

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
March 1, 2019



KENNY PERRY (-8)

Q. So what did you have going today?

KENNY PERRY: I birdied three in a row. I started on hole 10. Yeah, 10. I birdied 11, 12 and 13 right out of the gate. So that really got me in a good frame of mind, got me off to a good start.

I eagled 17, I made a putt off the fringe there to put me 5 under. Knocked it on 2, which was my 11th hole, in two and had a good chance to make eagle there, made a birdie. Just played steady. I drove it nice, made some good quality putts, and I think I only missed one, maybe two greens today in regulation, so I had a lot of opportunities and I hit a lot of fairways. Got a good score out of it.

Q. How long was the putt on 17?

KENNY PERRY: The eagle putt? It was probably a 20-footer.

Q. 20-footer?

KENNY PERRY: Yeah.

Q. Were you chasing O'Meara? Did you know he was 8 under through nine?

KENNY PERRY: Uh-uh. What did he shoot? I never saw a leaderboard.

Q. Oh, you're tied with him.

KENNY PERRY: Oh, okay. I didn't know what was going on. I was just playing golf.

Q. Given the conditions out here, do you think it's going to require a really low score to win this tournament?

KENNY PERRY: Oh, yeah, it always does. It always does here. Perfect weather, I mean, there's no wind. It was like, you know, chamber of commerce day out there, it was beautiful. This weather's phenomenal, considering where I came from in Kentucky. Nice to be in the warmth.

Q. What was the weather like back home?

KENNY PERRY: Lots of rain, cold and rainy. We had a lot of rain last week, but I did spend

a little bit of time in Vero Beach, Florida, to go practice a little. I went down there to Bent Pine and did some practicing before I got here, so that really helped out, paid off today.

Q. You missed the start of last season?

KENNY PERRY: Shoulder surgery.

Q. Shoulder surgery?

KENNY PERRY: I did.

Q. And you missed this tournament. How long were you out and when did you start feeling better?

KENNY PERRY: Six months. I didn't hit a ball for six months.

Q. Oh, wow. What was the injury?

KENNY PERRY: Called AC joint in my right shoulder.

Q. That's just a wear-and-tear type deal?

KENNY PERRY: Getting old.

Q. What was it like not being able to play for six months?

KENNY PERRY: Actually, very nice. I didn't feel guilty, I didn't feel guilty, and so I never done that in my 30-something years. I'd never gone any length of time not hitting a golf ball, so that was definitely --

Q. So when you started hitting them again, did you feel rusty?

KENNY PERRY: Oh, my word, it was horrible. I hit a hook. I was hitting a 40-yard slice. I was way over the top of it and the ball would start way left and slice. I had it all on camera, it was the craziest thing I've ever seen. It took me a long time. I got with my teacher, Matt Killen, and we worked a lot to get my club back dropping inside like it always does so I can swing right to left. It was a challenge. I thought, well, this is it, I'm done, I'm going to retire. A lot of hard work and I got it back, I got it back, the KP hook.

Q. How long would you say it took you to -- from when you first started playing again until you felt like yourself?

KENNY PERRY: A good two months.

Q. A good two months?

KENNY PERRY: A good two months of hitting a lot of balls. It was ugly. I was really out of whack.

Q. So how rewarding is it then given all of that to have a pretty good year last year and then come out here and shoot what you did today?

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, you know, it was neat to get to the TOUR Championship playing half a year. I thought that was a pretty good accomplishment, to get to Phoenix. Then I've been playing -- I took my top-50 all-time money, so I'm playing some on the regular Tour this year as well, and so that's been good.

I haven't made a cut yet out there. It's been pretty difficult. But yet I love the competition and I like seeing the young kids again. Been hanging out with J.B. Holmes and Justin Thomas, my Kentucky boys, a little bit. And Josh Teeter. That was good to see them again. It's all good. Heck, 58 years old, let's be realistic about this deal. It was a good day today.

Q. You're very active with charitable work. Given that this tournament, I think all the proceeds go to charity, how does it kind of dovetail with some of the stuff that --

KENNY PERRY: Well, the Tour in general is great in general, period; the PGA TOUR as well as the Champions Tour. They raised I think \$550,000 here last year, phenomenal. We need to get it to a million. We need to figure out a way to get more money and grow the purse if we can.

It's all good. Anytime we can give back and help people in need, it's a good thing.

Q. Kenny, anything you did with -- you mentioned Justin and the Kentucky guys. Anything you did with those guys when you were playing out there?

KENNY PERRY: Just played practice rounds with them and I found out how short I am. It was a phenomenal driving show, how far they hit the golf ball. It just made me say, well, you know -- what was the funniest story was in Phoenix this year I was paired with Joaquín Niemann. He's 19 years old and I'm 58. I looked at him and I said, "Realistically, I'm 40 years older than you." He got a big kick out of that, started laughing. He hit it 30 yards by me easily in the air. I mean, it was a clinic how far that kid could hit a golf ball. But that's the future of golf and it's fun to watch.

Q. You were the longest hitter out here last year, weren't you?

KENNY PERRY: No, I don't think I'm the longest out here.

Q. Yeah, you are.

KENNY PERRY: Brandt Jobe, he's probably the longest on any given day, you know, in

hitting golf balls.

Q. Are you hitting it as long now as you were before the surgery?

KENNY PERRY: Actually, came back okay from it. Yeah, I have good power still, so that was good to see.