

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW  
October 5, 2017



**BRENDAN STEELE (-7)**

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**Q. Last time I saw you in this spot you had shot 65 to win this thing. Another 65, you're right back in the saddle.**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, yeah, two goods rounds in a row a year apart, but the one common denominator is that you're following me around.

**Q. Well, I wish it was more than that. The golf course is playing very much different to last year, though?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, kind of like how it played the first year here, I think that was 2014, very firm and fast. Greens are not holding very well so you have to be in the fairway. I think this is the way that it's meant to be played. It plays really nicely this way.

**Q. After the BMW you were very close to the TOUR Championship. Was the time off to kind of decompress or did you work on the game some?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** I didn't work on it too much. I mean, it's a lot of attitude and just I put a lot of pressure on myself to get to the TOUR Championship, and even though I didn't get there I was happy for it to be over and kind of get back to trying to play the best that I can rather than just trying to get as many points as I could and just not play poorly. Just a totally different mindset and a lot more free to come out here and play well.

**Q. Well, the defending champ picking up right where he left off a year ago. What worked for you today in your opening round?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** A little bit of everything. Had a really good ball striking day. I don't think I missed a green so that usually helps. And then had a good putting day as well, so you put that together it's going to be pretty good.

**Q. How did you take advantage of the par 5 5th, your 14th hole today?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, I actually got a nice little break there. I hit a great tee shot and then I pulled my 6-iron a little bit and I was hoping for a good bounce and I got a really good bounce, rolled down there to about a foot and a half. So it's always nice when you get a little lucky.

**Q. For fans at home, describe what it's like to have a comfort level on this layout.**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, this place just makes sense to me. I'm a west coast guy so the

greens, they're like how I grew up on. They just roll a lot better, so comfortable there. And then the shots just make sense. I know where to be aggressive, where to be cautious and where you can miss off the tee as well as into the greens.

**Q. Are your expectation levels any different than say some other tournaments where maybe the course doesn't feel as good for you?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. There's a lot of courses over my career that I really feel comfortable on and I seem to play well almost every year. Phoenix is like that, San Antonio's like that. You just have a really good comfort level and when you get there you get a little bounce in your step because you feel like it's going to be a good week. Whether it's more mental or physical or the time of year, you know, get a little break. I normally play better after a break, too. So a couple weeks off was probably good for me.

**Q. Is there one thing that you can pinpoint about this particular course that's like, all right, this fits me?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** I think there's holes where you can be really aggressive and then there's holes where you have to kind of play strategic and I think the balance of that, I just have a good understanding of it. So I know where you want to just go as aggressive as you can and then I know where you want to just kind of take your medicine and make sure that you don't get in the wrong spot. For some reason I've just always had a good understanding of this course and it seems very comfortable for me.

**Q. Zach hasn't played this tournament before. Do you think he was watching what you were doing to a certain degree?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** I don't know. I think you always watch. When a guy's playing good especially, you're always paying attention to what he's doing. But he may have been watching me a little bit just knowing that I've had some success here. I know that I definitely do that when I go somewhere and I know somebody's played well. Try to see if there's anything maybe you missed. Like if I'm hitting 2-iron off the tee and he's hitting driver, maybe it's a walk back to the bag and take a look at why I'm doing that kind of thing. But he played a great round today, too, so we kind of fed off each other.

**Q. And weather doesn't seem to make any kind of difference in how you play this course?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, I like it this way a lot better than in the rain, but yeah, it's still comfortable for me even when it gets wet, I guess. Yeah, either way's okay with me.

**Q. You mentioned not hitting missing any greens?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** I don't think I did.

**Q. Do you recall doing that anywhere else?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** I don't. I may have but it would have been at like somewhere in Palm Desert or something, a little bit easier course, perfect conditions, soft greens, that kind of thing. But yeah, I don't know that I have done that before.

**Q. Winning this event last year, the first event of the season, I mean how much of a comfort was that to set that season up?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, it set everything for my season. I got in all the majors, all the WGCs for the first time in my career and was able to ride a lot of momentum for a long time really. I had my best PLAYERS last year, best U.S. Open, best Masters. So there was a lot of really good things and this was definitely the springboard for it.

**Q. You say you play well. Are they very similar?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Normally they're good driving courses where you have to hit a lot of drivers. They're not necessarily really wide but they're not really narrow like a U.S. Open that you would think of where it's 15-yard wide fairways where if you're 15 yards off or 20 yards off it doesn't matter. So that's probably why I like Phoenix, there's a lot of drivers there and if you get way off line you're in the desert, if you hit good shots you're okay.

Same with Valero. Valero's pretty wide down in San Antonio. It's pretty wide off the tee as far as fairways go, but then there's junk on both sides of every hole, so you start spraying it and you get in trouble. But I think that's probably the most common thing for me. Out here, the way it's playing right now, if you're in the rough you really can't control the ball so you've got to hit the fairway, but there's enough drivers with the par 5s and everything that I can take advantage of that.

**Q. Do you want to pinch yourself sometimes when you come to -- I mean the rounds you've had here over the last like two and a half years are pretty amazing?**

**BRENDAN STEELE:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, it's really fun. I mean, it's nice to be in California. I love it here obviously with the food and the wine and staying on site and everything, it's just a really comfortable week. I think there's something to the start of the season with everybody being back to zero, it's kind of a fresh start, which whether you played good or bad last year, it's kind of nice.