

The Sentry

Friday, January 3, 2025

Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii, USA

Plantation Course at Kapalua

Maverick McNealy

Quick Quotes

Q. (No Microphone.)

MAVERICK McNEALY: I feel like I did everything pretty solid. I hit it nice, every drive was for the most part in play, cleaned up well around the hole, didn't have to chip that much, which was nice, and I feel like everything was pretty solid.

Q. A lot of smiles between you and your brother throughout the round. You came here and played a bunch growing up. Are you bridging up any old memories?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It's usually just stupid stuff. Jokes, keeping light, funny stuff we have seen. We could probably write a book with all the crazy, funny stuff that happens out here. But we're keeping it light, having fun.

Q. What do you think going into tomorrow your attitude, mindset, anything you want to clean up or just pedal to the metal?

MAVERICK McNEALY: 14-under, probably about halfway there. I think I need to get to 28 at least with the wind forecast. So definitely have to keep the ball in play to be able to hit it at the flag and make some birdies, so more of the same.

Q. You're leading in strokes gained approach. What do you feel like you've been doing well with your irons besides hitting them well. Why have you been hitting them well?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Honestly, I've been doing the same stuff I've been doing the last six months that's been working, and just feel like it's getting better and better. It's the same swing key, take it back outside and swing left, hit down, take a divot. It's coming out nicely. I'm really excited about my play on the uneven lies on this golf course because that's something I've struggled with over the past couple years. And really I think the answer to that is just getting steeper, so swinging more left and hitting down. It's something that I kind of miss living in Vegas



versus growing up at Stanford. The back nine at Stanford, tons of uneven lies, and everything is Vegas is pretty flat. I've been doing a good job of that this week.

Q. You say the stuff in the last six months, is that just swinging left?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Exactly. It's pretty much just swinging left, trying to hit cuts, and being able to hit down.

Q. How much more gettable was it out there today?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It was really gettable. Our group was 27-under combined. It just felt like I was playing solid, but had to keep making birdies just to keep up with JT and Davis. So it was very gettable. There's a lot of interesting tee shots where if you hit a perfect tee shot it's going to end up in the rough, so that puts you on defense on a few holes. Like, the 1st hole, 13, there's just a handful of tee shots out there. But, otherwise, if you're in the fairway, it's soft as wind-free as it is there's usually a bowl you can use to get it really close.

Q. Are you hitting down on it even when the ball is above your feet?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Definitely, yeah. Because if you're -- basically, if your swing plane is to the right -- sorry, if your swing plane is left, it kind of gives you room to hit down, because when you hit down it kicks the path out to the right, so if you're kind of underneath and stuck there's really no way to keep the ball from hooking with a ball above your feet if you're too in to out. But for the most part it's, like, hitting down, there's less ground in the way, from a simple perspective.

Q. What kind of schedule have you set out for yourself, given there's a lot of good stuff, it's a tight season, you got to give yourself a break.

MAVERICK McNEALY: I love to play a big West Coast and then a little lighter on the Florida swing, being a West Coast guy. I'll probably play everything except AmEx through L.A., and then might play Mexico as well, so planning possibly seven out of the first eight and then one



or two in the Florida swing.

Q. What's your beef with Palm Springs?

MAVERICK McNEALY: With Palm Springs? That would just be eight in a row, and that's too much. I love Torrey, AT&T is my favorite event of the year, can't skip Riv, and I finished sixth in Phoenix last year, so kind of got to play all those.

Q. Sony?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Sony, yeah. 7th two years ago, I'm here. We'll go home for one week, probably even fly down to Palm Springs, because it's the best place in the country this time of year for weather, just to practice for a day or two. But eight in a row would be a little too much.

Q. As a kid what was your first experience with Florida Bermuda?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I really didn't experience Bermuda until my freshman year of college when I qualified for my second tournament and played Golf Club of Georgia. The greens were bent grass, but I remember being on the left side, hitting what looked like the simplest little bump and run chip, and I hit it like two feet, and I went, Well, that's a little different. I definitely improved a lot in that department.

Q. How? Experience or is there another way?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Just time on it. Over the last seven years, every time I've been in a Bermuda tournament, I've spent a little extra time on the putting green, trying to learn it, and I think it's paying off.

Q. You talked about during your career you always had one thing kind of really good, and trying to keep it all together. Last year was the iron play the one thing or what was that?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Last year was the iron play. Short game was really good, putting was solid, driving was very good, and so far it feels like everything's been really good the last couple weeks.

Q. What are your Augusta plans?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I'll probably see if I can sneak in a practice round the Monday after THE PLAYERS. I haven't set that up yet. Honestly, just trying to treat it like any other week. It's not, it's the Masters. But I feel like I'm playing pretty good most weeks right now, so if I just take that into -- I feel like the game I have right now travels to any kind of golf course, which is exciting, so this is the first time.

Q. You played there before, haven't you?

MAVERICK McNEALY: This one?

Q. No, Augusta.

MAVERICK McNEALY: Augusta? I played it twice, but never played the tournament.

Q. (No Microphone.)

MAVERICK McNEALY: Yeah. You got to play good there. It doesn't really suit any kind of game, maybe shaping it a little bit right-to-left, but I got it set up where my 3-wood draws and my driver cuts, so I feel like I can do that.

Q. Is it still cool getting the invitation?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Yeah, it was awesome.

Q. Were you waiting for it?

MAVERICK McNEALY: No.

Q. Did you find yourself checking the mail every day?

MAVERICK McNEALY: No, I was in the backyard covering up the outdoor furniture, and Maya just said, Hey Mav, you've got some mail, I think you're going to want to open this. It was from Augusta National. And I said, Yeah, that one's pretty cool. It really sunk in that I was going to play the Masters when I opened that up, that was fun.

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