

Sanderson Farms Championship

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

Jackson, Mississippi, USA

Country Club of Jackson

Mackenzie Hughes

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome defending champion of the Sanderson Farms Championship, Mackenzie Hughes, to the interview room here. Thanks for joining us.

It's kind of weird, you're seeking your third title. You've won two, but you're defending in the same season, which probably doesn't happen that much, the actual same tournament. Can you just take us back to that victory and defeating Sepp Straka in the playoff here and what it's like to be back here again.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it's a nice place to come back to. Obviously great memories, and I played the back nine today, so kind of reminisced a little bit. Kind of walked back through some of the shots I hit last year.

You don't have too many of those moments to look back on. Really I've won the RSM and I've won here, so it's really special when you have those places that you go back to that you've claimed victory, and this one is no different.

Every time I walk on this golf course now, I'm reminded of that. It's great to be back.

Q. Have you been out on the golf course today? Have you change any changes at all condition-wise compared to what it was like last year?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: The course looks great. I played the back nine today, and it looks awesome. I think every year we're kind of spoiled out here. The greens are always fantastic and the course is in great shape, so no different than years past.

Q. A lot of changes on the PGA TOUR lately. One of the big things is the next ten, which it's a little bit difficult to explain, but obviously the Next 10 at the end of the season through RSM get into the first two Signature Events, Pebble Beach and Genesis, and



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you're No. 51. That Next 10 will be 50 to 60 at the end of RSM. You're No. 51 right now; you've got a number of tournaments in the fold to retain that position. How much will that be on your mind as you're playing through the fall?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Certainly when I get asked the question it will be on my mind, and I've thought about it, but I think for the most part, I'm just trying to play some good golf this fall and get some momentum heading into next year.

Whether I get those two events or not is not going to make or break my year, but certainly it would be nice to be in those events.

But like I said, if I just focus on me, play some good golf, hopefully that takes care of itself. But I'd like to get in the mix and see if we can try and pick off another win.

Q. You played the Fortinet, the first event of the Fall Series. Obviously you had a few weeks off. What have you been doing with your time?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, there's not been a ton of golf, but I stayed busy. I've got three kids, so relaxing at home is not something that is in my vocabulary right now.

Yeah, very active with my kids starting school and different sports and activities, so I've been a bit of a chauffeur the last three or four weeks at home, which has been fun. Fun to be part of the school dropoffs and pickups and be there for all that kind of stuff.

It's been nice to be home and relaxing, but it's also been pretty busy, too.

Q. You talked a bit about reminiscing playing that back nine. How much can you remember that feeling of getting that victory, and how much does that drive you in tournaments now to get back to that?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, definitely I remember basically every shot I hit from that last round. I could probably go through the whole tournament.



Specifically that last round, there was lots of memorable moments and shots. Yeah, playing the back nine today, it was just nice to relive those things. It's a feeling that you want to have more often, and that's kind of what I alluded to earlier. I just want to play some good golf and get myself in position to feel those things again because that's what we all love to do the most is to compete for trophies and try and win tournaments.

Yeah, definitely motivated to try and recapture those feelings from last year.

Q. No matter how many times you play a course, these practice rounds can never really be taken for granted. Even though you won here, still important to come out and check what the conditions are. What has been your routine today to make sure that you're getting your game plan ready for Thursday?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I think that the way I go around the course for the most part doesn't change too much strategy-wise, but yeah, getting a feel for the conditions. Getting a feel for how the greens are playing is hugely important. Nine holes today was great for that, just getting a feel for how pitch shots are reacting, speed of the greens.

Yeah, it was very valuable, and definitely feeling more comfortable the more I play out there.

Obviously it's just nice to have the memories I have from years past. Even when I'm playing the course this week, I'm sure some of those things will come to mind pretty easily. That's always nice to kind of draw back on.

But yeah, the prep has been going well, and feeling good about this week.

Q. You mentioned remembering a lot of those shots from the end of the tournament last year. Having executed and played so well in a tight situation, how much does that boost your confidence moving forward knowing that you've been in those spots and executed in those spots before?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, definitely. There's no doubt that's a confidence booster. I've hit some important shots under a lot of pressure and pulled them off. You have those forever to draw back on.

If I'm in a similar spot this week, like I said, coming back to last year or drawing back on my first victory, I know in those moments, those scenarios, that I can do what's needed to be done. That's reassuring.

Having two wins on the PGA TOUR in playoffs also gives me a bit of confidence, just knowing that when it's needed I can pull it through.

Q. Talk about what you like so much about coming back to this place, and what can you draw from past experiences?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, there's lots of things to like. The people here are great. Steve and his team do a great job just making us feel welcome. That's first and foremost.

Then the golf course itself is one that I love. Very easy to kind of see what your eyes look at. It's visually appealing off the tee. It's one that I enjoy looking at and playing.

There's a bunch of different factors. I like the fact that it's a relatively small town, if you will. So it's not like you're playing in a big city type feel. I came from a small town, so this is something up my alley.

There's a bunch of different factors that I like.

Now that I'm a defending champion of this place, it's one that will always kind of hold a special place in my heart, I guess, going forward.

Yeah, I guess for those reasons, this is a place I just love coming to.

Q. Has there been any notable changes or bag changes to your game since you were here last year?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: No. Really just -- I've got the new Ping woods in the bag, but other than that, I have the same irons and the same wedges, like fresh wedges but the same wedges. For the most part, everything is basically the same.

Q. I want to ask you, did you pay attention to the Ryder Cup? Did you watch much of it? Were you invested in it? How much did you watch?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I watched a decent bit of it. I wouldn't say I was invested but I was definitely keeping a tab on it, watching it fairly closely. Was curious to see how all that was playing out.

It was some compelling TV at times.

Q. I think the reason I'm interested is I think in your pool at the Match Play earlier in the year, you had Spieth, Homa and Lowry, who all played in the Ryder Cup, and you beat two of them and advanced out of

your pool. When you watch the Ryder Cup and knowing that you had those matches with them, what is that like when you're watching that and know that you've contested and beaten them?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I mean, that's fun to think about and fun to discuss even. I know that those guys are obviously some of the best players in the world, and I knew that when I was playing the Match Play earlier this year, that they were going to be tough to beat, and that advancing out of that pool was going to be tough.

But yeah, another thing that kind of -- another feather in the cap. Something that I can always look back on and draw some confidence from is something like that.

Just knowing those guys, seeing those guys and playing with those guys a bunch, you're watching the Ryder Cup with a bit of a different outlook, if you will, because I'm looking at those guys and I've played with all of them, and it's just neat to see them in that format because they obviously all come out with a little bit of a different persona or demeanor than when they play on the PGA TOUR. You're seeing reaction and emotion that you never really see from some of those guys. It's definitely a fun thing to watch on TV and to kind of be sort of a part of.

Q. Just to add on to that, obviously you have the Presidents Cup in mind and you're one of four Canadians that's won on the PGA TOUR this season. Presidents Cup is in Canada next year, within a year's time. How much is that on your mind when you're playing and moving toward next year?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, that's a big part of the next year for me. I think I alluded to it maybe earlier this summer, but that to me would be like the cream of the -- I don't know. That one to me is the biggest one.

The Olympics are next summer, as well, but having done that once, I would give the Presidents Cup the nod for me. I was pretty close last time in Charlotte, and that was like my new hometown, and I'm going now to my home country next time, two Presidents Cups back-to-back that I've desperately wanted to be a part of.

My focus will actually be to not try too hard. I know I think Justin Thomas alluded to this a little bit in the summer when he felt like he wasn't playing very well and he kind of alluded to the fact that he wanted the Ryder Cup so bad that it almost felt like a hindrance to him.

I know I'm similar in that sense, that like I would want the Presidents Cup probably too badly to a fault, and I need to keep that in check because, while I do want to be a part of

that team, it is not life or death. But it would be one of the thrills of my career.

I'll work really hard to do it and try and be my best for the next 10, 11 months, but yeah, going to have to just keep my expectations and my desires at bay or just kind of tempered, I guess, if you will.

Q. The Sanderson has one of the more unique trophies in sports. What was that like lifting that last year, and where does it rank in terms of trophies you've gotten to lift in your career?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it's definitely up there as far as unique trophies that I've had. I actually -- funny enough, I won an amateur tournament when I was 20 years old, I think, and the trophy was actually a giant bear head. I have a few animal trophies in the house, which is unusual.

But I think when my oldest son asked me to win a trophy, he didn't have that one in mind, which I told him, I really can't be too specific or too selective with trophies. Whenever they come, we're going to take them when they come.

I think the rooster is really cool and unique, and it's definitely a fun talking point. When we're at home with friends or different people see the trophy, it's kind of fun to talk about.

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate your time and your insight. Good luck this week.

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