

U.S. Open Championship 2021

Saturday, June 19, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

Mackenzie Hughes

Flash Interview



Q. It looks like no matter what happens you're going to be playing in the final group of a major. Your reaction to that?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I'm excited. You get goosebumps thinking about it, so I know I'm going to be nervous tomorrow. I essentially played today around the lead all day. I think I was only ever a few back the entire day, so it felt -- I think it'll feel different tomorrow being in that last group, but you do the same things. You mentally tell yourself the same things, and I'll be referencing my yardage book and my notes a lot.

But yeah, I'm going to try and enjoy it lots, and yeah, embrace the moment.

Q. How do you feel about your position, and is it surprising given your recent results?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: I wouldn't say surprising. I don't think I'm ever surprised when I play well. I wouldn't say I necessarily expected to be in the last group this week, but I know that my game is good enough to win on the PGA TOUR. I've done it before. This is a bigger stage, but again, it's the same -- you do the same things. It's an 18-hole golf course and 72 holes, so I just need to do a lot of the same things I did to win that tournament, and I'll draw back on some of those experiences, but yeah, I'm excited for where I'm at and for the round tomorrow.

Q. Last year you missed five cuts before your runner-up at the Honda. Same thing coming into this week. What did you learn from that that you took into this?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: You know what, I have referenced that a couple times here post-round, just that kind of felt very similar to today where I kind of got to Saturday and felt like the weight had been off my shoulders a little bit. You miss five cuts in a row and you kind of wonder when you're going to get it back on track, going the right way, and so I got to Saturday today and just felt like, okay, the hard work is kind of done for me. I'm going to go have some fun and play golf.

Definitely drew on that experience and felt like there was a lot of parallels.

Q. Did you find anything over the past week leading into this tournament that allowed you to kind of flip your results?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, you know, I got a couple good tips -- now granted, not a lot has changed, but one thing I did change was ball position. I kind of get my ball a little too far back, and as a result the path was too far right, and I either hit a block or a shot going left, so now I've kind of moved that ball forward and been hitting cuts predominantly all week, and that's been great, just to have a shot I kind of lean on and go to.

But that's pretty much it. That's kind of the one thing I've found, and a couple little small mental keys that I've been trying to tell myself, as well, but yeah, just a couple small things, and then golf sometimes just goes your way a little bit and you make a few putts and maybe pitch one in and you feel like momentum takes you forward rather than kind of going the other way.

Q. What kind of mental cues?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: I don't want to divulge too many secrets --

Q. I'm not going to steal them.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: But people are listening. (Laughter.)

You know, it really just comes down to mental toughness. I really think that the hard thing to do when you're in the midst of struggling like five cuts in a row that I had missed is to stay positive in light of that. It's really easy to get down and to be negative and to pout and feel bad for yourself, but I've been trying to do the hard thing, which is to be positive, glass half full, optimistic, looking for the progress, and that's kind of a little bit what I've been working on.



More of that tomorrow, and again, win or lose tomorrow, I've been making a lot of progress, and I'm excited for the challenge.

Q. Saturday night, what do you do tonight? Will you get your mind as far away from it or will you sort of wallow in it?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: You know, I feel like it takes more energy to keep it away, and tomorrow it's going to be right in my face. So I don't think I'm going to try and turn my phone off or shy away from it at all. I'll probably watch a couple of shots I hit today and kind of relish those and enjoy those and remember those for tomorrow.

I've had pizza the last two nights, so I'm probably going to have pizza again tonight. There's probably a strong chance I'll eat pizza. I'm not that superstitious but I'm a little superstitious.

Q. Rory said he's having the same chicken sandwich for the sixth straight night tonight.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Three nights is not bad, so I'll probably do pizza and play with the kids and go to bed.

Q. Given where you are on the leaderboard, would you rather it be set up difficult tomorrow or would you never want to wish that at a U.S. Open?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: I think they could not touch it at all tonight and it would be perfect for tomorrow. I don't know what they're going to do. It has progressively gotten firmer as the week has gone on, so I expect tomorrow to be a bit firmer. I just hope it doesn't ever cross the line of becoming unplayable, I guess, but today it was perfect, the right amount of firmness where good shots were rewarded but bad shots weren't. Yeah, so I think that it's in a great spot, and I'd love to see it stay kind of how it is, but we'll kind of see what it's like tomorrow.

Q. I actually wanted to ask you about that. The complaining and moaning and groaning is kind of the sound track of every U.S. Open and there really hasn't been any hardly at all this week. What's your explanation for that?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: It's just a really good golf course. I know that that will be criticized, that comment, probably, but there's no tricks to it, if you will. It's right in front of you, and if you leave it alone and kind of let it do its thing, it's a great challenge all on its own. You don't need to do a whole lot to it. We play the Farmers here every year and 8, 10-under wins. Make it a bit firmer in June and you might have 4- or 5-under winning it, which I think is a pretty good

score. I think it's just a great golf course that be set up a number of different ways and you can probably push it a bit more. You can make it a bit easier but just a good golf course that I think has a number of different ways to have it set up well and play well for this tournament.

I agree with you that there's been very little complaining, which is unusual, but yeah, it means the USGA is doing a good job.

Q. Are you a leaderboard watcher? Did you realize where you were this afternoon?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I pretty much looked every time there was a leaderboard. Kind of not glued to it but just wanted to see where guys were at, if someone was going haywire and 9-, 10-under par, I don't know, but I wanted to see where everyone was at.

Kind of gives you a bit of a barometer, too. I know I dropped a shot on the 9th hole but seemed like no one was really tearing it up, so I thought, okay, hang in there and stay patient, it's going to be tough on the back nine, and luckily I got a few.

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