

MARK CALCAVECCHIA (-17)

CHRIS RICHARDS: Congratulations to Mr. Mark Calcavecchia, his fourth win on PGA TOUR Champions. Mark, why don't you just -- what's going through your mind right now?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: That was hard. Yeah, that was a hard day. Even the front nine when I played great, it was -- it was windy. I got off to a dream start, obviously, birdieing the first three holes, birdieing 7. But the hard part for me today was my speed on the greens was terrible. I left them short, I blew them by. I don't know why, but my speed didn't feel right. That kind of caused me stress on the greens, so I didn't quite putt as good today as I had been.

As it turned out, it kind of got interesting, but I got the job done and I made enough putts and I hit enough good shots. That bogey putt on 16 was huge obviously. I knew it was. I knew the read on it. Even after seeing Bernhard's, I knew it went left because I missed it left before and I knew that putt. As soon as I looked at it, I said, I know this putt, it goes left because I missed it before. Anyway, that one I hit great. I knew the second I hit it I hit a good putt.

And then 17 was nice. I hit a couple great shots and I left it short. It was a nice little downhill left-to-righter and I left the dang thing short. And then I hit a great drive on 18, I was proud of that. And then I hit first shot I hit all week left with a 6-iron. Just wasn't easy. I never make things easy on myself. Why didn't I just hit a nice high fade in the middle of the green and it was over.

At any rate, it's over now, so I'm beyond thrilled.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You had a nice cheering section waiting for you on 18 green. What does it mean to have friends like Russ Cochran and Rocco greet you and help you celebrate?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I mean, those two guys, Rocco's completely changed his life around in the last four or five months. He's awesome. And Russ and I played for the last two months a lot of golf together and have talked a lot about what we want to try to achieve in our, you know, end of our Champions Tour careers. We play three, four, five times a week together and play with his son Case. I saw he was 7 under today. I mean, that was just awesome. For them, his whole family to be there was awesome at the end, and Rocco. That means a lot, so I was super happy he had a great day so that was really cool.

Q. 16, that bogey putt, did you know the second you hit it that it was good, because you started to walk it in? Were you actually trying to walk it in there?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I knew it was good. It broke a little early, but I knew I hit a good putt, and then when it was six, seven feet short, I knew it was right dead on line. I don't know, just kind of a reactionary thing because I was kind of -- when I chunked the 6-iron, I knew it was going to be close to getting over. I didn't chunk one shot all week and it never crossed my mind I was going to chunk that one. It was right at it. I mean, I just caught it a little fat. I thought it might still get over. My thought was just make sure I stay in the shot because sometimes when I get a little nervous I tend to leave it out to the right a little bit. Then I chunked it and it was fading right at the hole and it went in the water. I was like, Is there a drop area over there? The pin's on 7 but when you're way over there, it's certainly not 7 because the yardage was to the front left of the green so it was another 20. So I was more or less guessing at the yardage, so I was in a little bit of a panic situation. Then I got up there and I saw I was in a decent spot. I hit a pretty good pitching wedge. I was guessing I had around 120 yards, which I was pretty close.

Then I saw the putt and I knew I had a pretty good read on it. Then I saw Bernhard, he clearly didn't know it was going that far left and I kind of knew it was. Then I saw his and I knew it was going to break about six inches to the left.

Q. At the time that you made that putt, did you know or think, okay, this is the putt that just saved my tournament?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: No. I knew we were tied with two holes to go. Then he blasted one right down the middle and I kind of fanned -- not fanned one, I hit it solid but I left it out just in the right rough, but I had a perfect lie. Then I hit a fantastic 6-iron, so I came right back and hit just a great 6-iron 15 feet left of the hole with a really easy putt. So I was back really.

Then I left it short, and then he hit his worst shot of the day and that kind of caught me by surprise. Didn't have an easy bunker shot and he blasted it out there six feet and you just expect him to make it.

Then I was watching him putt from the back of the green and he -- Lanny comments every once in a while, well, that was kind of a quick stroke. And he doesn't do it very often, but I watched his backstroke and it was really short and really quick. As soon as I saw that, I went hmm. Sure enough, he hit a bad putt. I was like, oh, okay, if I make 4 on 18, this might be it. So I started really concentrating on what kind of swing I was going to make on 18. It was probably my best drive of the week, just absolutely killed one. Then he kind of ended up in a bad spot. Anyway, we all butchered the last hole, so I couldn't get off the course fast enough.

Q. Was 16 a (inaudible)?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Yeah, pretty much was. I didn't think the tournament was over by any stretch. I knew -- I did regroup and think I still needed to make a bogey here. I took

my time, I figured it was right around 120 yards. I walked up a little bit. I said, okay, hit a good wedge, you're putting good, give yourself a chance for bogey. I threw up some grass, I said, okay, straight left to right. So I wasn't in total panic mode where I was going to screw that shot up, too.

So I had regrouped, hit a pretty good wedge. I looked right in the sun, I didn't even see it. I knew I hit a decent wedge and I heard some clapping and I was like, okay, sounds like a 15- to 20-foot clap or whatever. Then I got up there and I didn't see my ball. I didn't know they marked it and Bart was going to hit his bunker shot. I said, shit, where the hell am I? They said, you're over there where Bernhard's at. I said okay. Then I made it.

You know, I didn't want to get too excited, I just kind of putted it and I hit a great putt and I made it and I was just like, okay, take that. I was like, all right, good bogey. Then I was just, you know, yeah, I was happy I made it for sure. I knew it was big.

Q. Mark, what's it mean to you after all the struggles you've had with your back over the last few years just being able to play well again?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: This game is so up and down. My best tournament last year was a tie for 15th. When you're down there frolicking around in 50th, 60th place every week, you just -- it's so far away the possibility of winning a tournament when you're watching Bernhard, Scott McCarron. I mean, Scott McCarron hits it 40 yards further than I do. It's like how can I compete with those guys when I can't practice, my back's killing me, I'm in pain after about four holes. I'm like, might as well just have surgery and just go away and just quit. You know, I'm done.

I mean, I think all these things, and then, you know, the next week you show up again. Well, maybe a miracle will happen. Every week you show up and you go maybe a miracle will happen, because a miracle happened in Des Moines in 2015. I was playing horrible prior to that week. I got there a week early. I bought a putter at Dick's. I played four different courses around the Des Moines area, figured out something with my putting, started putting good. I like that course anyway. Then I won out of nowhere. I was playing totally like crap prior to that week. So that was basically a miracle. So that's why I keep showing up because I think a miracle could happen.

Well, now this year I get my back fixed for now. It will go bad again but then I'll get it fixed again, this rhizotomy thing that I did. I feel great for now, so that's been a miracle, that's been a blessing. I'm doing this Orange Theory thing. I'm supposed to -- I'm scheduled to go at 9:30 tomorrow morning. That remains to be seen if I make that or not depending on what happens later.

So I'm in better shape physically. I look the same, but I was talking to Bernhard about it today. He says, you're hitting it further. I said, yeah, I am, I'm a little bit stronger, a little more flexible. I said, but I weigh the same. Bernhard says he's the heaviest he's ever been because he's stronger, muscle. He gives me the whole speech, you know, muscle weighs

more than fat, all that other bullshit. I said, yeah, I know, I said, but I'm eating like a horse. I said, I get done with one of these workouts and I look like, you know, my dog. Anything in the refrigerator I've got to eat.

Then of course I've discovered ice cream. I never really ate ice cream my whole life except when I was a little kid. Now ice cream's going down like a --

So anyway, that's why I haven't really lost any weight. But I'm stronger. I feel good and it's made a difference. I played five, six days a week for the last five, six weeks straight, which is what I did when I was young in my prime. I played all December in Arizona, played every day. When the west coast started, I was in mid-season form, I was ready to go. That's why I got off to a fast start on the west coast, I was 100 percent ready to go. There was no rust. I was just playing as good as I could play at the start of the season, so that's kind of the way I felt coming into this year.

Q. You've always played golf with a lot of emotion. Watching Bernhard at 60 now, it's clearly remarkable, it seems like he plays without emotion, but you know him so much better. What do you think?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: He does. I mean, he's by far the strongest mentally we have out here, and there's probably not more than two or three guys on the PGA TOUR stronger mentally than him and Tiger Woods is probably one of them and I'm not sure he's even there anymore. Jordan Spieth might be close.

But he knows his game, he knows his capabilities, he knows how to manage a golf course better than anybody in the world. He seems oblivious to pressure. I mean, the odds of him bogeying 17 and 18 are one in a million, one in a million. Couldn't happen again if he played those two holes again for the rest of his life, he wouldn't bogey those two holes. I believe you're kind of -- when I win, I'm penciled in, it was my time, I was penciled in. But he's incredible, and you can't do what he does at his age and be as great as he is week in and week out without -- I would be stunned if he didn't win next week, quite honestly.

Q. Would you put him -- with respect to his strength of mind, Bernhard, would you put him in the same group with Jack?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Yeah, I really would, but Jack had five to 10 guys he consistently beat week in and week out, I believe. Bernhard's got 70 out here to consistently beat every week. There's a lot of guys that are really good players out here that can really play golf on this tour.

You know, Jack knew that if he played his game and hit it in the middle of the greens and didn't do anything stupid, he was going to be there at the end. But Bernhard knows that he has to play good. He can't just plod his way around and shoot even, 1, 2 under par. He knows he has to shoot 5, 6 under every day, so he still has to be aggressive but smart aggressive.

Q. As you said, you've been playing a lot with Russ. I talked to him and he said he could see this coming. Is this a surprise to you or did you see this coming?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I didn't -- a win is very surprising, but what happened to me out in Hawaii was kind of a fluke. I played great in the pro-ams out there in the Mitsubishi and I shot two 67s in the first two rounds. But I started getting horrendous blisters the very first day, and the second day -- I mean, it was the size of a quarter on the bottom of my right foot. By the end of the second day, I was in horrible pain, I was walking on the side of my foot. When that happens, the whole side of your calf starts killing you, my knee and my left hip. Then I started getting back spasms in my upper back. Then I just, I hit a cart path and my ball went into the lava rock and I missed a couple of three-footers, and the next thing you know I was 4 over. Then I just mentally snapped and I shot 80.

But the other four rounds counting the two pro-ams I was about 17 under, so I knew I was playing well. I dropped it that night. Brenda said, You're playing great, all right? That sucked but you don't need to be in a pissy mood all the way back home, moaning and bitching all the way on the airplane. I said, You're right. So we had a good dinner and I was done with it. I knew I was playing good.

Healed up for five days and then got back out there playing with Russ and played with Jesper, and I mean, he knew I was playing good. All the guys, they knew I was playing good. I knew I was going to have a good week, but winning's a whole different story.

Q. How many times have you won with Brenda on the bag, and can you just kind of share a little bit of the emotions of what you guys were sharing there after you knew you were going to win the tournament today?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: She's going to be bawling her eyes out if she hasn't been already. This is the first time we've won, and we've had quite a few opportunities to win. This is the first time we've won together this big a tournament. We won the Shark Shootout together, we won a tournament in Korea together, we've won three or four different tournaments together, but nothing of this magnitude.

Yeah, it's finally we did it together. It's been something that's been bothering me, almost to the point where because the other three Champions Tour events I won she wasn't on the bag, so it's like, you know, then it gets in your head, I can't win with her, why is she still caddying for me. I fired her twice, she's quit 20 times, you know. There she is. She hates spectating. Either I'm not coming out or that's it, or I'm still caddying. I'm well, good point. I still want her out here with me, so she's going to caddie. Then again there's five or six, seven places she's not going to come this year, so other people will caddie for me. But she still enjoys it, she's really happy.

Q. What did you and Brenda talk about out there?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: She's very calming. I told her at the start of the week to remind me to follow through on my putts, which is one of my keys this week. And when I bogeyed 15 and 16 on Saturday, she told me to forget about it, regroup and finish strong, stuff like that.

She will help me read a putt. If it looks dead straight and I've got like a 10-footer and literally it's dead straight to me but I've got a feeling it isn't, I'll say, what do you think? She goes, looks like it's going to go a little right to me, and I might play it left center or something, or wind or whatever.

For the most part, company. She's obviously a lot better looking than most of the other caddies. She's my best friend and I just enjoy being with her. It works for us. Even when I get bitchy and moany and have a bad day, I usually forget it pretty quick and we always have a good time.

Q. Was there ever a moment where you were thinking, you're looking at Bernhard thinking, man, this guy and I were at Kiawah in '91 and here we are all these years later?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: I've thought of that a lot, yeah, I really have. I can still see that putt that he hit, and he hit a good one, it just broke a lot. I remember what I said to him when we were walking by each other. Just shit, what's that, 30, 28 years ago, 27 years ago? Yeah.

Q. What did you say?

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: "God still loves us" or something like that. He goes, yeah, I guess. I said, you hit a good putt. So yeah. And we used to stay together when we played Bay Hill when we were both with IMG at Mark McCormack's house when he was married to Betsy Nagelsen. Yeah, we used to stay with Mark there and have dinners and have a glass or two of red wine. He's really a very personable guy and used to have a lot of good times with him. You think of him as being really kind of dry and kind of quiet, but he's a very intelligent, very funny guy once you get him kind of off the golf course, so to speak.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Thank you, Mark. Congratulations again.

MARK CALCAVECCHIA: Thank you.