

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
April 28, 2021



SCOTT McCARRON

Q. Scott McCarron, you have a unique situation this week being the defending champion, but it's back in 2019, two years ago. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, yeah, it's an interesting situation not getting to defend last year. So I guess I'm the longest reigning defending champion here at the Insperity Invitational.

It's a great golf course. It's such fun to come back to a venue that we played on the PGA TOUR and now we get to play on the PGA TOUR Champions. Looking forward to a good week. Hopefully the rain will stay away and we'll get some good fans out here and have a good week.

Q. What do you remember in particular about 2019? I know the back nine you hit some really great shots.

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah, there were a couple shots that stick out. Coming into the par 5, 14, I had like, I don't know, 225, 230 hole and I hit a good drive there. Scott Parel and I were kind of going head to head at the time and he had to lay up. I thought this was a good opportunity to knock it on the green, and I hit a beautiful hybrid. I just got a new Tour Edge Exotics hybrid and I hit it as good as I can hit it, right in the middle of the green, and made birdie there.

Then the next hole I kind of -- I fooled him a little bit. I hit this little knockdown slicing 6-iron in there, and I don't think he realized how much I took off it, so he hit 6-iron to the back of the green. I'm like, I kind of got him there. We were talking about it yesterday actually on the range. He's like, man, you got me. Yeah, I kind of got him there.

And then I hit a great shot on 16, a 6-iron to about a foot. So that was -- that was huge. Scott hit a great shot on 17 and missed a short birdie putt and I had a two-shot advantage going into 18 and was able to close it out. It was kind of fun kind of going -- kind of battling with him coming down the stretch.

Q. Just kind of talk about this tour in itself, the Champions Tour, how it's kind of -- what it's kind of been for your career to keep it going.

SCOTT McCARRON: Well, it's meant a lot. I mean, when I was 48 I had battled a few injuries my last few years on the PGA TOUR, so I was playing 12 or 15 events a year and decided to do some TV work with Golf Channel, which was a lot of fun. But I was playing 12 events and working 12 events and not doing either one of them great. I had fun doing the TV, at least.

So when I turned 50, I wasn't sure how it was going to go. I still kind of kept my feet with the announcing with Fox for a couple years, I signed a two-year deal with them to do USGA tournaments. So I wasn't quite sure how it was going to go.

But when I got out here and I played my first event, the British Senior at Sunningdale, I think I finished 18th or so and I thought, you know what, I can actually do this. I had a couple top-10s the last -- I played like six or seven events that year and then came out strong the next year.

I got married halfway through the year at Bass Pro Shops and two weeks later I won in Des Moines and that was it. I mean, I started winning quite a bit and really having a lot of fun.

So it's been a huge resurrection of my career to think that you turn 50 and you can actually have a better career than you did on the PGA TOUR. And I tell people all the time, I feel exactly the same as I did -- now as I did on the PGA TOUR when I was trying to win golf tournaments. When you get in the hunt, you've got the same feelings. And it's the same guys I was playing against, a lot of the same venues. So, I mean, I've got to pinch myself that I'm able to continue to do this. Now I'm 55, but it's been a great run for the last five years.

Q. Scott, did this event at all like springboard that 2019 run of yours?

SCOTT McCARRON: You know, I would say it probably did. I actually broke my driver at home, cracked the face, and came here with a new driver. Just started driving it great and ended up winning here, winning two weeks later in Atlanta and then winning a couple weeks later in Japan. I won three events in about five or six tournaments, which was a huge springboard.

Then I had a couple pretty tough losses. The PGA Championship when Kenny Tanigawa made a putt on the last hole to beat me. My college teammate and one of my best friends, but I was very happy for him. I stuck around for his celebration, to celebrate with him, but that was a tough one.

And then at Calgary, I won that two years in a row. Then to lose to Wes Short with a ball hit in the water, bounced out of a rock onto the green. Great break for Wes, bad break for me. We could have had a couple more wins in there. But it was a good solid year and this definitely springboarded to winning the Schwab Cup.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the fact that Jim Furyk, you know, started out pretty hot? He goes back and forth on each tour, he's still pretty competitive. What does it mean to have him playing out here?

SCOTT McCARRON: It's great. You look at the players that have come out in the last couple years, Jim Furyk, Ernie Els, Retief Goosen, I mean, these guys are Hall of Fame

guys and they can still flat out play. They can still play both tours if they wanted to.

So Jim to come out here and play well, no one's surprised. I played at Colonial last year and played a practice round with Jim and he was talking about, you know, I'm not sure how much I'm going to play out there, what's it like. I said, Jim, you know that feeling you get when you have a chance to win a tournament on the PGA TOUR? He said, yeah, it's been a while. I said, you get to feel that a lot on the PGA TOUR Champions. And he did, he came right out like gangbusters. Again all of us want to win, all of us want to put ourselves in contention, and if you play well, you can do that out here.

Q. It didn't help you, though.

SCOTT McCARRON: Listen, it's good for our Tour. The more good players coming out here, the better. Having Phil coming out here testing the waters a little bit, he enjoyed it.

You've got to remember, almost everyone that played the PGA TOUR and was successful played out here. There's only a couple guys that didn't and those guys were guys that had a lot of other extracurricular stuff going on. They had businesses and they put their competitive juices into that. But the guys that still want to compete, they all come out here.

So when I look at the Jordan Spieths and Rickie Fowlers and all these guys that have a long time before they get out here and they all say, "Well, I'm not going to play out there," yeah, you will. Everybody does.

Q. Scott, even like I saw this week like Thomas Bjorn is in the field. When you see a guy like that, more and more guys are --

SCOTT McCARRON: Absolutely. John Senden's making his debut this week, too. Sendo can still play, and plays on the PGA TOUR and he'll play probably four or five events on the PGA TOUR as well. And then Thomas Bjorn, you know, Ryder Cup captain, and he's been a big stalwart on the European Tour for years. It's great to have him over here. He doesn't really have status yet, but if he plays well, he'll have status. And that's what he wants to do, just like Darren Clarke when he came over here.

So everybody wants to come over here and play and to get those competitive juices flowing because at 50, you don't know when it's going to end, because it's going to end at some point. Just sitting up there having breakfast with Hale Irwin, this guy won so many times out here and still wants to compete. In his mind, he still thinks he can compete, but the body just doesn't quite do what the mind thinks you can do right now. And it's going to happen to all of us at some point, so why not take advantage of everything you can while you're 50, because by the time you're 61, 62, who knows. But guys like Bernhard Langer give us hope that you can continue doing it for a long period of time.

Q. Like you were saying, you would like to go at least another three or four years?

SCOTT McCARRON: Oh, I'd like to go another 10 years. If I can stay in shape and continue to play well. Who says you can't play competitive at 65 or so? The thing is, the guys that are coming out are really good and they're longer. They get longer and we'll get shorter. You've got to do all the things to continue getting strength and not losing too much strength to be able to hit it far and compete with these guys.

Q. You guys are competitive, like you've been talking about, but this is a real friendly tour, though, right? Everybody gets along with each other?

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah, pretty much. You know, we've known each other for 20 or 30 years and played against each other, competing. There's a little more camaraderie. When you win a tournament, guys will hang out and wait for you on the 18th green or up in the locker room. But everybody's happy when they see a buddy of theirs win. I'm happy when my friends win and they're happy when I win. It is, there's a lot more camaraderie.

And it's not as cutthroat. I mean, you know, most of the guys that are out here can compete and compete for however long they want, so they're not out here trying to fight for their job. But there are guys who are fighting for their job that maybe didn't have a great PGA TOUR career where they've got to stay in the top 36 or get into career money or career wins. That gets a little bit more cutthroat, but for a lot of the guys, we're rooting for everybody.

Q. Scott, could I ask you one question about the kid that went viral this week, the Michael Visacki, the kid who Monday qualified?

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah, when he was crying?

Q. Yeah.

SCOTT McCARRON: I know.

Q. How cool, right?

SCOTT McCARRON: Really cool. And it just shows you how much guys put in and how much they struggle. What a battle it is just to get and play an event on the PGA TOUR. People ask me all the time, you know, what's your greatest memory in golf or your greatest victory. I still go back to just going through Qualifying School at Grenelefe all six rounds. I just remember the emotion that you had just to actually get through. That was, I think, one of the greatest things I've ever done because if I didn't do that, I wouldn't be here.

Q. And lastly, this summer coming up it's the 30th anniversary of Payne Stewart's first U.S. Open win. Do you have any memory of Payne Stewart that you can share with us?

SCOTT McCARRON: Yeah, you know, actually, my first real memory happened here at Shell Houston Open here at The Woodlands. I had won in New Orleans and I think we came

straight here after that, or THE PLAYERS Championship and then here.

I got into the winner's category and I got paired with Payne Stewart. We teed off on 1 and I'll never forget, I absolutely bombed one on 1. I didn't know Payne Stewart very well at all and I was about 40 or 50 yards by him, just smoked it by him. I walked up to Payne and I said, I said, "Is that your ball or my ball?" He said, "Oh, that's mine."

"Oh, yeah, mine's up there. There's a Walmart in between our balls." He just looked at me and says, "Oh, it's on." And from that point on, me kind of giving him a little jab, we became instant friends. When Duck Soup would play and he would go out and play harmonica, he'd take me with him as someone to talk to before we'd kind of hang around and get up on stage. I mean, I deal with him here, in Phoenix. We just started hanging out and having a good time, because I was the rookie and I was kind of -- I was kind of giving it to him because he loved to give it to people. He was such a character.