

ROUND 3 QUICK QUOTES

November 23, 2024

MAVERICK McNEALY (-14)



Q. Mav, good playing today and this week. How's it feel to be in this position with a chance on Sunday on the PGA TOUR?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It's exactly where I want to be. I'm really excited about the golf that's gotten me there. It's kind of affirming to come to a golf course that I haven't had much success on with being a really good test of approach play. The guys who hit their irons really well play well here. Kind of icy dormant Bermuda, which is a grass type that I don't see much on the west coast.

Came in this week with a goal of testing my game to play in kind of unfriendly conditions and really excited with how it's panned out.

Q. What inspired you to come here and play this week? Was it along those lines of wanting that test?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It was -- wanting that test is kind of the reason I came, but I think the main reason I came is Maya loves to stay at the Lodge and I think she loves that cookie and milk service at 7:00 p.m. She's like, we're playing Sea Island. I'm like, OK, we're playing Sea Island.

We're having a lot of fun. It was great to see my whole team because last couple events have been international. See my coach and my trainer, had team doc out this week. It was kind of a quick team rendezvous here and firing on all cylinders.

Q. How do you envision this offseason being different than last?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I'm excited to actually take some time off this offseason. Feels like I haven't had time off for almost a year and a half. Had a couple weeks off after I had the PRP injection in my shoulder and from there it was back hitting balls every day just trying to build up the endurance and move the right way.

So I'm excited to go home. My wife and I have our one-year anniversary wedding celebration December 6th. We eloped a year ago and we're going to have our big party then and spend a couple days in Hawaii and just relax for two, three weeks to start the offseason. Kick things into gear three weeks before Hawaii.

Q. So this will be like the big reception?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Exactly, yeah. We're going to go get married again but this time in

front of everybody, all our friends and family.

Q. We talked to Joseph a little bit ago. He's putting together a good week and this is a big week for him. He said you've helped him with his putting. What's the extent of that? What was he doing wrong and what are you like as a coach?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I wouldn't go that far to say I'm a putting coach. Joseph's an incredible athlete, like one of the most gifted -- by gifted, he works so, so hard. One of the most gifted ball-strikers I've ever seen.

Just had a few things that kind of snowballed into lack of confidence with putting. So he changed putters and changed grips. And I've never really been a technical putting coach, like I don't really focus on technique with my putting. Starting my freshman year of college I realized that I was the worst putter on the team by a long shot and that was what I needed to improve to get better. I really dialed in on speed, eye line, green reading and kind of rhythm, tempo and timing.

He's made the technical changes on his own, I've just really been kind of giving him my blueprint for how I practice and how I kind of created my own putting feels and honed my eye lines and feels and rolls and stuff like that.

To his credit, he's done them religiously. There's a speed drill with coins that I do four times a week at least and I think he's done it every day since we started chatting about putting a couple months ago. I'm really excited to see that panning out for him.

He's a complete inspiration to me. Being on the range at Stanford, watching him work through his back injuries and rehabs, he's the most resilient, hard working guy, and a great guy, too.

I'm following his score probably even closer than I'm following my own. I have no doubt that he'll be back on the PGA TOUR very, very soon, whether it's this week or Q-School or winning the first three on the Korn, whatever it is.

Q. He said he's known you since you were like 7 years old?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Um-hmm.

Q. You kind of mentioned him as an inspiration. Is that the biggest thing that he's helped you with?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Absolutely, yeah. When I was 7 years old, I was more of a hockey player than I was a golfer growing up and I'd practice and play out at Stanford. The guys on the Stanford golf team were like gods to me. They were the people that I idolized and I wanted to some day play for Stanford men's golf.

Joseph was the first guy to come up and say, hey, kid, want a chipping contest? I think he realized I wasn't half bad and gave him a half competitive chipping contest. So we started out just practicing like that.

He came back from his medical my rookie year on the Korn Ferry Tour, we played two years on the Korn Ferry Tour, got our cards together. Coincidentally, he went on his first date with his girlfriend the night I went on my first date with my wife now. Just a lot of coincidences there.

Like he always tells me "plan B only distracts from plan A" and with my kind of late decision to play professional golf, that has been so true, that never once have I looked in the rearview mirror thinking what else could I be doing. Plan A is professional golf and that's exactly how he was through all of his injuries. I think that's a really powerful message.

Q. What possessed you to do all the mathematical calculations that you submitted to the Tour that have caused the change to the points? I'm not saying it's good, not saying it's bad, I haven't really studied it, but do you sit around and go, oh, this is wrong, I can fix it?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It was something I was fighting against all year because I was starting the year on the medical and playing against guys that were playing for way more points with way less players. I was trying so hard to get in those Signature Events all year and I was just on the outside.

I was at one point in the top-10 -- I was sixth in scoring average and outside the top-50 in the FedExCup. I was like, this isn't quite right, I'm playing better than my FedExCup ranking is showing.

So it was kind of a question like is there actually something here or am I just bellyaching, and there actually was something there.

Q. What's the next step for the Tour do you think if they had to make one more change in addition to what they've just announced?

MAVERICK McNEALY: This is my personal opinion, but I have a hard time defending Signature Event fields of 72 players if we're going to limit the number of players that have a card.

I think 120 is a beautiful number, I think it's very competitive. I think a cut is an integral part of our sport and I think it would be really cool to play Signature Events at 120 players over the 72. With eight tournaments, that's 400 more playing opportunities. It just seems like a layup to me.

There's a bunch of arguments why 72 is the number. None of them have convinced me yet, but that's my personal opinion.

Q. So same number of players in each field kind of across the board and you distinguish a Signature Event from a non one by maybe money?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Money and points to reflect the strength of field. But I just hope that the decision they've made is really what's best for the Tour. There's always going to be winners and losers in every decision. I just hope that the Tour as a whole wins.

Q. What would it mean for you to win tomorrow?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It would be pretty cool. It would be really, really cool. I really want to win one for my team because they are an incredible group of individuals that are the best at what they do. And they look at me and say you're being ridiculous, go win one for you, but they're the best individuals for what they do and they dedicate their life to helping me chase my dream of winning on the PGA TOUR and I just really want one for them.

Q. What would it mean for you to see Joe keep his card?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I would trade 100 trophies to have him on the PGA TOUR next year.

Q. Have you talked to Davis Love or any other players who have served on the policy board about your thinking on the size of the field?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I've mentioned a few things to the player relations team, but the board's really the one that makes the decisions. I'm on the PAC, the Player Advisory Council, and we advise but we don't make decisions.

Q. (No microphone.)

MAVERICK McNEALY: I hope so. Sometimes I think playing good is the best way to make your voice heard.