

ROUND 2 INTERVIEW
February 16, 2018



GRAEME McDOWELL (-7)

GENESIS OPEN

GRAEME McDOWELL: Just kept the ball in play. Ball striking's been really solid the last two days. I think when you showed up, you saw some maybe conservative enough play. I was a little bit out of position coming into those last three or four holes, and I think that speaks volumes about what you have to do well on this golf course if you are out of position, you have to take your medicine. But if you do hit it well, it offers up a lot of chances. The golf course, I couldn't imagine this golf course with rough. We're seeing how tough it is out there with no rough, and I think this golf course has shown its major qualities a little bit the last couple days.

Q. One of the things I noticed when I showed up here was your ability to scramble and your pace on the long putts was really good.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Interestingly, my pace hasn't been very good the last couple of days. The first nine holes I played beautifully and three-putted twice from long range. I did putt better on the second nine holes today and I started to feel my pace coming. It was nice to, when you hit a lot of greens, you don't get a lot of chance to scramble and it was nice to miss a couple for actually the scrambling to be there. So I'm really happy with all facets of my game, looking forward to being up the business end into the weekend.

Q. 66, look at the statistics not only from today, Graeme, but both days, whether it's off the tee, your approach to the greens, around the greens, on the greens, very, very solid. What did you put together heading into the Genesis Open?

GRAEME McDOWELL: It's been much of the same stuff for the last four, five months. My numbers just haven't been showing it. I opened up with three missed cuts this year but walking away from them saying to myself, you know what, I'm really happy with what I'm doing, I'm really happy with the progress I'm making and just stick to the process. We all love the word "process," but all I'm missing is a couple little numbers and a little bit of confidence. I'm really excited to be going into the weekend of the tournament on the business end of things and really looking forward to getting back out there.

Q. You mentioned that excitement heading into the weekend. Mentally, emotionally, how do you approach the weekend given your position?

GRAEME McDOWELL: You know, super patient. I've got a lot of work to do this year, and it may not happen this weekend, but like I say, the way I'm practicing and the way I'm preparing myself off the golf course, it's only a matter of time before good things start to happen. So really trying to go out there this weekend, try to play carefree golf, try to respect this golf course. When you get out of position here, you have to respect it and get it back

into position. If you play well, it offers up a lot of birdie chances. So I've enjoyed the way I hit it the last couple of days and looking forward to getting back out tomorrow.

Q. Can we continue the conversation you started yesterday about why you don't play on the west coast?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, we were saying why I don't play the West Coast Swing when some of the best results of my career have come on the west coast. But, you know, it's funny, I was talking to Sky Sports yesterday and they've got that fancy graphics machine behind them and they pulled up my record from Riviera and it didn't make for very great reading, and I was like, please switch that off.

You know, this golf course the last couple of days, we talked about its major quality coming out of it a little bit. It's an interesting setup this week with the kikuyu fairways, very soft, and when you pitch a ball in the fringe it kills, but the greens are very firm and they can get away from you. So you have to really pick your landing spots very carefully. When you do get out of position, you have to be very respectful of how fast and firm the greens are.

To be honest with you, I drove the ball really well the last two days, my iron play's been sharp, I haven't missed a lot of greens. To be honest, the only real negatives are on the greens. I haven't felt very comfortable with the putter even though that's been one of the strengths the last few years. I opened up with three birdies today, 10, 11, 12, my opening holes, and I three-putted from long range on 13, I three-putted from 20 feet on 14. I thought, here we go again. Managed to weather the storm and make a really good six-footer on 17 for birdie and that was a big putt for the momentum at the time. Like you say, west coast, hopefully we can continue that love affair this weekend, but a lot of work to do.

Q. Are you surprised you haven't performed better here? It seems like it would be a course that would suit your game.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I'm surprised I haven't played better at Riviera, for sure. It's a golf course which fits my eye. We went through a spell there where it seemed to be bombers winning this golf tournament, Bubba Watson, Dustin Johnson, even guys like that. But this is the first real dry year I can remember being here for the last four or five and I think the firmness of the golf course is taking guys by surprise. I think tee shots like 5 into the corner there, there's a left side that cuts in about 265, I don't think we're used to balls traveling as far down that left side as they are going. The golf course is just playing that little by fiery-er and I think it's taking some of the guys by surprise. So historically I've played well in tough setups, I'm relishing the opportunity to continue playing this tough set up this weekend. I like my game plan, I've just got to keep executing.

Q. Along those same lines you just mentioned, do you consider this a bomber's golf course? You're not a bomber, but --

GRAEME McDOWELL: I certainly don't see it as a bomber's golf course this week. I think

Tony Finau hit iron off the first yesterday. That says enough about how gettable this golf course is. You know, we talked about it yesterday, there's no rough out here and yet we're looking at 2-over cut. No one's getting away, 4, 5 under par's right in touch. It's not your regular PGA TOUR scoring where you've got to get to 15, 16, 18 under par. There's no rough, the fairways are soft, the ball sits perfect, but those greens are firm and fast. Like I say, I think it's taken a few of the guys by surprise just how quickly this golf course can get away from you. Like I say, I like my game plan and I'm feeling quite comfortable on the golf course. If I can continue to settle down with the putter, we'll see. A lot of work to do obviously.

Q. Graeme, you mentioned consistency. How do you translate today's performance into a consistent weekend?

GRAEME McDOWELL: You know, it's not even about this weekend for me, it's just about continuing to fill up the confidence tank really. That's pretty much the only thing that's missing with my game. I've really been doing some nice things for the last six or eight months. I haven't really been seeing the results, but like I say, practice has been looking really, really positive and there's no substitute for going out there and executing with a card in your pocket. Like I say, confidence and belief. No one can give you a magic pill. It's very difficult to do anything in practice that can give you the belief in yourself apart from just going out there and doing it on the stage. I just need some more of this. Whether it's this weekend or not, I'm really happy with the progress I'm making.

Q. Was it tough to fight off the kind of discouragement the last few months?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, it's been discouraging the last three, four years. Of course it's tough to fight it off. This game is very difficult and you do ask yourself some deep, dark questions sometimes.

But I think I've managed to boil it down to the fact that if the worst case scenario happens this year and I don't play well, I can be okay with that. So once you decide that you're okay with the worst case scenario, you can start to think about what happens if I really apply myself and start to play well and get out of my own way. I think that's what my caddie and I have been talking about lately. I'm doing all the right things, just get out of your own way. We tried to go out there today and I think I called it "Dustin Johnson golf." Have that carefree attitude, have that "I'm really good at this game" and get out of your own way and let your talent come through a little bit. I might try and keep that going this weekend, he's pretty good.