a little difficult, the fact that your ball can bounce around a little bit, that might drive people a little bit crazy. But for me, I'm used to it because that's what I learned to play on and I think that was a big advantage.

**Q. Looking back at 700-some odd, whatever it's been start --**

**MARK O'MEARA:** 900-something, over 1,000 worldwide easily.

**Q. That means some of those events you didn't make the cut.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Correct.

**Q. So away from the accolades, what do you learn from a tournament when you don't make the cut?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Well, I think I learn what I need to work on to become a better player. Sometimes you have to just realize that golf is like life, it's not always going your way and there's times where you're going to go through difficult stretches.

To me, I always felt like I actually learned more when I was struggling than I ever learned when everything's going my way or when I was winning.

Yeah, winning doesn't happen that much in the game of golf, you lose way more than you win, so I think you have to understand that that's part of the process to getting on top is understanding that when the spiral is not going your direction, how to turn that around and try to hang in there, whether it means work more on your short game or maybe take a break away from the game a little bit. Like luckily for me I have so many hobbies outside the game of golf that I can distract my mind away from this game by my passion of either fly fishing or riding my snowmobiles in the wintertime so I don't think so much about golf.

I think to be good at something you can't be totally synchronized 24 hours a day being consumed by that. I think you've got to have a little bit of diversity in your life in all aspects of



it to be successful in a certain area.

**Q. You won amateur events here as well. Of course the five -- last Bing Crosby, I think.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yep.

**Q. And then the AT&T. Do you recall vividly the first win as well as you do the fifth win?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** I do actually.

**Q. Can you give me an anecdote about the first win?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** The first win came in '85, which was the last Crosby, and it would have been my second win on the PGA TOUR because I won my first tournament in '84 in Milwaukee.

In '85 the reason why I know that I remember it distinctly is because in '84 I stood on that 18th green with about a 14-footer for birdie to tie Jim Nelford, who was in the clubhouse.

Hale Irwin was in the group behind me. He had hit it in the ocean, bounced back up on the fairway. Hale made birdie to go into the playoff with Jim Nelford.

But I actually had about a 14-footer, a lot of people will remember that, and I needed to make it for birdie to tie Jim. I ran it by about three feet and I missed the next one.

So yeah, but my pro-am partner made a long putt and we won the team event in '84, Bing Crosby pro-am with Jack Diesel, who was my pro-am partner that year. Then in '85 it just gave me more motivation to come back and try to do a little bit, one or two shots better and that came to fruition in the '85 Crosby. That was obviously my first win around Pebble Beach as a professional golfer.

And then my last win was in '97 and I remember it distinctly because my good friend Tiger Woods was like in a group one or two in front of me and on the back nine he was lighting up the place and the roars were crazy. Most people would have probably maybe when Tiger Woods' name goes up on the board, they start like, just like when Mr. Nicklaus was doing that kind of stuff, players start falling off the other way. But because I knew Tiger so well and our friendship and everything, I expected him to do those kind of things so it didn't really faze me.

I remember I was on the 17th green, my 71st hole, and Tiger drove it in the fairway getting ready to knock it on the green in two. I had a birdie putt and I knew if I made my birdie putt I'd have a two-shot lead. I thought to myself, Tiger's going to knock it on 18, he might make eagle, he's going to make birdie for sure, I've got to make this one. I made it for birdie and I



ended up beating Tiger that year in '97.

**Q. Staying on Tiger for a minute, everybody knows you guys were neighbors.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yep.

**Q. Played a lot together. Are you still in contact a lot through the years or is it everybody's got new responsibilities, different things --**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah, no, not anything like it once was. He has a family, I have a family. I went to the Champions Tour, he was still playing the regular Tour.

Yeah, I get to see him at Augusta National. Sat next to him at the Masters in April, he looked great. I was happy for him. We talk about his family. Once in a while he'll ask me about my family. He kind of grew up in my house.

Then I texted him a couple weeks ago because he's actually building a golf course across from my course in Park City, so I told him I went up and looked at that. I haven't talked to him since, to be fair, and I really don't talk to Tiger that much. I usually hope to see him at the PNC.

I know I've heard he recently had back surgery, but I haven't really reached out to him or I haven't heard from him.

**Q. The alliteration of Prince of Pebble, who came up with that and do you know the story about it?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Well, I think the media did. I mean, I don't claim to be the Prince of Pebble, but I have two quick stories.

**Q. Please, of course.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** The year that I won with my father here as my amateur partner, I played with my dad all four days and I was fortunate to win the AT&T Pebble Beach playing alongside my dad, which is rare in any major sport.

I remember the next week my father called me and he goes, Mark, I just got my Golf World in the mail and you're on the cover, Prince of Pebble.

He goes, I'm looking over there and I see you played well and you won 180 grand or whatever it was back then. But he goes, I also noticed in this other category over here, Team O'Meara-O'Meara won \$8,800. So I'm just wondering when are you going to send me my check for \$4,400?

I told my father, Dad, listen, you're an amateur, you can't accept prize money. He goes, No,



no, I'm going to turn pro, just send me the \$4,400. So we had a great banter back and forth.

And then the other time I would say -- let me see, I might have lost my train of thought.

**Q. Two stories be being Prince of Pebble.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah. One year I'm playing in the tournament, in the pro-am and I'm paired with Ben Crenshaw and his amateur partner. We were on the fourth hole by the beach club. We're sitting on the tee waiting to hit our tee shots on 4 and a member in the gallery, a person in the gallery yells over, O'Meara, you own this place, and I remember looking up and I said, Oh, I appreciate that, that's really nice of you, but to be fair, if I owned this place I wouldn't be playing as a professional golfer anymore.

Yeah, those are my two kind of Monterey Pebble Beach stories.

**Q. The celebrity component of the AT&T has changed as of last year, but through the years all the times you played I'm assuming you playing with presidents and actors and other businesspeople, is there someone that you always looked forward to playing with if you could? And I've lost track if that was a streak of something.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** I played with the chairman for a long time, of AT&T, Bob Allen. He became a very dear friend of mine.

But I was able to play with, like you said, different celebrities, different athletes. Ken Griffey Jr. was my partner for a few years and I have the most admiration for Ken and what he accomplished in baseball.

I think that's what kind of sets golf kind of apart from other sports is the fact that we co-exist with all these different other areas in life, whether it's the political world, the entertainment world, the professional athlete world, and then that in my opinion just makes our game that much better.

**Q. I guess lastly, Sunday you can't predict how it's going to be on Saturday or Sunday, but any thoughts on what you're expecting or looking forward to on Sunday, if it's Sunday?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** You know, I'm going to take it all in. I'm also going to have a tear in my eye. I realize that for the last 44 years I've been chasing this little white ball around these golf courses, but certainly because of the experiences and the memories that are etched in my mind that have transpired here Pebble Beach and the Monterey peninsula, yeah, I mean, I'll be happy but I'll be sad.

I don't know. I mean, I felt this experience before already when I played my last Open Championship in 2017 at Royal Birkdale and I felt this at Augusta National in 2018 when I walked away from playing in the Masters.



I'm kind of prepared for it, but we'll kind of see. But if I'm not emotional, then I wouldn't be human.

**Q. Sure. I guess there is one last thing. If you don't mind the term elder statesman --**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah, I am that.

**Q. -- can you give an opinion about the status of the game? There's a lot going on that hasn't been determined yet.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah.

**Q. Do you have an opinion one way or the other?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** You know, my opinion would be this: Like I've always believed that golf -- yeah, there's been a little bit of a speed bump in golf, right, with everything that's gone on, but I still think that golf is above all this. I think that the game is going to be fine.

I know that there's opinions on both sides good and bad, right, but my take is that at the end of the day we're going to be all right, we'll get this all worked out. And I hope they do.

Look, I'm a guy that traveled around the globe, played around the globe, chased the money. I played professional golf not just for victories and tournaments, but I also tried to make money. I mean, if I want to have a nice house, I have to make money to buy a nice house.

So I don't fault anybody for doing this, whether they went to LIV or didn't go to LIV. I know it created a division a little bit in the game of golf, but I think at the end of the day guys tee it up to play for not only just the money but their pride. They want to beat each other, they just do, whether it's at the Presidents Cup, the Ryder Cup, the Solheim cup, whether it's on LIV, the PGA TOUR, the Korn Ferry Tour, the Champions Tour, DP World Tour. There are a lot of different golf tours.

I hope and pray that the PGA TOUR, Jay Monahan and Yasir can get this worked out and the players all come back together and give each other a bunch of big hugs, get out there and play.

**Q. You alluded to it, so many memories here. What has this tournament meant to you being involved with this, The First Tee, the Golden Ticket, just the experience that these kids get and you see them as the future of this game and just your involvement here?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Well, first of all, we're very thankful for PURE Insurance and the Monterey board and for Pebble Beach Corporation to let us come and play this iconic golf course.



This experience that these juniors, The First Tee juniors, boys and girls have the opportunity to come and play on this track here and Spyglass with professional golfers and also great people in the business world. I just don't think there's many tournaments that match this stature when it comes to giving back to the game of golf and providing for the future, you know, the future generations that are coming along, and we're very thankful for that.

I always look forward to this event. I think this event here, the PURE Insurance Championship, and then you look at Augusta National what they've done with the Drive, Chip & Putt, it's all about feeding the narrative of helping these young players be more involved and feel somewhat comfortable.

They're going to be nervous. I'm a pro golfer, I'm nervous, so it's OK for them to be nervous. But I think these experiences can change their life and that's what we should do as stewards of the game.