

**ROUND 1 INTERVIEW**  
**February 9, 2018**



**MARK CALCAVECCHIA (-8)**

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**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** It was for 10 holes a spectacular putting exhibition. I didn't miss, literally, which was nice. And then I lipped one out on 2, which was my 11th hole, and then really never made another one. Kind of lipped one out on 8 about six feet, hit a beautiful shot in there, but played real good. I could have hit a few more fairways, but some of these fairways aren't that easy to hit, so really good day. I knew I was playing pretty good coming in, been feeling pretty good, playing a lot of golf. You know, great start obviously. But lot of good scores today. Even with a good breeze, a lot of good scores. You've got to make a lot of birdies out here, so I've got to keep it going on the weekend.

**Q. You look at that leaderboard and a lot of popular names, a lot of big names, a lot of guys you've gotten to know over the years. Looks like it could be a fun weekend coming up, and a competitive one, right?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** Oh, yeah, yeah. These guys don't let up. You know it's just going to keep going and going and going. Mr. Langer at 6 under, that's just not average for him. You figure two more of those and he'll be at 18, so 20 under would be a good goal.

It's a good start but can't just get stuck making pars out here. You try to birdie literally every hole, even the tough ones. Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17 are really tough golf holes, but you have the mentality even on those holes to try to birdie them, so it's kind of what you need to do out here.

**Q. I have to believe you found something. I mean the last couple years have been kind of rough for you. Have you discovered something about your game?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** Well, a couple things. I had rhizotomy on back in December, which is where they burn the nerves in your back, so number one, I'm not in excruciating pain for the first time in five years. That helps, which has enabled me to practice, which helps. And I started exercising in December, which helps. Started a class called Orange Theory, which Brenda and I are doing that. I don't look much different but I feel a lot better.

All those things kind of add up to feeling a lot better, and you can't compete out here in pain. You can't practice, you can't do anything. I played good out in Hawaii but pain crept in, I had some issues on the last round and just fell apart literally. Let's hope that doesn't happen again, but at least it's moving in the right direction. I've had three good rounds out of four, one disaster, but I'm going in the right direction and able to play and practice and that feels really good.

**Q. What's it feel like to lead a tournament?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** It's been a long time, since Des Moines in '15, and that was more kind of a shock than anything because I wasn't playing very good going into that one, either. Just happened to run into a place that I love and played well every year. Feels good, you know. I'm not really going to think of it as leading, I'm just going to think of it as a really good start and a long way to go. I've just got to keep the hammer down. But again, I knew I was playing well coming in, knew I was putting well, so it's a confidence builder and that's what I need. I think it's going to be -- I feel good about this year, I really think it's going to be a good year for me.

**Q. We could be proud to say that the leader is a former CBS-12 athlete of the week.**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** True, true, yeah. I've got a lot going for me down here. This is home for me, it's my home senior event, so I love it here and love playing here and it's nice to -- it's a short commute from home when I-95's not closed. Hopefully, no more disasters on the highway. This is nice staying at home.

**Q. Do you have any fuzzy memories of being athlete of the week by any chance?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** Not really, not really. I've got a lot of fuzzy memories, but not really.

**Q. You've always expressed an affection for this tournament and the course and yet you've only had one top-10 in the years you've played it. It's got to be exciting?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** Well, I have a great memory but it's a bad one, when I had a three-shot lead with seven holes to go and fell apart, made a few bogeys. And then Corey Pavin hit the shot left-handed that was probably the greatest shot I've ever seen. Then I three-putted a few and it just all fell apart. That hurt, obviously. Kind of felt like I let that one slip away.

I have good memories here. I feel I can read the greens fairly well and I did that today. You know, looking forward to the weekend. You've just got to keep making putts, but I'm confident with my putter. Haven't been that way in a long time.

**Q. It couldn't have been too much fun playing through pain for all those years. Did you ever think about, you know, stopping?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** I thought about a lot of different things. Contemplated back surgery, full-blown surgery not this winter but the winter before. Got a second opinion and he talked me out of it, just said to keep doing the epidural route, which is what I've been doing but they only last about a month and you can't really get anywhere doing that.

Talked to Jay Haas and he did this rhizotomy deal basically where they burn the nerves. I'm not 100 percent, but I'm about 85. I still have some twinges and some grabs and spasms

and whatnot, but I can actually -- you know, if I didn't need to get home and let the dogs out, I could actually go hit balls right now, which -- and I have energy. I could easily keep playing, not feel like I need to get off my feet and go lay down and put a bag of ice on my back, which is what I felt like for the last five years. So I feel like I can keep going, so I have a lot of energy and I think exercising has helped a lot with that.

We talked to my wife and she's like how much longer do you want to do this, and I said if I keep finishing 60th every week in these tournaments and finishing 66th on the Money List, not much longer, and I'm only 57. You look at Bernhard and you look at the way some of these guys are playing in their late 50s, I've got to do a Senior Tour 2.0, second chapter here, otherwise I'm done. Hopefully, this is the start of a second chapter out here. It kind of helps to know that I can still shoot some good scores. It's been a while since I have, so we'll see. It's just a -- it's just one round, it's a good round, but it's a confidence builder, so we'll see.

**Q. Makes the day a lot more fun?**

**MARK CALCAVECCHIA:** Oh, absolutely, it certainly does.