

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**March 7, 2019**



**MARK O'MEARA**

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**Q. Hours on the tarmac, is that right?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** So I left on Monday morning from Tucson because I had to go to Bay Hill for MasterCard, who I represent, and everything went fine. I got in there Monday afternoon, had dinner, played on Tuesday, dinner Tuesday night.

Yesterday morning I left my -- I left Bay Hill at 5:00 a.m. yesterday morning to catch the 7:15 United flight through Houston and arrived here at 11:15 yesterday morning.

I got on the plane and they had it loaded up. There was somebody, an ill passenger on board, so they had to have the paramedics come, so that took 45, 50 minutes. The passenger, they didn't want to get off. The pilot says we're not taking off, I'm not taking off with an ill passenger. So they had to kind of slowly get him off the plane.

Then there was a light and a mechanical problem. They tried to fix it. They couldn't fix it. Then they got everybody off the plane. Then they put us back on the plane, and so we were about four hours late coming into Houston, so I couldn't make my connecting flight.

So then they said -- when I landed in Houston around noon, they said you can a 2:20 flight but you're coach, or you can catch the 6:45 p.m. and you're up front. I'm like, look, I paid for a first-class ticket, I want to fly first class. I'm in no hurry.

Now, it's already been messed up. My wife is coming to the airport, so I said I can have lunch with her, pick up my mother-in-law, who was coming down to watch our dogs, and I'll go home for two or three hours. Then I'll drive back up, catch the 6:45 last night.

So I did that, I went home. I left the house at 4:45, drove back to IAH, got there, got on the plane at 6:10. Supposed to depart at 6:45. Lights are on, something mechanical again. I'm thinking, you've got to be kidding me.

So we sat there at the gate for like an hour and 45 minutes. Then the pilot says, okay, I think we've got the problem fixed, we're just waiting for the paperwork, waiting for the paperwork, waiting for the paperwork. Okay, we've got the paperwork. We're going to button up, go out, pull out. We're not even like on a main runway, we're just sitting out there on this runway for like 50 minutes and he hasn't said anything.

Now, we've been on the plane for like two and a half hours minimum. He comes on and he says, you know what, we still have an IT problem, we don't have the right paperwork and we've got to wait for that. We could take off, but it would be -- we can't take off.

So everybody's just sitting there, sitting there, sitting there. 10:10, back to the terminal. 10:10 p.m., back to the terminal. Change aircraft, we have to get a new crew, we're going to fly to L.A.

I'm like, no, you're not. I'm going to catch the morning flight.

**Q. Was the first one supposed to be Orange County?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah. So literally I spent 18 hours yesterday. It took me 18 hours of basically from the time I left Bay Hill to the time I put my head on my pillow last night, and seven and a half hours of that 18 hours was sitting in a seat going nowhere. Not good.

**Q. That's not the way you treat a champion.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** It was kind of a bummer because I would have liked to have got here and do the things that need to be done. Even, you know, if it wouldn't have been here, possibly I might have withdrawn, but I had to come here.

Obviously I grew up here. As you know, we've talked before, I played high school matches on this golf course. You know, look, I got here. I'm obviously tired, but we'll be fine. We have a 12:20 tomorrow.

**Q. Besides that, isn't it kind of cool to return to your stomping grounds after a win?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah. No, listen, I had 550 text messages Sunday night, I had 120 emails. I stayed up pretty much all night on Sunday night responding to everybody. You know, it's a nice problem to have because it had been a long time. It was nine years since I had won. The way I played last week at Tucson National, I didn't play like a 62-year old. I felt like I was 32. I mean, obviously I was a little nervous, but on Sunday I was pretty calm.

When you tee off with a one-shot lead on Sunday and shoot 7 under, eight birdies and a bogey and you win by four, that's a nice way to certainly finish it off in that style.

But the players out here play so well. Obviously what Bernhard's done out here has been amazing. You know, I've had so many seconds. I mean, 15 or 16 seconds. That's a little disappointing, so it was kind of nice to get over the hump.

**Q. Did those seconds motivate you at all in terms of --**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Maureen, you weren't there last week, but my practice session to get ready, everybody's like, did you work on your game? I'm like, no, I was home for a couple days. CBS came in, we did some filming. The week before I rode my snowmobile. I rode all day Friday, I rode all day Monday of Tucson, and then flew down to Tucson on Tuesday morning and I hit it pretty good. But I haven't hit a ball -- well, I played a couple holes on

Tuesday in Orlando. We'll get out there this week and hopefully play well this week, it would be great.

**Q. Do you still have a lot of friends back here?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** So my daughter went to USC. She's a lawyer, she lives up in L.A. So my daughter and my son-in-law are coming down. They had a little boy, so I had my first grandson back in June, so he's eight months. Oliver. So they're going to come down maybe on Saturday morning.

**Q. And Shaun has a business now, right?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** He does, in Orlando. He's got that Duvyn, D-U-V-I-N, clothing. He's doing well. I had breakfast with him on Tuesday morning before Bay Hill. He's good friends with Rickie and a lot of the guys. They wear a lot of his stuff off course. Obviously Rickie's a Puma guy, but when they're hanging out they like to wear Shaun's Duvyn stuff, so that's kind of cool.

**Q. Did you make it back here when you played in the Big West at Mission Viejo that year?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** I did, I did.

**Q. That's the last time you were at Mission Viejo Country Club?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** No. I played last year actually.

**Q. Oh, you did?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Yeah. I went down there and played, Dave MacKenzie, who is a dear friend of mine, he used to kind of be the Pioneer electronics guy. I went and played with Dave. He's a legend at Mission Viejo, so it's fun to go back.

I'll tell you who I did sit next to at dinner on Tuesday night up on stage, Beau Hossler, because he's a MasterCard kid now, too. Beau's sitting there and I'm like, "Hey, Beau, how old were you when I played with you at Mission Viejo?" It was Curtis and I in the back row and it was Beau, it was Justin Rose and Ian Poulter. And Beau's like, "I played with you when I was 12." I remember. Then those guys didn't know it there that Beau grew up on the same course I grew up on.

**Q. Yeah, he had playing privileges there and his old caddie, Shellenburg, who's a member at Mission Viejo, I was telling her --**

**MARK O'MEARA:** Have you been out there?

**Q. No, I haven't, but I heard about the Mark O'Meara room. I had a few glasses of red in the Mark O'Meara room.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** He'll know this. Jim Murray named it Mission Impossible. It was a Robert Trent Jones course. Senior, the old man's course. It was -- yeah, as a kid growing up, it was tough. I didn't hit it very far, but I mean --

**Q. If you could play there, you could play anywhere, right? One other question. You talked about winning after 60.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** I didn't know that I was the fourth oldest guy that had won on this tour.

**Q. Yeah. Jay Haas -- in the last five years there have been nine. Of course, Bernhard has been six of them, but Jay Haas did it, you, that's nine in five years, so there's more of them.**

**MARK O'MEARA:** You know what it says?

**Q. What?**

**MARK O'MEARA:** The golf ball doesn't know how old you are. Only you do, and I know. I mean, but luckily my health's been pretty good and it's just been a motivation thing, so maybe this will help motivate. It doesn't guarantee that I'll play great this week or win this week, but it's nice to come in the locker room and every guy's sending me texts or congratulating me.

Because I remember that feeling, and that's a great feeling when your cohorts or your fellow competitors are happy for your victory. I think they all know how I've come close many times but haven't finished the deal. Where Bernhard Langer finished the deal or other guys finished the deal, I just, I haven't. But it was nice to finish the deal last week, close one out.