

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Jeff McNeil

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Hi, Jeff, thank you for joining us in the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions. As defensive line, tell us a little bit about looking back on the last year and what you look forward in this week.

JEFF McNEIL: Yeah, last year was a lot of fun. Wasn't sure what to expect. It was my first celebrity tournament ever. I had no real expectations coming in.

You know, it was a lot of fun. Just being in the tournament like this, you know, playing alongside the LPGA girls and the celebrities was a lot of fun.

Was lucky enough to come out on top and get the W.

Q. (Regarding 2009 amateur championships.) What made you decide to focus on...

JEFF McNEIL: My second round of that tournament was not good. Played really well the first day. I think I shot 74. The second day I just remember going to the first tee. I think was well within the cut line to make match play. The second day it was pouring rain, horrible conditions.

I think I got the wrong end of the draw. I had the afternoon/early, instead of early/afternoon. Ended up shooting 89 the second day, so wasn't really getting any college scholarships.

Started playing baseball again and started playing well for about a month or so, got a scholarship.

Q. How much did you gain last year from playing alongside the LPGA Tour pros and what skillset did you gain that you can use in your own game?

JEFF McNEIL: Yeah, they're incredible. They're so good. We play the same tees as them. People ask all the time, did you play back? No, same tees as them. They're incredible. Short game is a phenomenal. I wish I had half the short game they do. They're incredible.



Yeah, just a lot of the fun. They're great players. You know, kind of learned a lot last year seeing how they navigate a golf course and they haven't seen the rough ever. That's how straight they hit it. Wish I could do that with my game.

Q. As a former competitive golfer, do you pick up where you left off or is there still some rust?

JEFF McNEIL: I still try to play a lot of tournaments in the offseason. Baseball is my job; golf is my hobby now. I try to play as much competitive golf as I can, still play a few tournaments here and there in the offseason.

Still know what the pressure is like in those kind of shots. For me now it's fun. It's a hobby for me now.

Q. It how is your golf game coming into this year?

JEFF McNEIL: You know, not bad. Actually was up at Pebble Beach last week for a little three-day tournament. It was a lot of fun. Shot my career low at Spy Glass. Want to say it's pretty good. Got a new putter. Rolling the ball a little better I hope.

Hopefully some putts can drop this week.

Q. Jeff, looking at the field this year which of the celebrities will be your biggest competition?

JEFF McNEIL: A lot of good celebrities out there. Mardy Fish has won this a few times. Always a great play. Smoltz, Mark Mulder, Derek Lowe, have all won this tournament before.

So I think one guy who hasn't won this tournament I think is going to compete this year is Aaron Hicks. Great golfer. Hits the ball a mile. I think I hit the ball far and he outdrives me by 20 yards.

I played a practice round with him last year. Pretty amazing how far he hits the ball. If he can put it all together he is going to be a good player.



Q. When you look back at last year, seeing this is an actual tournament for the ladies, you're still competing against each other and you see how they dial in and are competing and also still keeping it a fun environment for and you the other celebrities, when you look back on that, what do you think about that, and maybe the respect for things that you saw when all that was going on?

JEFF McNEIL: Yeah, this is their jobs, what they do every day. This is me out on the baseball field. I know what they're doing. It was weird. I feel like last year, like last year I played with Charley Hull and Whit Merrifield the first round, so two MLB guys and her. It was a little bit more comfortable having him there as well.

Then the next two days I played with two LPGA and I'm like I kind of want to stay out of their way. This is their tournament. It's our tournament at the same time but I feel like this is their livelihood what, what they do. So try to stay out of their way a little bit. Then the final round I played with Charley again and John Smoltz who I played with both of them. That was a comfortable pairing for the last round.

I think that helped me get the win as well.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports