

**FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW**  
**November 19, 2017**



**AUSTIN COOK (- 21)**

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**JACK RYAN:** We would like to welcome 2017 RSM Classic champion Austin Cook. Austin, tell us about an exciting day out there.

**AUSTIN COOK:** It was definitely exciting. It was a little brutal with the wind. Got off to kind of a slow start but I was able to keep my head level and know that there's a lot of golf left to be played. With the wind and the conditions, there's no telling what can happen. By the end of the day I was able to finish strong and come away with the W.

**JACK RYAN:** Looks like you move to third in the FedExCup. Tell us about the importance of these fall events, and how do your goals change moving into the second half of the season?

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, coming into this fall series, having to miss the first event in Napa because my brother was getting married, looks like it worked out. But I knew that you would have to get off to a hot start and it would help to get in new events in the spring, especially being in the Web category.

My goal coming into the year was to win Rookie of the Year, and on a good path so far. Still a lot of golf to be played and a lot of opportunities for a lot of other guys, but now with this win and the FedExCup, my goal is to make a good, long, deep run into the FedExCup Playoffs and get to East Lake and try and perform there and compete and try and win the FedExCup.

**JACK RYAN:** We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Are you one for leaderboard watching at all in the past?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, I'm terrible at it.

**Q. Do you or don't you?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** I do watch, yeah.

**Q. With about four or five holes left, I wondered if you had -- did you ever take notice of the couple times that J.J. cut it to one?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Um-hmm.

**Q. And did you feel like you were going to need the three or four birdies down the**

**stretch that you wound up getting, or three of your last four holes?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, I was definitely aware. They were almost on every other hole, maybe every hole on the back nine and they're in spots where you can't miss them. But I was watching them. The guys in my group kind of made a bogey or two or just were kind of falling off a little bit and J.J. was the closest to me and yes, I saw what he was doing. I saw that he parred 15, the par 5, and I thought that was big for me. Then I was able to make birdie there. And then 17 and 18 just happened to make some putts. But I saw he made birdie on 18 as well to get back to 17 when I was at 19 and that's when I made the putt on 17. A lot of relief whenever that putt went in knowing that three shots on the last hole.

**Q. And to follow it up, playing with a couple of veterans and Kisner made a run, Brian Harman played well, did you stay aggressive perhaps knowing that you could not relax with all that going on around you?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Definitely. With my caddie Kip on the bag, he's been able to win multiple times, now five on the PGA TOUR. His old guy, Brian Gay, obviously who I was playing with. He was able to keep me in the moment and keep me pressing instead of playing conservative. He knows how to win down the stretch and I was fortunate to have him out there.

**Q. I'm sure this is something you've thought about for a long time. Was it the same as you envisioned growing up?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah. Better, it was way better, it actually happening. You always grow up thinking that you can do it, but actually being able to get the job done and perform and hold all the nerves down and still put in a good round especially in these conditions and on this golf course, I'm just so happy.

**Q. I kind of asked you this outside, but just to kind of follow up on it, it was stress-free golf from the outside looking in. Did it feel that way inside?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Not at all. A lot of stuff going on, mostly up here. A little tenseness. This week my ball striking was great, and for the most part my putting was great as well. My short game, only not getting up and down one time this week for my bogey on 2 I think it was today. The other bogey was 14 yesterday with a three-putt. All around my game was just incredible this week. I was just, like I said, happy that it turned out the way it did.

**Q. Austin, congratulations. Andrew Landry was saying he told Kip last week to watch out for you this week. You don't really realize how good you are. With that trophy sitting next to you, do you start to realize how good you are and how good you can be out here?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Hadn't quite sunk in yet, but yes, now being able to finally win a professional event. The only professional event I've won was an Adams Tour Winter Series

event. I've been close on the Web a couple times but haven't been able to get the job done, and to be able to do it on the biggest stage in the world, it definitely boosts my confidence and lets me know that I can play with these guys. I've told myself all along, and for it to actually come true, it's amazing. It's a blessing.

**Q. So many things come with a Tour win, two-year exemption, the Masters, Maui. What sticks out in your mind that right now is sinking in that you've accomplished?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Now I can basically play whatever tournament I want. Of course the Masters, but the FedExCup, now I get to get into THE PLAYERS, the Tournament of Champions, spend two weeks in Hawaii now. I think just jumping up to third on the FedExCup, really set myself up well for the remainder of the season and future years. I really don't know what to think.

**Q. Have you ever been to Augusta as a fan, or have you gotten a chance to play it?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, I went I guess, what, 2012, 2008, for a Tuesday practice round. Told myself I would never go back until I'm playing in it.

**Q. What were the circumstances, how were you able to get on at that point?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Practice round during the Masters.

**Q. Oh, you qualified?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** No, no, no, I went as a spectator to watch the Tuesday practice round.

**Q. Was there any impressions you formed, like the first time you walked on the course, what did you think, do you remember?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** It was beautiful, but it's been a while. I think I was a little awestruck.

**Q. And are you going to count the days until you get that little letter in the mail?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** I guess. I mean, it will be a great day, but I'm just excited for the rest of the season and being able to make hopefully a strong push to the FedExCup.

**Q. You mentioned the wind was pretty brutal today. Was today the worst for it and just how did it affect what you did on the course?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** I think, yeah. I think this wind was just quartering a little bit different than Friday when it was blowing out of the north. I think this one, with the circumstances of being Sunday and having the lead, put a little more pressure on shots for me. I do think that today was a little tougher with the wind.

**Q. Austin, when you get your card and you come out here in the fall, you have X number of starts to really perform. Can you just speak to the pressure involved there and how you've really got to get off to a fast start to set yourself up for 18?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, I finished fairly strong in the Web Finals, I was 20th, I think, on the priority list, so I was ahead of a few guys there knowing missing Napa that I would have to take advantage of the other four. I had pretty good starts in Jackson and Vegas, didn't finish quite like I wanted to, and then Mexico. So I knew that I would kind of jump up a little bit on that priority list because I think after this tournament it reordered, shuffled. But I knew that you had to play well to get into events early in the year next year because some of them go pretty deep, or not so deep, sorry, you know, and a lot of guys play them.

But I was trying to not push. I know that my game, I can compete, and if I just play how I'm capable of playing that I'll be able to move up the list and I'll be fine. But it's definitely, yeah, a little sense of urgency to play well, and if you don't, you get a little upset or a little behind the eight ball, I guess.

**Q. Austin, either last night or sometime before you teed off today, was there someone who said something to you that really stuck with you, any words of wisdom or a little pep talk from your caddie, family, a player, anything like that?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, Kip sent me a message last night. Well, lots of love from lots of people saying good luck, play well, we're praying for you, whatever it maybe.

But Kip texted me last night and said a lots of people are going to be messaging you; just tell them thank you, don't think about much, and wait until tomorrow when we get inside the ropes into our safety zone and we'll take care of business.

Just kind of helped me stay a little calm. Didn't sleep great last night. I think first time holding the lead going into Sunday. But yeah, with him saying that and all the love from everybody that I've gotten, I think it was just comforting, yeah.

**Q. Austin, congratulations, sir. So you missed the Safeway Open for your brother's wedding, and these first five events it's kind of like a second Q-School type of thing where you have to play well to get the starts and the reshuffle. Can you describe whether it's pressure you put on yourself or the mentality for these weeks in your category where it's not guaranteed that you can get the full season and the feeling that now not only do you have this season and two more seasons, get to play in everything?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** Yeah, I was a little upset having to miss, I guess. I wanted to play my first PGA TOUR event holding a card, but I wouldn't have missed my brother's wedding.

But yeah, it was definitely a little pressure to play well to start because, like I said, starting in the spring, you never know when your next start could come if you don't play well. So yeah,

a little bit of pressure. But like I said, I know that my game, if I just play how I'm capable of playing, then I'll be able to make cuts and I'll be able to kind of make some money and jump up the list.

**Q. With the Web.com Tour, finishing second in Utah and having sometimes been in contention, how did the vibes coming down the stretch today compare to the vibes you might have felt being in contention on the Web.com Tour?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** I guess out here it was a little more tense, I think. There's a lot more money on the line and a lot more, I guess, at stake; you know, years of membership out here and tournaments that you would get into.

But on the Web.com, a win, if you play well throughout the rest of the season, will secure your card and that's huge in itself. But I definitely think that out here there's a little more nerves going on. You know, today especially with the wind and everything, one small errant shot could really send a round in the dumps.

**Q. When did you finally feel comfortable, like that trophy was probably going to be yours, and was there a shot that really -- what would you say was your shot of the day or highlight?**

**AUSTIN COOK:** 17 green when I made that putt and seeing that I jumped back up to 3, that was kind of when I had a small moment with myself, teared up a little, I had to put the sunglasses back on. But yeah, that was pretty much the moment that I had a really good feeling, just hit two good shots and let's put this on the green. But yeah, I would say 17 green.

And then any shots -- there were so many great shots. I think the par on No. 11 was really big, put it in -- I got really lucky, it rolled back down into one of the bunkers, but I had a hybrid into a 430-yard -- I mean, I hit 50-degree yesterday or two days ago, whatever it may be, and then I hit a hybrid today. Put that short and was able to get that up and down, and that was a big par for me, I think, and a momentum holder I guess you would say.

**JACK RYAN:** Thanks, Austin.

**AUSTIN COOK:** Thank you.