

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 14, 2019



SCOTT McCARRON

JACKIE SERVAIS: Please welcome Scott McCarron to the media center. Scott, you've had success at this course in the past, winning in 2017. The weekend there was obviously incredible for you, 61-64. Can you just kind of go back and talk to us a little bit about what --

SCOTT McCARRON: Did I shoot 61-64 or 61-63? I can't remember.

JACKIE SERVAIS: 61-64.

SCOTT McCARRON: Okay. I can't remember, long time ago.

I'll tell you what, I didn't get off to a very good start the first day and then started rolling pretty good the second day, made a lot of putts. I just kept it going.

And then Kevin Sutherland and I had a tremendous battle. We were four or five up, I think, from anybody else in third, so it was just a battle between Kevin and I, and we just kept making birdie after birdie and topping each other with birdies. I birdied -- I think I birdied 16, 17, 18, and had a great birdie at 18. That's the thing that's the most memorable was hit a drive off the tee on 18. I didn't want to hit it in the water, so I over cut it a little too much, hit the trees and kicked way back, and had a shot over the trees from like 165 yards with an 8-iron. No angle, no nothing. And just one of those shots that just came off perfect to about 10, 12 feet just left of the hole.

I mean, I've gone back there and tried to recreate it when I did media day here and I can't even do it, trying to recreate. So it was one of those, you know, shots you pull off one out of 20 times. That was pretty special to make the putt and finish it off with a birdie.

JACKIE SERVAIS: This will be your fourth start at this event. Can you just talk a little bit about what you like about this event and what brings you back here?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, it's fun for us to come back to golf courses that we played on Tour. I mean, I always loved coming back here and playing this golf course. We get to play a course that we played on, Tour the same type of yardages, and the golf course has just gotten better and better over the years. It's in fantastic shape. It's a golf course you've got to drive the ball extremely straight, you've got to work the ball off the tee. The greens are in probably the best shape I've seen them in quite a few years. We've had some trouble with some rain over the last few years, but this year the golf course is just absolutely fantastic. And it's fun for us -- the fans that were here watching us back in the day, playing, you know, in the '90s and 2000s are coming back and watching the same guys play and I think it's

pretty special.

JACKIE SERVAIS: How about that Charles Schwab Cup ranking, you know, 11 consecutive weeks of being No. 1 and significantly No. 1 the last five weeks. Can you just talk about what that means to you and how you would like to continue that?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, yeah, that's no surprise to anybody that I've been saying that's my goal is to win the Schwab Cup. I finished fourth, third, second, so I've got one more to go. So I'm trying to do everything I can to be there with the last few events into the Playoffs. I would like to try to get a lead and get a big lead going into the Playoffs because once we start going to the double points, you know, guys can come from behind and catch you with a couple good weeks. I've got to keep plugging away and keep trying to win these tournaments and see if I can get a nice lead going into the Playoffs.

Q. Scott, I think it's safe to say this is by far one of the best fields we've had at the Dick's Open. When you look at that field, what are your thoughts?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, anytime you've got Freddie Couples and Davis Love and Bernhard Langer, Retief Goosen, it's pretty special. These guys are Hall of Fame players, they're playing great. You know, some of these guys are playing as good as they did in their heyday. It just means a lot for guys to come back here and supporting this tournament just like they did when they played on the PGA TOUR. By far I think this is one of the best fields we've had all year.

Q. Jack Nicklaus is going to be here later on today. When you were growing up and an up-and-coming golfer, what are some of the memories you have of Jack Nicklaus?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, I think everybody goes right to the '86 Masters with Jack winning that. Jack was one of my heroes growing up. I had about eight or nine young guys my age that played at Silverado Country Club where I grew up, and every time we played, everybody picked a player. Who ya going to be, Johnny Miller, Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino. You tried to swing like him and act like him during the day. I always wanted to be Jack Nicklaus because he was the best.

Q. How much have you played or practiced since Firestone?

SCOTT McCARRON: I took a month off actually after Firestone. I didn't go play the British, just took a little break, took a couple weeks off right after Firestone. Over the last couple weeks I'm back practicing and playing a little bit.

But I've had a nice -- I've never had a month off in any season during my whole career, so it was actually kind of nice to take a little break, kind of a mid-season recharge the batteries. Spent a lot of time on the lake in the boat, wake surfing. Had a great month off, but I'm ready to go back and play.

Q. Scott, I remember having a lot of fun doing yardages for you at the 2013 Phoenix Open.

SCOTT McCARRON: That's right.

Q. On-course reporter. What do you attribute your success to on the Champions Tour? I mean, you really lit it up out here.

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, I think there's a couple things. I felt like when I got to the end of my career on the PGA TOUR, I had a couple injuries and life gets in the way of golf sometimes, and taking that time off really made me appreciate how much I love playing golf for a living.

So when I was coming back to play on the Champions Tour, one, I started working with a new teacher, E.A. Tischler, and that helped out a lot. But just getting back in shape, getting back with some renewed energy.

And I was dating my wife, Jenny, at the time. Wanting to show her I could still play a little bit. And she was pushing me, because there was a time in that 48 to 50 when I was doing some announcing, I was working for Golf Channel, doing a little CBS, NBC, signed a contract with FOX, that I was considering which direction do I want to go. Do I want to give it a shot again in playing golf or do I want to go into the announcing. And Jenny really was pushing me to go back into golf, she knew how much I loved that.

So that was a big push for me to get back in. Okay, if we're going to do it, let's really do it. A lot of guys come out here and have had great careers and have tons of money and Hall of Fame and this is kind of a just go out and have some fun. For me it was, okay, if I'm going to do this, I want to be the best out here and I want to practice and I want to play and I want to eat right and work out and do everything I can to be the best player that I can be and be one of the best players out here.

So I feel like I've got a lot of prove, I guess. Mostly just to myself, not anybody else. No one else really cares what I do except my wife, but I'm trying to prove it to myself. So I'm setting high goals and I feel if I stay in shape, I can have a good 10-, 12-, 14-year career out here on the Champions Tour.

And the other thing is, you know, when you're 25 to 28, 35, you're not really thinking of the end, that you're going to have to stop playing golf at some time. Once you turn 50, you think, oh, okay, there is an end in sight. I know that and it's not that far away, so I want to put everything I can into it and get the most out of it and enjoy it and have fun.

I think that's been one of the biggest things for me is having Jenny travel with me. We have so much fun together on the road that she's made it a lot more fun than just traveling out here by myself and going through the drudge a little bit. I think she's been a big help.

Q. You mentioned the 20s, this is a quick follow-up. Wikipedia has you not transitioning well from college to the professional ranks. Looking back, I mean --

SCOTT McCARRON: I don't know about not transitioning well. I quit golf for four years. I thought that was a great transition. Yeah, I quit. So what's the question?

Q. Just lessons learned from that?

SCOTT McCARRON: You know, lessons learned from that would be when I was getting out of college, my buddies were all turning pro, going to South Africa and playing, Asia. I just didn't want to do that. I didn't feel I was good enough. I felt my golf career per se, you know, my lifelong dream to play on the PGA TOUR was over, so I quit. I literally just quit.

I actually just found a picture the other day. I took all my trophies from all my junior golf days, and there were hundreds of them, whatever, and at the time my dad and I started a golf apparel company, so we had this big packing table that we packed shirts on. And I lined them all up, took a picture and I threw them all away, every single one of them. And now I wish I would have kept a few of them, but I literally, at that point the dream was over and I quit.

I didn't play hardly at all. I only played golf to sell shirts, and I was running some charity events in Sacramento because I had the golf background, but I was doing it to sell 144 shirts and hats and those type of things.

So I played some scramble events 10 times a year for three years and that's about it. Didn't play golf hardly at all. Skied. I was flying, got my pilot's license. Skydiving, kayaking. Started a city flag football team, was playing on two softball teams, playing city basketball, tennis team, traveling, playing racquetball tournaments, open racquetball tournaments.

So I was doing a lot of other things and not playing any golf and it wasn't until a Champions Tour event at my home course, the Raley's Senior Gold Rush that I saw four or five guys putting with the long putter. I went home that night, made a long putter, started putting with it.

The next day I called in sick to work, went out and practiced a little bit and I said, I like this. You know, I'm going to have some fun with this. I started playing and I signed up for some amateur tournaments just for fun and started winning them and enjoying it. And almost won at 25 the U.S. Mid Amateur. I think I made the quarterfinals at the U.S. Mid Am and that was it. I came back and told my parents, I said, "I'm done working, I'm going to go play golf for a living," and that's what kind of got me back into it.

Obviously a different transition than most guys. I don't know how many guys on the PGA TOUR played the Mid Am, but again, being away from it as long as I was again gave me an appreciation to when I got back into golf, how much I really did love it.