

# AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Pebble Beach, California, USA

Pebble Beach Golf Links

## Maverick McNealy

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Maverick McNealy here to the interview room. A place where you've had two Top 5s in your career including a runner up in 2021. How does it feel to be back at Pebble Beach?

MAVERICK McNEALY: This is one of, if not my favorite, event every year on TOUR. I love the golf courses. I'd say any day with short sleeves at Pebble Beach is going to be a bucket list day. It was actually my 16th birthday present to get to play Pebble Beach for the first time. Kind of grew up playing the Peter Hay as 12 and under used to be free for kids, so my brothers and I would just go around and around.

So special place. Love this tournament. And it's cool being an AT&T sponsor guy and playing in the home event.

THE MODERATOR: You've got three top 10s so far this season, just one shy of your career high on TOUR already in I think eight starts. How great has it been to get off to a good start this season?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It's been good. I feel like I've been doing everything just a little bit better this year. Putting has been a really bright spot for me, really consistent week in, week out.

Just tweaking little things here and there. I don't think there is any magic push to get over the hump and the hurdle, but just trying to find little bits and pieces that I can improve on here and there.

My whole team is doing an awesome job. I think everybody has just kicked it up a notch this year. We're all trying to find that one percent in everything I do, and really excited. I feel great coming into this week.

**Q. You have two runner-up finishes in the state of California. What is it about your home state that really gets your game going?**

MAVERICK McNEALY: I could start with the home

cooking. I'm staying with my grandparents this week, so grandma's home cooking. Same thing back home in the Bay Area.

I love poa annua grass. A lot of guys don't like it, especially guys who grew up in the southeast. I kind of have the same feeling about dormant Bermuda, but I just say it breaks downhill and play a lot of break and hit it soft and it's a speed contest, and that's something I literally work on every day I go to the golf course, is my putting speed control.

There's a little bit of variance in that poa. It gets a little bumpy in the afternoons, but if you putt with good speed you have a better chance of making it.

I'm comfortable with the turf. I love these golf courses. Suits my eye.

I think from a driving perspective, I feel like the stats, I don't hit the most fairways, but I kind of keep the foul balls to a minimum. And out here with shorter rough and just trying not to hit it in the Pacific Ocean, that kind of is right up my alley. Just really comfortable. I just see shots out here really well.

**Q. You mentioned the recipes. Which is your favorite?**

MAVERICK McNEALY: The golf courses?

**Q. No, your recipes, the home recipes.**

MAVERICK McNEALY: Grandma made French toast this morning. Last week -- I actually stayed with them last week at Torrey Pines, also, and grandma makes one of my three favorite foods, these little homemade dinner rolls with a little bit of caramel on them. It's incredible. I can't eat too many of them, but they're the best.

**Q. You've improved your FedEx standing each year on TOUR. In your mind, do you see yourself as an established guy out here, or is there still kind of an impetus to prove yourself?**



MAVERICK McNEALY: That's honestly something I haven't thought about. I just show up with the mindset I want to get a little bit better every day, and it's really validating to see my FedEx improving, my stats improving, getting into bigger tournaments more and more.

Kind of something that I want to change is I've only played two of the last 12 majors. I've made the BMW Championship every year on TOUR. I've improved my FedEx every year. But now I want to start competing in those bigger tournaments. It's something you think about but don't think about is trying to get in the Masters.

THE PLAYERS Championship is going to be a big week for me, and that's why I'm so excited to come to a tournament like this because I feel like I have a great chance to get my nose up the leaderboard and make some of those things happen.

I'm just encouraged and excited about all the things in my game that are improving right now.

**Q. Going back to that 16th birthday gift, what sticks out to you about that?**

MAVERICK McNEALY: My dad and I actually played right before the Champions Tour event. We played all the way back, and I think I shot 72 as a 16 year old. I was pretty happy with that. It was towards the end of summer season, so I played more ice hockey than golf growing up, and the start of golf season in the summer, I'd be hitting it 15 yards further, but everywhere, and then by the end of the summer I'd figure out where my ball was going just in time for hockey tryouts. I remember my game was pretty good at that point.

We spent the summers here, so we would come and putt on the Pebble putting green and my parents would be upstairs. We'd order breakfast at the gallery, pancake, bacon, eggs, an incredible amount of food for four boys, and then we would go down and putt for 20 minutes until food was ready, and they would yell down from the balcony when it was time to go eat and we would go back up and eat.

So I spent hours and hours at the Peter Hay and then on the Pebble putting green, but the first time I actually got to go out there and play the golf course, I guess with an actual tee time, I may have snuck out a few times after the last group was done, but it was really, really fun.

**Q. How big do you expect your gallery to be this week?**

MAVERICK McNEALY: I'm going to have a lot of friends, a

lot of family, a lot of my friends from Stanford coming out. My three brothers are all coming in. They were saying, yeah, if the weather is good on the weekend -- I'm like, what do you mean if the weather is good? Come watch. It'll be fun. They're all staying with grandma and grandpa, too, so really excited for Saturday night dinner. It will be just the four brothers and mom and dad and grandpa and grandma, just a family event, super comfortable, and just can't wait.

**Q. Do you feed off of that when there's like a lot of family and friends following you? Does that inspire you to play better?**

MAVERICK McNEALY: For sure, yeah. I had two years on the Korn Ferry Tour and then my rookie year was the COVID year, so I hadn't really competed with fans around for kind of the first two and a half, almost three years of my professional career.

I remember when fans started to come back on the PGA TOUR, I go, wow, this is just so much more fun. I have so much more energy. I remember playing the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial and I was a late tee time on Saturday, and we were standing on that first tee going, there is just so much more energy out here, it's so much more fun.

It's fun when you make a birdie when people clap. I love that.

**Q. Because of your track record and because of the special meaning this place has to you, is there any consideration or any worry about not putting too much importance on this week and treating it like another week, or do all those incentives actually kind of incentivize you to play a little bit better?**

MAVERICK McNEALY: I would say -- like I said, I'm very -- I think very, very much in the present. The past and the future are all things you just make up in your mind, and really the only thing that matters is right now.

To be honest, I'm just focused on a few things right now. I'm focused on making sure my putting speed is good, making sure that I see lines on these greens, making sure that I do my golf swing maintenance, making sure that my body is in good shape and I am ready to go, and most importantly making sure I'm rested.

Because it's three different golf courses, it's a pro-am format, so the rounds are a little bit longer than usual, and hopefully have a ton of energy and focus and ready to go on Sunday afternoon if the week goes the way I want it to.



But I just think -- I'm really looking forward to this event because I feel like I have a great chance to play great this week. Doesn't put more pressure or expectations on me. I am just focused on what I'm doing right now, and hopefully it all turns out.

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