

RBC Canadian Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

St. George's Golf & Country Club

Mackenzie Hughes

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Mackenzie Hughes to the interview room here at the RBC Canadian Open. Mackenzie, thanks for taking the time this is your sixth start in the event. So, just coming back to Canada after two cancellations, how does it feel to be back in your home country playing in front of your home fans?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it feels great. The excitement and the buzz seems to be here and I know after three years of not playing the tournament it's, everyone's pretty excited about it.

So we share that same feeling. I know the Canadian players I talked to are all really excited to be here. It's a different week for us because we don't get to feel, I don't do press every week on PGA TOUR, so it's kind of neat, I kind of relish the opportunity to do it and hopefully have a great week and get the fans behind me on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Do you feel that when you're out there walking around the property as well? You mentioned the media, but just walking from the green to here people coming up to you and stuff like that, how does that affect your week?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it's great. I have no problem doing that. It's not anywhere near like a Phil Mickelson level where I feel like I'm being bombarded, but there's definitely people that want my autograph and want to take some time to say hi.

So I love that and, yeah, kind of nice to see on a few familiar faces here and there and pop in and say hi. Yeah, it's going to be a fun week and hopefully have a chance come Sunday to make them get really excited.

THE MODERATOR: Played 10 holes in the pro-am today. Weren't playing the last time the Canadian Open was here in 2010. What's your familiarity with this golf course and how did you like what you saw today?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, my first time playing the course was actually Monday, so I've never played the



course until this week. I love it. It's great. It's right in front of you. Obviously the rough is incredibly difficult to play out of so hitting the fairways this week will be paramount.

Yeah, I love it. It's very old school, traditional, kind of feels like a very Canadian golf course, which just, I don't know what that really means, but I just feel like it's a Canadian golf course because when I walk around and just the way it looks, the tree-lined, old-school greens, a lot of pitch in them, feels very much like a target golf course, not meant for a bomber by any means. So any kind of player can win this week, which is kind of fun. It should be a great test of golf.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. One of the highlights from the tournament in 2019 was when you pulled on that Raptors jersey at the Rink and there was a massive crowd reaction. What are you expecting from the fans this week at the Canadian Open?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I think it's going to be a lot of the same. I know I mentioned it to a few people that 2019 I thought was the best Open that we've ever had. I thought the excitement and the buzz was through the roof.

That hole especially was really fun. Fun to get the fans involved and to be kind of active with them. Yeah, I know obviously we had the Raptors going through the Finals at the same time, so there was a good buzz in the air. But it's going to be a lot of fun this week. I think that the Rink will be awesome as it was the last couple years and looking forward to kind of getting 'em going on that hole.

Q. Both tomorrow and Friday you're going to be playing in an all-Canadian trio with Adam Hadwin and Mike Weir. How much, how exciting is that to be the only all-Canadian trio for the first two days at least and knowing that you're going to have massive crowd support at every hole?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, it will be fun. I think that any time you get to play with Mike is an honor. He's basically my biggest golfing hero. So to ever think that when I was 12 or 13 years old -- I told this story before, but



when I was 13, at the Canadian Open at Glen Abbey, this was 2004, so he had just won the Masters the year prior, he was a rock star in Canada. And I was caddieing in the pro-am in his group. So I caddied for one of the ams and I just did a horrendous job caddieing that day because I was so intrigued by just being close to Mike and trying to ask him a question here and there and just kind of hearing the stories he was telling. Then my player would be over here in the rough and I'm like, Oh, sorry, just nowhere near him. So it was like a really cool day.

But then to think, what is it, 18 years later, I'll play the first two rounds with him and be playing in the Canadian Open as a, you know, I think a player that has a chance to win, it's pretty cool.

So, yeah, the Canadian group will be awesome, but, yeah, definitely playing with Mike is a huge privilege.

Q. You grew up playing on a Stanley Thompson course. Is that, do you feel the similarities here in this at all in any way, shape or form?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, definitely feels some similarities like I think one of the biggest things I learned growing up playing Dundas Valley was that there wasn't really a green that it was bad to be short of. There was always -- you always had a good option or a play from short of the green.

It's kind of the same thing here this week. Missing some of these greens long is an absolute no no. So that's something that I'll keep in mind this week as I'm going around the course and playing to certain flags and certain pin locations. But it's a harder test, obviously, than the one I grew up on, but there definitely are some similarities.

Q. Being back here in Canada do you have more family that's able to come watch you and just how exciting is that if so?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, definitely have lots of fans coming out this week and my family, I've been trying to sort them out with tickets, which has been fun.

Yeah, they will be loud and they will be not hard to spot, that's for sure. They will probably have signs and shirts and all that sort of stuff. So it's pretty neat. Like I said, we don't get to do this very often where we play in front of lots of family and friends like this. So try and enjoy it and soak it in and have some fun with it.

Q. With some of the news that's been breaking overseas with the LIV league, do you think it's a bit of a shame that that is happening this week at the time of

our National Open?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: For sure. There's no doubt that it stinks. I would be lying if I said it was good timing. There wasn't really going to be good timing for that, but as a Canadian, yeah, it's a bit, yeah, disappointing. But not much we can do about that, other than focus on what's going on here and trying to make this one a great one. And it's already shaping up to be a great one.

This week, yeah, I think that most of the eyes will still be here. The top part of this field is really great and so there will be a lot of eyes on those guys. And the other stuff is the other stuff. So we'll, yeah, we'll let that happen as it happens, but I'm not too concerned with what's going on over there.

Q. For all the Canadian players in here when they first come in, what do you have to learn about playing in this tournament to become a competitive player? Like there's so many things that I think can be overwhelming, I gather, but what did you have to learn to realize, okay, I still got to play golf here?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: I think the one thing that you have to try to learn a little bit is that you can't say yes to everything. That's tough to do because I feel like I want to make everyone happy and appease everybody. But there's a lot of people pulling you different directions and you need to have your energy for Thursday morning when you get ready to play. I think it's easy over commit yourself to too many things during a Monday through Wednesday. Like I would have loved to have played Monday in the Golf Canada pro-am, but it's a long week and I felt, okay, I wasn't going to be able to fit it all in. So I had to skip that, unfortunately.

But you have to make some of those choices, which you don't like to make, but I think gives you a better chance come Sunday afternoon if you got a bit more energy and a bit more focus when it counts.

Q. There's a few Canadians who are playing in their first PGA TOUR event this week. Where was your first TOUR event and any advice to those young guys?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: My first TOUR event was Hamilton in 2012. I remember that one being pretty cool for me because I grew up 10 minutes from there and I was playing as the Canadian Am champ from the year prior. A lot of build-up for that one too because I had won in August of the year prior and I knew I was going to play that next July, so a lot of time to think about it. But it was really cool.

I think that the advice I would give to those young guys is

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

to first and foremost enjoy it, try to learn from everything that you can this week. But I think that it's easy to kind of get your head looking around a lot and seeing a lot of cool things, seeing a lot of players that you watched on TV. But to keep your head down and try and play good golf, I think that you'll like your chances for the week.

I know that my first time playing I was fighting that a little bit too because I would be hitting balls on the range next to someone that I grew up watching on TV and I thought that was really cool. But when you kind of get past that I think it helps you kind of get into your own game and just play golf and have a good week.

So I think that's kind of what I would tell those guys is to enjoy it, but keep your head down and go play.

THE MODERATOR: All right, with that thank you, Mackenzie.

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