

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
May 30, 2019



SCOTT McCARRON

CHRIS RICHARDS: Good morning. I would like to welcome 2016 Principal Charity Classic champion, Scott McCarron.

SCOTT McCARRON: Thanks, Chris.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Your first win on PGA TOUR Champions was three years ago here at The Principal Charity Classic. Is there a sense of nostalgia coming back to this tournament knowing that it was your first win?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, certainly anytime you win a golf tournament, wherever you are, always feels good coming back. And this one being my first win out on the PGA TOUR Champions is very special.

You know, I remember a lot of that week. I had just gotten married a couple weeks before. I remember the weather being pretty good, the course was playing fast and firm, and I remember birdieing the last three holes to win by one. So it was a pretty special moment.

CHRIS RICHARDS: And since then you've won nine more times. Could you have imagined that being the setup to the kind of run that you've had the last few years?

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah, sitting here now and I've won 10 times or nine times since that one in 2016 is pretty amazing. But I've been looking at what Langer's been doing over the years, he's been winning a bunch, and I'm trying to win as many of these tournaments as I can and put myself in position. Some good players out here. You know, I just have to pinch myself that I still get to play golf for a living and do what I love to do at 53 years old.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You talk about putting yourself in position, you've done that this season, you've built a pretty sizeable lead in the Charles Schwab Cup. What's been the key to your success not only tournament to tournament, but sustaining that over the course of the season so far?

SCOTT McCARRON: You know, I've been playing pretty solid. I'm hitting a lot of greens, which you've got to do out here. I've been driving the ball well. Putting's been okay; it hasn't been as good as it was over the last few years, but I've had my moments when I've putted well, putted okay. So I think just putting myself in position. I've got it done twice, I won two times already this year, but I also feel like I've lost a couple tournaments. I feel like I should have won in Newport, I felt like I should have won last week, those type of things. So I've missed a few, but just keep putting yourself in position. You're going to have times where you might get it done when you play well, you might have other times where you play well

and somebody else just plays a little bit better. As long as you keep having a chance with nine holes to play, that's what we're asking for.

Q. How do things change? You won, like you said, when it's firm and fast, now it's soft and mushy. How does that change your approach?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, I've only played three holes so far this week. I played on Tuesday, I played 9, 10, 11 and they were extremely wet. I think now I'll be hitting driver a lot more because of how wet it is. Before you're hitting some irons off the tees. It's a lot of position golf course, trying to get in the right position, some 3-woods. But I think now the way it is I'm probably just going to be hitting driver everywhere, so that will change strategy quite a bit actually.

And the par 5s, when it's fast and firm you can get to all of them fairly easily. I'm hitting irons into some of the par 5s after good drives. You won't be able to do that this week. I mean, it's going to play a lot longer on those par 5s, so I don't think you'll be playing the par 5s quite as well as maybe we had before. But driving will be a lot easier because you'll be able to keep the ball in the fairway.

Q. You get enough uneven lies around here anyway. I imagine with everything either going, you know, one hop and stop or even doing a plug, even with the lift, clean and place, you're going to have a lot of challenging stances for second shots even more so than you would. Tom was in here earlier, Lehman, and he said that when you get to lift, clean and place, spin control may not necessarily matter as much, but is that still a big issue out here on these greens considering how soft everything is?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, I do believe when it's fast and firm the ball tends to run down to the low part of the fairway, so you'll have some flatter lies. Now the ball's going to be standing on a lot of the slopes. I talked to a couple of the guys who played the pro-am yesterday and like I think it was 15, for instance, Brandt Jobe said he had a shot that stayed right on the slope and it was almost a full baseball swing. Well, we never had that before because the balls roll down to the low end. So you're going to have a lot of unusual lies. Even though it's lift, clean and place, the greens are going to be so soft, and these greens are probably some of the most severe greens we play on the PGA TOUR Champions all year. We have three, four, five, six percent slopes on a lot of these greens, which is a lot. So I think spin control's going to be a big issue here. You've got to be able to control the spin because of how wet it is and how sloped these greens are.

Q. Tried to predict who's going to come on this tour and be successful is an inexact science. Some guys you think are going to kill it, struggle to do it. You have managed to do it to have success. Why do you think you have been able to have success when maybe some others haven't?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, a couple things. One, I think you've got to stay in good shape, that's a big key. Come out here ready to play. I went and played on the Web.com for a year

and a half some events just to kind of keep ready, to keep the game in shape. You've got to come out ready to play. I think guys who maybe take three or four years off that don't play and don't play competitive golf have a tougher time transitioning to the PGA TOUR Champions because these guys are really good and these guys go low. So I think you've got to be prepared and ready to go right from the start when you turn 50.

Also, I think I've had success because I'm hungry. I want to play well, I need to play well. I had a decent career on the PGA TOUR, but it wasn't a career where I could just rest on my laurels and go retire off into the sunset with a bunch of money. I need to play well, I need to make money, I need to do the things that I'm doing. And because I'm hungry, I'm practicing, I'm working out, I'm eating right, doing all the things you need to do to be competitive out here.

So I think you've got to still have that hunger, and you can have that if you've got millions in the bank, but I think sometimes that makes it a little bit harder.

Q. Did you have that hunger, that realization from the start, or --

SCOTT McCARRON: Yes.

Q. Okay. So you didn't have to kind of --

SCOTT McCARRON: No, I needed to go out and make money. I needed to go out and make money to do the things that I wanted to do. In order to do that, you've got to play well. Right from the start I came out here wanting to do well, not knowing if I was going to be successful. I played like eight events when I turned in July. The British Senior Open was my first one at Sunningdale and I finished 18th. I didn't play great, but I said, okay, I think I can do it. And I had a couple top-10s there towards the end of the year and I felt comfortable.

But then again, the USGA took away the anchor ban and I putted with the long putter and I had to kind of start over again. So even at that point, even though I felt like I could play well here, I had to reinvent myself and find a different way to putt. Even after that first eight events, I still wasn't sure what I was going to be able to do until -- it took me a couple of months to try to figure out how to putt again not anchored. Then, once I did that, I felt I could come out here and be successful.

Q. Is that what that progression -- I mean, kind of remember as we're going back and talking about that breakthrough win a few years ago, there was a progression that kind of led into that.

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah.

Q. There's several top-20s, even a couple of top-10s two out of the three weeks before maybe. Was that more of the figuring out the reinvention that needed to

probably happen before --

SCOTT McCARRON: It was. I started playing that year unanchored the first tournament and I didn't putt very well. The next tournament I putted short putter, claw grip. In Tucson I putted short putter, claw grip. Then it wasn't until I had a couple weeks off until I cut my putter down, added some weight to kind of really figure out how to do this thing, how to make it as stable as I possibly could unanchored, and I figured out right around Rapiscan, the tournament in Biloxi. That's when I thought, okay, I can do this. But it took a couple months to kind of figure it out.

Then, once I figured it out, I realized that it's actually a better stroke being nonanchored because it's a freer stroke. When it was anchored on my body, if my body stopped, I couldn't get the putter through. That was always one of my problems even on the PGA TOUR. But with it being not anchored, when the body stops, the putter still goes through because there's nothing anchored. So it actually created a better stroke not only -- and even that ban was really only for the belly putter. They wanted to get rid of the belly putter. And they knew -- I talked with the USGA guys, Mike Davis and all those guys, the whole time through this. They knew that guys were going to continue with the long putter, but they wanted to get rid of the belly putter.

Q. Your first-round pairing is interesting.

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah, UCLA guys.

Q. Are you looking forward to that?

SCOTT McCARRON: I am looking forward to that. You know, we play every Tuesday together, Brandt and Kenny T. and I, and have a great time. We've known each other for -- well, Brandt and I have known each other since '83 and Kenny since '85. Very comfortable with each other. We do dinners together. I think it's a great pairing, we'll have a lot of fun.

Q. I think he said last week that playing with you guys helped him, helped him with depth of the tour and really learn how to grind and what it took.

SCOTT McCARRON: Absolutely. You know, Kenny we knew had the game coming in, just, you know, figuring everything out; where to stay, when to come in, what to do, practice rounds, don't hit too many balls, be rested, all those things. And I think Brandt has really helped him a lot. I've maybe helped Kenny a little bit.

But I enjoy Kenny's company. He's a great guy and I'm really happy that he's been successful out here. I believe he's going to be one of the top-10 players out here.

Q. Is it in any way different when you tee it up now when you're leading the Schwab Cup, you're leading the Money List and everything, everybody's aiming for you like

they have for Langer for a few years?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, it's interesting. It's still real early in the season. We've got like 15 events left or something like that. Having the lead right now doesn't mean too much, but I can keep increasing that lead and that's what I'm trying to do. I want to go into the playoffs with a big enough lead that I can secure this thing up. So to do that, I've got to keep playing well.

You know, again, nice my caddie gets to wear the Charles Schwab jersey every week, that's kind of cool. I don't think anybody's really gunning for me. I think everybody's just trying to play well and win tournaments. We'll see how it goes towards the end of the year.

Q. What do you want to learn about this course before you tee off Friday?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, I'm going to go out and play the pro-am, play 10 holes today, so I won't even get to play the front side at all. Again, probably try to find out where some of the real wet spots are to avoid them and how much the ball is spinning back on some of the greens. The greens were pretty slow when I played the other day, so they're probably going to be fairly slow again. I've got a pretty good idea of how to play this, but some of those where I normally would hit iron off or a 3-wood, I'll be hitting a lot of drivers today just to see where the ball's ending up.

Q. How much of an adjustment -- because of the washout last year, how much of an adjustment is it when you've played a course a particular way even though you guys -- I mean, I know it doesn't take that many rounds for you guys to get a grasp of a place, but when you truly haven't seen it play the way that it's going to play right now, I mean, what kind of adjustment process is there for you guys in reality, or is it not that --

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, again, I go through my yardage book. I went through it last night and I was looking at where I was hitting irons off tees, where I was hitting 3-woods off tees. For instance, like 1, 3, 4, I was hitting 3-woods off tees. Those will always probably be drivers now.

So I won't know because I'm not going to get to play those today. To be honest, I'm going to go out there tomorrow and it's going to be a little bit blind, not sure how far the ball is really going. You know, like on 3 you can take it and hit a little 3-wood draw and catch the top of the slope and it used to run all the way down. I don't know what it's going to do, so tomorrow's going to be honestly a little bit of guesswork. I'll try and get a little feel for it today, what the back side's playing like, but the front side, we're going to be totally blind on that one.

Q. Pros usually don't like to use the word "guesswork."

SCOTT McCARRON: That's going to be guesswork, it really is. You're going to have some

guesswork. Depends on who's teeing off first. I'm going to be watching for Brandt and Kenny and seeing what their ball's doing and have to make adjustments watching what they're going to do. I'm not sure exactly right now. Probably still hit 3-wood off 1, probably going to have to hit driver off 3, probably going to have to hit driver off 4. 6 is probably going to be a driver now, 7's probably going to be a driver. So there will be some -- there will be a little bit of guesswork tomorrow.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Anything else for Scott? Thank you very much.

SCOTT McCARRON: Thanks.