

U.S. Open Championship 2021

Friday, June 18, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

Mackenzie Hughes

Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: Mackenzie Hughes, 4-under 67.
Mackenzie, what was the biggest difference from yesterday to today?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: I made a few birdies today from spots that par would have been a pretty decent score. I made a couple long putts that we'd have taken two-putts all day, and I pitched one in. That's really the kind of difference in the round where you shoot around par and you've got to get one going a bit lower. A few bonus shots. I really thought I played quite nicely. It was going to be a solid day regardless, but those few extras made it really nice.

Q. Talk about how important it is to get out to that hot start.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: The back nine is really difficult start. 10, 11, 12 were all really tough holes. So to go 3-under through that stretch, I felt like I was more than three shots ahead of the field there. So that was big. Then just kind of felt like I got into the round quickly with that start and felt like I was back in the tournament. Yeah, it felt good to do that early.

Q. Not a ton of success previously at the U.S. Open. Talk about your past experience and where you are now.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, my first one I was deer caught in the headlights, 22-year-old, hadn't really played that many professional events at that point. So that was fun at Marion. Last two, yeah, I felt like I've played okay, just probably didn't come in on the best form the last couple times. So I felt like my game was coming around even though, again, I really wasn't on the best of form. I felt like I was coming around and felt pretty good about my game in general.

Yeah, it's a hard test of golf every U.S. Open you play, so it doesn't take much to miss a cut. I feel like I've been a pretty strong performer on the PGA TOUR for the last five years, but U.S. Open is a different animal. So I feel like I'm trying to figure that out now in my fourth start, I think.

Q. Mac, wonderful start to the day. Not only was it three birdies in a row but three of the toughest holes on this golf course. How did it feel to get off to that fast start?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it was a real bonus. I felt like, if I got through those holes even par, that would have been a nice start. 3-under was far and above the expectation for that stretch. That's kind of what you need to do sometimes in a tournament like this is get a few unexpected ones, and then yeah, it really made the rest of the round feel a little easier, kind of getting off to that nice start, feeling like I was back in the tournament.

Didn't need to press kind of the middle of my round, end of my round. Had it been a slow start, kind of felt like I would have taken a few more chances. It was nice to get that start and go on with the round.

Q. Seemed like you managed the rest of the day fairly well. Is that a fair comment?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I felt like there was a few times where I probably should have made birdie where I didn't. Maybe the wedge into 14, wedge into 17, wedge into 18, and made par all three times, where I was in a great position to maybe make a birdie.

Then a few nice saves, a few nice recoveries from the rough. So all in all, I feel like it kind of balanced out fairly well. Missed one shorty on the 5th there, but all in all, I just feel like I made a lot of progress with the game and excited for the weekend.

Q. Did you see this coming in? Did it seem like you were leading into it?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I felt like I couldn't miss every cut, so five cuts in a row, I felt like I was kind of due to play some good golf. It's a nice place to do it being a U.S. Open at Torrey.

Yeah, I felt like I just had to keep my head down and keep working hard. I was just, again, hoping that results were



coming. I just didn't know when, if they were going to be next week, this week, a month. I've been working hard at it and feel like I'm going the right direction.

Q. You've said this before, how much you like to play the difficult golf courses. The tougher the test, the more you enjoy it. Is that what's happening here?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it's just hard. There's a value to par, and that's when I feel like my best golf comes out.

Certainly, I've been a part of a few birdie-fests, but I'd much rather putt my way around and try to make a bunch of pars and sprinkle in the odd birdie. This golf course is a great test right now. There's a bit of luck involved with lies and the rough and all that, but you just have to manage your way around so well. There's just not an easy shot out there.

Yeah, just excited about the way the game's trending, and hopefully keep it going on the weekend.

Q. What do you do for the weekend? How do you prepare?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: I just do a lot of the same I've been doing. I guess I've been in a pretty good routine this week. Just working on a few things in my game. So I'll just keep doing those things. Got a few notes in my yardage book that I'll be referencing a lot. Really more of a mental focus for the weekend, where I just stay committed to that plan, and I like my chances playing some good golf.

Lately that's probably been more of the case is just, if my head's screwed on properly, then I'll play all right.

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