

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 14, 2017



MAC HUGHES

JOHN BUSH: Like to welcome Mac Hughes into the media center here at the RSM Classic. Back to last year surviving a five-man playoff for your first win on the PGA TOUR, just get some comments on what that day meant to you.

MAC HUGHES: Yeah, it was a life-changing day. I still look back on it and I some days think like, wow, how did I manage to pull that off and how did I manage to go wire to wire? I mean, it was my ninth ever start on the PGA TOUR, fifth as a member, and it was just -- I mean the whole week, I don't know what it was about it, but I was calm and I had the lead after the first day and I just kept with my same routine. I just had rituals every night that I did and I stuck with those and they just seemed to calm me down. I was watching, you know, Friends at night and I had a glass of wine and I was having home-cooked meals. I don't know, something about that week, everything was just how it needed to be. My mind was in the right place.

And ever since then, things have taken off in a good way. Things have changed and I've been able to play in some really great events because of this tournament to give me a springboard.

Yeah, really nice to be back. Just the memories driving in. I mean, seeing the poster when you drive in of me holding the trophy and just being on the property and remembering -- even just being here last year on the Monday morning doing this press conference. So it's been a nice year and excited to be back.

JOHN BUSH: You carried that victory on to a 36th-place finish in the FedExCup, just coming up short of the TOUR Championship. I know you really wanted to get there. Comment a little bit about your goals for your sophomore year on the Tour.

MAC HUGHES: Yeah, not making East Lake was tough, but there's not a lot of rookies that are able to say they had a chance to get there or to even get there. Yeah, that stung for a little bit.

To be honest, it was probably a little bit of a hangover. I played in Napa a couple weeks later and I probably wasn't really ready to play at that point. I had a long year and kind of turned around quickly and started 2018. But yeah, if you had told me at the beginning of the year when I was starting in Napa in 2016 that I would have a chance in Chicago, third leg of the Playoffs, a chance to make East Lake, that would have been like, yes, please, where do I sign? So I try to look at it that way, glass half full.

For this year I'm really going to try and make East Lake. That would be a great goal or

accomplishment for me. I know that win was a huge part of me getting to where I was, so I need to play really well this year in order to get there and I just want to have more chances to win. That's kind of what fuels me going out here, I want to have a chance to win and compete on the back nine on Sunday. That's one of my goals for next year and yeah, we'll see how it goes.

JOHN BUSH: Great. We'll open it up to questions, go with Steve.

Q. 12 months ago you woke up on a Monday, you weren't a PGA TOUR winner, you weren't married, you weren't a father and your name was MacKenzie. 12 months is an awful lot to handle. How challenging has it been or how great has been the last 12 months?

MAC HUGHES: They've been pretty awesome. I would say the name change is probably the biggest deal of all those things. It's really hard to adapt to that. Being a father is easy. Winning on the PGA TOUR, no problem.

No, it's been a lot, but I mean I have great parents, I was raised well and I think that helps me prepare for these sort of these things and be prepared when they do some.

Yeah, I would say the hardest bit of that whole piece has been the last few weeks. I mean, as I led into fatherhood and now being a father, this is some challenging times, but it's fun. I've had so much fun the last two weeks being a dad, but even being away in Mexico last week was tough. First time leaving and being away for a week when my wife's home alone, it was tough. So I'm learning how to deal with these things.

And being a PGA TOUR winner is an easy thing to get used to. I like that feeling. I would like to be a multiple PGA TOUR winner. So it has been a big year.

As far as the name thing goes, I actually just changed that last week because, you know, if I'm talking to somebody, I say, hey, call me Mac and that's just kind of what I go about by. So if that's what I'm going to go by, I'll just write it down on paper so everyone just calls me that, make, my life a little easier.

Yeah, it's been an awesome year. It's actually crazy to think it's only been a year because it feels like it's been almost two. Like the year is so long and the RSM was last year at this time and with the wraparound season, it just seems like it's been a long year and there's been a lot of events, more than I've ever played in my life, but all good things.

Q. Congratulations on the baby. Can you talk about the name?

MAC HUGHES: Yeah. So his name is Kenton, Kenton Robert Hughes, and we had a few names picked out going into that day. He was born right on his due date and so we were back and forth between a few names. The reason we liked Kenton -- well, we didn't know any Kentons with the exception of one, who I don't know if you guys know but there's a rep

that works for Ping who's actually named Kenton. We didn't name him after him. He will tell you that we did.

But we both went to Kent State and we liked that connection there where there's Kent in his name. We want him to go by Kenton. I'm sure Kent will inevitably come up as a short form at some point. I will always say Kenton.

But yeah, that was kind of the reason behind the name. There was no rhyme or reason really as to when it happened. We actually picked the name the following morning. He was born Saturday night and we waited until Sunday morning to actually name him. It was not an easy decision. I think that's been one of the harder decisions I've had to make in the last year is picking a name for my son. It's hard to be like, this is the name he's going to have for the rest of his life so I want to make sure the initials are not something inappropriate or the nicknames are not crazy. So yeah, we're excited, yeah. That's the reason behind the name.

Q. What's been the biggest takeaway the last 12 months as far as your goals, what did you learn the most?

MAC HUGHES: I think in the last 12 months playing with some of the best players in the world, realizing that the gap is so small. I mean, playing with guys like Spieth and playing with Phil and Henrik Stenson and some of these guys. You watch them on TV sometimes when they're winning tournaments prior to last year and I'm thinking to myself these guys don't even seem human at times. But that's all you see is if they're winning a tournament and in the last group on Sunday and you're seeing all these great shots they're hitting.

But I've been with them when they've hit poor shots, too. I don't want to say that that's refreshing, but it's just -- that's what I've learned is that these guys still make mistakes and it's not about being perfect and it's not about being, you know, like you're not hitting great shots all the time. And I knew that but it's also nice to see it, be a part of it. Play with these guys and you watch Jordan go through a round and, I mean, he's very tactical and he's very smart and very good, but he has misses and he misses shots but recovers really well and he's got a great short game. I think just seeing those sort of things and realizing that my game is not that far away from some of these guys, and with a little polishing and some more experience, I mean, hopefully I'll be one of those top guys at some point.

Q. You mentioned just coming up short to get to East Lake and still making it that close, that as a rookie has to be rewarding. Did you learn immediately the importance of playing these fall events, if you can get a win, if you can get some good finishes, you can kind of set your schedule much easier the rest of the year?

MAC HUGHES: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, the fall, you know, certainly with getting that win, it became so important. And now looking at this fall, I haven't been able to play much and my wife was sort of getting ready to have the baby when I was supposed to be playing in Asia. So I didn't go play in any of those Asian events and I was eligible for all three of them, which was sort of hard in a way to decline all the free points and the free money because I could

have played three events in a row with no cut.

But it's huge. I mean, you look at guys like -- well, now Patton being No. 1 in the FedExCup, you know, it's so early but I remember thinking last year it's so nice to be up there that quickly that early in the season, it just sets you up for a really nice year. I know he has to go out there and still earn East Lake. You have to play really well in 2018 to make East Lake, but to have that start and to have that kind of jump on those guys that don't play in the fall or that don't play very often, it's amazing. I think I'll be a guy that plays at least a few events in the fall every year. Now, I don't know what the future holds, but that just seems to get you off to a nice start and it's nice to get that little cushion in your pocket going into the new year.

JOHN BUSH: Mac, these two courses obviously set up very well for you last year. Talk a little bit about each course and what it is that you like about them.

MAC HUGHES: Yeah, I think they both suit my eye pretty well. I like the layouts and they're both challenging in different ways.

Now, walking in here, I mean, the wind's blowing 20, 25 and it's kind of cool. It kind of reminds me a little bit of the last couple days when we played last year. And they play so different when there's no wind. The first couple days last year, the wind was so light, I remember just thinking, you know, the scores are going to be low. I think the first two days I was minus 14 and the last two I was minus 3. So the conditions really changed over the first two days to the last two days, but the golf courses are kind of meant to have the wind.

The Seaside course kind of has some bigger fairways when there's not any wind blowing, but when the wind's blowing, you've got those crosswinds going, the fairways seem kind of small. The golf courses are awesome. They're both kind of different styles. I think the Seaside's more, I don't want to say linksy but it has that linksy feel to it, and the Plantation's a bit more tree lined. But they're both great. Yeah, I can't tell you that or I can't say one bad word about either golf course because they're going to be two of my favorites for a long time.

JOHN BUSH: Awesome. Anything else? Mac Hughes, best of luck this week.

MAC HUGHES: All right, thanks. Appreciate it.