

# Valspar Championship

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

## Maverick McNealey

### Quick Quotes

**Q. First round in the 60s since January. I know health has been a concern. Good to see you out healthy. You feeling good?**

MAVERICK MCNEALEY: Yeah, feeling much better. Huge props to my team for getting me back healthy. It's the first real injury setback I've had in my career. I had some SC joint issues and huge props to the team at Greathouse Physical Therapy back in Vegas. Doctor Sprouse and Adam Curley out here. It takes a whole team to get you feeling good. The sport can be tough on your body sometimes. It's a hard game and it's really hard when you're not a hundred percent, that's for sure.

**Q. Your game was in such a good place before the setback. So what was that rev up like to you? Reps last week at THE PLAYERS, you made the weekend, obviously a difficult golf course. But what is that process getting back to playing good golf like you were seeing earlier?**

MAVERICK MCNEALEY: I really didn't have expectations last week. I thought if I got to play four rounds of golf that would be a huge win. Obviously you make the weekend and your expectations start to get a little higher. But I was really able to work hard on my short game and putting and I've been putting and chipping it really well coming in. I was really happy to see that those tools have stayed sharp for me. Driver speed's coming back still probably not a hundred percent. Just subconsciously not wanting to rip at it completely full. Especially these golf courses, you don't need to hit it 185 ball speed, you just got to get it in play and leave it on the right side of the hole and chip and putt. So I've been just really, really grateful to be back out and playing and having a ton of fun with it.

**Q. Given all that what is your strategy around this place, this is golf course you have to think your way around it, don't you?**

MAVERICK MCNEALEY: This is my first timing seeing it. I'm relying on Hunter for all of his information and Travis for all the walking he's done. It's definitely changed a lot since



I got here on and started playing Tuesday morning. It's a lot firmer, flier lies out of the rough. The greens are icy and firm and fast. I know it's going to change a lot. It feels like if it doesn't get rain it's going to turn purple by this weekend. So I'll definitely be leaning on Hunter and Travis for their expertise around here and hitting it where they told me.

**Q. The contrast in colors from the fairways to these greens, we're starting to see the poa pretty much all burning out. You've seen greens in transition. How does that lead to the reads? Like what is your strategy and looking at these reads and trying to figure it out, because you're right, it's a sheen to 'em right now?**

MAVERICK MCNEALEY: For the people watching at home, I don't know, sometimes there's a green screen, green color. And I come back in the clubhouse and I'm like what tournament are they showing right now? These greens are basically brown. There's hardly any overseed left on 'em. It just makes it a very icy surface. That 9th green was, it was basically dormant Bermuda and icy. You get that shiny one down grain and probably rolled about a 15. So it was definitely playing a little more break. The grain doesn't rip it quite as much. You just know that the first chip hop is going to skid instead of actually grab. So it just kind of changes. But it's all a subconscious feel. We've all played these greens and these consistencies before and it's just going back on previous experience and practice.

**Q. Tournament debut. What went into adding this to your schedule?**

MAVERICK MCNEALEY: Honestly, I've heard from so many players that this is just a fantastic golf course. I'm a West Coast guy, I've played, usually play a heavy West Coast Swing and Florida's usually a little different but everyone kept saying, this doesn't feel like a Florida golf course. I got out here and I saw pictures. It kind of looks like the golf course I grew up at, Sharon Heights and Stanford back in the Bay Area. Tree lines and elevation change, some sloping fairways and some kind of small greens and target areas. Other than the really dormant Bermuda putting surfaces, some of the shots you have to



hit off these tees are pretty familiar and like it really doesn't feel like we're in Florida here. It's kind of fun.

**Q. Was there one shot today or a highlight that stood out to you in your round?**

MAVERICK MCNEALEY: I think my best swing of the day was on the 8th hole. It was 241 yards into a pretty good breeze. I was thinking 7-wood or 4-iron and honestly I thought 7-wood with the height and the breeze would go probably about the same distance as a 4-iron. So I just kind of hit a really strong flighted 4 and carried it 10 yards further than I even expected to the middle of the green and was pretty happy with that shot.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports