

MAVERICK McNEALY (-14)

Q. Here with Maverick McNealy after 2 under in the third round of the Fortinet Championship bringing you to 14 under heading into the final round with the co-lead. What are your takeaways from the day today?

MAVERICK McNEALY: It was a crazy day, I'm not going to lie, that front nine got going pretty quick. Hit it in a few funny spots. We were on the clock I think on I want to say the ninth hole and it was just pretty hectic.

Then got to the 12th fairway. I remember hitting a good tee shot down the middle on the 12th with a utility iron and everything seemed to slow down and calm down for me. I started seeing my lines with the putter and I was really proud how I finished.

Q. What was it that led to being on the clock and some of those earlier challenges?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Well, first hole, Beau had to take a drop out of the left hazard. The third hole I hit it in a tree well and actually had to chip out sideways and was really lucky that I didn't try to hit a full swing because I chipped out sideways and a softball-sized rock came out from under the ball. Actually kind of stung my wrist a little bit. I'm really glad I didn't go after that one full because I told Travis, I said I would have been out for a year. That was strange.

I sent it over the green and two-chipped on 4, and 5 was getting dicey. It was just one of those days where balls were ending up in funny spots with the golf course this firm.

Q. The wrist and everything is okay?

MAVERICK McNEALY: All good, yeah.

Q. Okay. So let's go then to the back nine. Things seemed to look up from there, especially those last three birdies coming in. What was going well then?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I just started seeing the lines with the putter. I felt like I could make everything from 40 feet and in. I made the putt on 13, almost made a 40-footer on 14, left it on the edge on 15 from 30 feet and then hit great putts on 16, 17, 18. It took a lot of pressure off my chip on 18. I just thought all I want to do is stick this on the green to give my putter another chance.

Q. Speaking of pressure, you're going into tomorrow with a chance to win in front of a hometown crowd, your family, your friends who all made the trip up here. How are

you managing your emotions tonight leading into the final round?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Tonight's going to -- it's going to take me a little while to wind down. I'll probably go hit a couple golf balls, a couple putts. I'll go work with my physio, just take care of my body first. Good news is I earned myself a sleep-in tomorrow, so no rush and I'll go through my routine starting at 8:30 in the morning.

Q. Again today a tale of two nines, slow start and then a fast finish.

MAVERICK McNEALY: It's funny you say slow start, fast finish; it felt the exact opposite. That front nine was going so fast. We ended up hitting it, Beau and I, in a lot of funny spots, him left on 1, me left on 3. Got pretty lucky to not break my wrist on a rock that was under my ball that was next to this tree. I decided to pitch out at the last second. Pretty sure if I had taken a full swing, there was a softball-sized rock right in front of my ball I couldn't see, and I airmailed the green on 4 with two chips, and 5 was getting dicey and it was just coming all over the place. Nine, we were on the clock starting on the ninth hole and I misjudged a chip completely on the front of that green and things were kind of going south.

But I remember hitting a great tee shot on the 12th, a really nice low cut utility iron, and walking up that fairway everything seemed to slow down and calm down for me, I started hitting really quality shots and started seeing my lines with the putter.

Q. Yeah, you closed with three straight birdies. Huge, absolutely huge.

MAVERICK McNEALY: Yeah, it was great. Not that I stare at scoreboards, but I really wanted to make that last birdie and get in that final group tomorrow. Whether that one shot ends up being a difference to win or not, it will just be great experience to be in the final group. I learned a lot today. I learned a lot managing my emotions. I'm pushing my comfort zone. My golf skill has gotten a lot better, but I still feel like I'm coming down the experience curve quite a bit and I think as a golfer I grew up a lot today and I'm really excited to see how I feel out there tomorrow.

Q. Are you nervous in the final group? Were you nervous today? Was it a different feel?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Definitely nervous, yeah. There's no joke, spent a lot of time doing my breathing, just trying to relax. But I welcome nerves because it allows me to hit shots that I can't hit under normal circumstances. That adrenaline, those nerves, that focus and intensity are states that I can't achieve in a normal round of golf. That tee shot on 18 was a great example, I was so locked in and zoned in, the few extra miles an hour clubhead speed from the adrenaline and it resulted in my best drive of the day. Like I said, the focus I had with my putter and seeing the lines, it's an exhilarating feeling and it's one that I can only get when I'm feeling those nerves.

Q. Well, you sound so comfortable. Are you excited about tomorrow?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I'm so excited, it's going to be a lot of fun. I've got a lot of family and friends out here watching and rooting. It's fun to be a little bit of a hometown favorite.

Q. What was it that you think happened there on the 12th hole that everything slowed down?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I have no idea. I think -- well, I will say it's a lot less stressful when you're in the fairway. That's one thing where you're not worried about what kind of lie you're going to get, whether it's going to be a flyer, where you're trying to leave the ball. I was just walking up there knowing that I'm in the fairway. I'm second to play, I had a little bit of time to just rest and relax. We caught up to the group in front of us, no longer on the clock. It was just like a combination of five or six things that were making my world spin just evaporated and I really settled into a nice rhythm the last couple holes.

Q. Did you feel like the round, the tournament was starting to get away from you?

MAVERICK McNEALY: Yes and no. Yes, the round was getting away from me and I was not playing -- I was making a lot of bogeys, but honestly, I built myself up a little bit of a cushion yesterday. A couple of those chip-ins and having a couple shots over third or fourth place, whatever it was, that allowed for something screwy to happen on the front nine and I would still be in it. Like I said, I closed with three birdies. I know that the last three holes are very gettable on this golf course and you're always in it until you're not.

Q. Have you played with Jim before?

MAVERICK McNEALY: I have not, but -- actually, I think I might have played with him one round on the Korn Ferry. Great guy. I'm really happy he's playing well and he's got a lot of people rooting for him, so it will be a fun pairing tomorrow.