

WM Phoenix Open

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TPC Scottsdale

Matt McCarty

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Matt McCarty to the interview room here at the WM Phoenix Open. Matt, this is your hometown. You were born here, raised here, call this home, and now you're playing as a PGA TOUR member and winner. What's that got to be like?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, it's really exciting to be here. Obviously been here a ton, just outside the ropes, and really cool to be inside of it and playing the golf course, and with all the people and the atmosphere and everything, it'll be a lot of fun this week.

Q. Tell us a little bit about, I believe you were a standard bearer once at this tournament; is that accurate?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, I did that a few times growing up and in high school and stuff. I've been inside 16 with all the fans and everything but haven't hit any shots yet.

Yeah, really excited, and obviously growing up here, know the course really well, and kind of more on an even playing field with a lot of the guys that have been out here a while. Yeah, it'll be a lot of fun.

Q. Are there any key memories, any moments from PGA TOUR players that are either still on TOUR or the past that stick out to you in your experience here onsite?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, we were holding signs for Ken Duke, and I remember a lot of guys are locked in out there, but I remember he was kind of talking to us walking down the fairways and stuff, and I thought that was a really cool experience.

But yeah, just to have fun and kind of interact with the crowd this week is kind of a good goal for me, I think, and yeah, just enjoy it as much as possible.

Q. Does your former experience as a standard bearer, does that make you treat your standard bearers any different now that you're on TOUR?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, I think so. I think just with all the kids and everything, I'm not crazy far removed from that, from wanting golf balls and gloves and whatever. So anytime I can do that and see a smile on their face, it's really cool for sure.

Q. State of your game coming in. You made history this past fall winning in just your second start as a member after that three-victory promotion on the Korn Ferry TOUR. What's the whirlwind been like since this past fall?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, it's been crazy. Kind of took me a few years to win kind of at every level. College took me a couple years. Korn Ferry obviously took me like two and a half, and then to get out here and get it right away was kind of surreal, but kind of keep digging deep and kind of got kicked in the teeth a little bit the first month out here and learned a lot. But just excited to kind of be back in the desert, comfortable environment, and really looking forward to it for sure.

Q. We had Luke Clanton in here earlier this morning and he's kind of the other end of the spectrum, a wunderkind, winning at every level. There's still room for development like yours in this game. How have you gotten so much better compared to all of your peers?

MATT McCARTY: I think just honestly being on the Korn Ferry, you learn a lot coming out of college, like how to travel, play 25, 26 events a year. But I was always kind of a late bloomer. Went to Santa Clara, kind of not a big school, kind of late bloomer coming out of high school.

Learned a lot like my first year out, realized I needed to get a little bit longer, take care better of my body, get a little stronger. Then just kind of everything that comes with playing four rounds of competitive golf and kind of making a cut is obviously important but then also keeping the pedal down on the weekend is the biggest thing.

Yeah, definitely learned a lot, but that's the thing; golf is obviously getting a lot younger, but I think there's a lot of



guys that play their best golf kind of in their 30s, too, as well.

Q. I'm curious about the differences in golf courses. How would you describe PGA TOUR setup versus a Korn Ferry TOUR setup?

MATT McCARTY: Definitely a little bit longer, more demanding off the tee for sure, a little firmer. You don't have to shoot like 7-, 8-under every day, which is nice, but it's a lot harder to shoot 3- or 4-under.

Yeah, been a bit of an adjustment, but I think coming off there, you know how to go deep and kind of learning how to do that is good.

I think you honestly play a lot tougher golf courses in college than you kind of do on the Korn Ferry, so it's kind of going back to that. But as hard as the golf course can play, one advantage of my game is being able to think and manage myself around four days.

I've liked it, that it's been tough. So yeah.

Q. Matt, when you're here as a standard bearer or as a fan, do you remember having visions, thoughts of competing in this tournament one day?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, definitely. I think came out in high school, obviously, and came back a couple times in college. It'll be kind of different coming out here and not having a bunch of beers on the weekend and everything.

But grew up wanting to play in the stadium, so it's a really cool experience. I think very unique for us as golfers, as well. Obviously the environment here is so much different.

But I kind of grew up out here, and this was like our local tournament, so I just thought golf was kind of always like this, and that fun atmosphere I think is great for the game, honestly, too, so just really excited to be here.

Q. You practice out at TPC Scottsdale, too, don't you?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, play and practice out here for the last three years. I didn't play stadium a lot growing up. I played across the street a ton. We could walk after school in high school and it was like 15 bucks, so I've played champs a lot more than out here, but the last three years since getting status and everything, gotten a lot more familiar with it for sure.

Q. I don't want to make too big of a thing out of it, but does this feel like it's going to be even a cooler, more surreal experience than any of your PGA TOUR starts

to this point?

MATT McCARTY: Oh, yeah, 100 percent. I think this is my ninth event, so being back home and getting to sleep in my own bed and everything will be great. This is the biggest tournament for me outside of the majors this year, so I'm looking forward to it for sure.

Q. What did the ticket requests look like this week?

MATT McCARTY: There were quite a few, yeah. The TOUR took good care of me, though, so we got enough for everybody, and it'll be nice to have a lot of people on my side and make a bunch of birdies and get everybody going. It'll be fun.

Q. Do you have an idea of the number of friends and family that will be following you?

MATT McCARTY: At least 28, but there will be a few more than that, I think. A lot of people -- even just walking around the last couple days, a lot of people that I kind of didn't even realize were coming. Yeah, it's been fun. I had more people follow me yesterday on a Tuesday practice round than any event I've played in for the last three years, so it'll be a lot of fun.

Q. Curious, your rise over the last year has been fairly unique, but go into your grip and your upbringing. Did a lot of people try to mess with your 10-finger grip over the years?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, a little bit. I've had the same coach since I was like 12, 13, so kind of -- I've tried to change it and then when I was younger in high school it was like I kind of hit it the same, just a little bit shorter, so there was really no reason to. It tends to get a touch strong on occasion. That's kind of my tendency. But I think that's better than it being weak for sure.

Yeah, no, I'm very comfortable with kind of how I do everything and got a good team around me in everybody. Kind of sticking with the same thing and not trying to make too many changes for sure has been good, and I think it's been a big reason why I've been able to improve every year. Especially kind of last year coming down in contention, just being very comfortable with how I do everything, it helps when your nerves get up a little bit for sure.

Q. A kid growing up here, was ASU kind of the thought when you were younger and in high school of what you wanted to do collegiately?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, definitely. Definitely was not



going to go to U of A. My grandpa played football at ASU so we grew up huge Sun Devil fans. I kind of wanted to get out of the valley for college and just experience something new, but in high school I wasn't good enough to play for them. Mickelson was the coach at the time and didn't really give me the time of day.

I'm really happy with the way that everything worked out, and I think everything happens for a reason. I kind of learned going up there to northern California, kind of learned how to play a different style of golf. If you grow up here you don't really play out of thick rough and wet grass all the time.

I think how everything has worked out, I think it was all for the best for sure.

Q. I was wondering if you recall either the first time you played in front of a sizable crowd or had fans that you were thinking about while you were playing or when that resonated with you that people were watching you play?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, honestly, probably early -- like Bogota, my first year on the Korn Ferry was probably -- so the same week as this. It was probably the biggest crowd I had played in front of at that point.

The Korn Ferry has some good events, but obviously Black Desert was kind of the most people I'd ever seen, especially like late on a weekend.

But I think it's fun, and when you're out there competing and a lot of people are watching and kind of -- you hit a bad shot, you get booed and you've got to be able to shake it off a little bit, so looking forward to that for sure.

Q. What do you remember about that vibe in Bogota, since it's this week? I know there's a lot of kids around and it's a pretty lively scene.

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, the biggest thing, you just kind of get hounded for your entire bag after the round I'd say more than anything. But no, it's just cool, and I think especially going down there to kind of see you're far away from home but a lot of people -- still same game and similar 18 holes on the ground and kind of cool to see that for sure.

Q. I was talking with your coach, your instructor, Dave Williams, and he talked about how you guys have actually talked about acknowledging the crowd and trying to be engaging with the crowd. This week is a unique week to ask you about that, but for you what does that entail in terms of interacting with the crowd

and your process of giving back in that regard?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, I mean, I think when I'm having fun, I play my best golf, so I think that comes along with it, especially here, and having a lot of buddies and family following me around, I think the vibes will be high.

But yeah, just to kind of enjoy the moment, as well, I think will be big for me. Kind of obviously that 30 seconds before you hit a golf shot and over the ball, laser focus, but then also kind of just enjoying the atmosphere. Grew up wanting to be out here, so kind of having fun with it this week more than anything will be important.

Q. As a football fan, what's your theory on why the Chiefs are so good?

MATT McCARTY: I mean, Patrick Mahomes for one. I don't know, Andy Reid is a hell of a coach. It'll be a good game. I don't really have a dog in this fight. I've kind of flipped, come full circle. It would be kind of cool to see a three-peat during my lifetime. But we'll see. Hopefully I'm playing good enough golf where the Super Bowl is kind of an afterthought this weekend.

Q. Is there any comparison between Scottie and the Chiefs?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, very elite, very good every week, and just win a lot. So that's the comparison.

Q. Do you have any advice for fans coming out this week, spots to go, stuff to do, secret hideouts to check out?

MATT McCARTY: Yeah, I mean, so I had a good buddy in high school that he actually worked out here, was one of the bag guys. We kind of like would weasel our way in, always find -- kind of create a little gap in the fence for a couple years in high school, so we'd show up on 16 at like 5:00 in the morning for a couple years, be like the first ones out there.

I would say I liked kind of getting away. It gets pretty chaotic around 16. I've always kind of liked standing off 7 tee, that par-3, watching guys hit shots in there. Always liked going out -- you kind of get out to like 13 green and nobody is out there. It's a fun hole to watch people play.

But yeah, if you get claustrophobic at all kind of stay on the front nine or the outskirts and you'll be okay.

Q. Through your Korn Ferry TOUR finishes, you also got exemptions into THE PLAYERS and the U.S. Open. With this being your first time, it's kind of your year of

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firsts. Out of those three, which one are you most excited about that you've highlighted the most?

MATT McCARTY: I think all three are highlighted for different reasons, but this is definitely -- outside of the majors, I would say this is a big one.

I played in the U.S. Open a couple years ago at Brookline. Missed the cut by one, so I think that's kind of circled for some redemption this year, as well.

Just being comfortable with the course and the atmosphere this week and just -- I think this is the most exciting tournament for me all year, so it'll be fun.

Q. Final thing with your card, what is the best perk that you've experienced or received just within the last six months?

MATT McCARTY: I mean, I think the courtesy car every week, just showing up from the airport and not having to wait in line at Avis compared to the Korn Ferry has been pretty nice. But yeah, I don't know. There's a lot of cool things that come with it.

I think kind of the access that we have to some different courses and you call up to a nice place and you tell them that you're on the PGA TOUR and you've won out here and you get treated a little bit different than playing a developmental tour, that's for sure.

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