

Travelers Championship

Thursday, June 25, 2020

Mackenzie Hughes

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP



THE MODERATOR: Mackenzie, thank you for joining us after a successful first round at the Travelers Championship. You said you wish it could have been one more, but 60 is certainly not too bad. Just a couple comments.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, well, just this morning the conditions were quite perfect. Little to no wind and kind of got off to somewhat of just a slow start, nothing special. 1-under through 4, and then hit 14 and started to kind of get on a bit of a roll there, rolled in a couple 15-footers. Kind of got my round going. And then, yeah, made the turn and was 6-under, and at that point was obviously feeling quite good about it, and birdied 2, and that's kind of when it first dawned on me that 59 was kind of in play.

Yeah, the rest of the way just was trying to get those last four and had a chance on 9, but just didn't quite get in position off the tee, and then left a long putt. But still really happy with the round and excited for the rest of the week.

THE MODERATOR: When you get on a roll like that with the five birdies in a row, you get the momentum going, how odd is it that there's not a growing gallery, that kind of thing?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, to be honest, maybe it helps, I don't know. It would have been nice to maybe have family out there, something like that, that would have been pushing you along. But obviously I knew I was playing well and that people back home were watching, so I was definitely motivated enough to keep going. But yeah, it was weird making some nice putts and just a couple guys in the group saying "nice putt," and if I shot 59 there would have been a few claps but that was about it. Yeah, it was a little different, but I think we're kind of getting a bit more used to it now.

Q. I'm curious what your history is with 59 and flirting with it, and where does this rank for you just in terms of overall rounds?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, so I've shot 61 twice in competition, once at Sea Island and once at a mini-Tour event. Both times there was an outside chance the last few holes to shoot 59. Kind of similar deal to today where I kind of needed to birdie the last few holes.

Where this ranks? It's certainly probably top three, top five, somewhere in there. I've probably had more like meaningful rounds of say 65 or 66, but this was as far as going low and how I felt about the game, it's definitely probably top five. When I was home actually over the break, I had a putt for 59 at one of my home courses, TPC Piper Glen. I had a little bit of a brief taste of it there about a month ago. Yeah, so that's basically the only few -- maybe four or five chances in my life. Still waiting for it.

Q. Just as a follow, as a golfer, most of us hacks, we're surpassing that around the 11th, 12th, hole. What does 59 mean? Some people have it on their Twitter handle, that kind of thing. What does it mean? Can you describe if you'd had that one more birdie on 9 today, what it would mean to you?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, that one shot means a lot more than 61 to 60 or 60 to 59. That's a big leap. I kind of joked walking off there that 59 wasn't even the record because Jim's 58, I mean, it's probably not even that special around here. But for a personal milestone, it would have been really, really neat. You just don't get very many chances in your life to do it.

But it was -- you'd take 60 every day and run, and just excited for the rest of the week.

Q. I was wondering how important was that runner-up finish at the Honda before everything shut down? And did that change sort of how you would have approached the three-month break?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, I mean, it's been off to a tough start this season, and playing at the Honda it kind of showed myself I still had what it took to play well and to compete for trophies. That was very important. Going into what we didn't even know was going to be a three-month break was huge for psyche, mental outlook on the game, just knowing I had that in my back pocket as I sat at home for a few months. Huge, huge boost for me, and yeah, still kind of trying to springboard some of that into some more good play, but feel like the game is coming around.

Q. There's an 18-shot difference between your round on Sunday and this round. Is that what makes golf so stupid or so great?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Both. Yeah, it's pretty frustrating. I actually felt pretty good on Sunday at



Harbour Town and was playing well over there, as well, and yeah, just for whatever reason, it's one of those days where you're kind of shoveling s--- uphill and nothing is going right. But yeah, I don't really know what to put a finger on it for. It's just one of those things that golf does sometimes. No difference really from Sunday to here, just 18 shots.

Q. Where do you go now? What do you do now? Clean card, 10 birdies; what does the rest of your day look like? How are you managing to mentally approach things tomorrow knowing that this was the first round obviously of three still to come.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Well, I'll probably try to react to it similar as I did Sea Island a few years ago. Nothing really changed much, but I just remember telling myself that it was one day of four, and there's just so much golf left to be played. Really the mentality tomorrow is to go out there and make a bunch of birdies again. The golf course is kind of yielding some scores, and in order to be there on Sunday, I'll have to keep making birdies. Nothing really changes. I'll probably have a quick bite to eat and maybe hit a few balls, but yeah, go relax tonight and yeah, put my feet up.

Q. What would you say is the most challenging part of this course, and how did you overcome it today?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Obviously the challenging part of this golf course, there's a few holes that kind of get swirled around in some trees or are a bit protected, but the wind kind of bounces around, kind of around that like 13 through 17 range, it can be quite tricky if the wind is blowing. Fortunately I went out pretty early this morning and the wind was a non-factor.

I think part of that trickiness wasn't really in play for the first bunch of holes, so that was a big part of it.

This golf course still has trouble lurking off a handful of tees where you just have to be pretty careful, and there's a fair bit of water still. Just picking your spots to be aggressive, and yeah, trying to figure out that wind.

Q. How surreal is this whole experience, whether it's the no fans, having to wipe down the seat you're sitting on right now, doing news conferences through like a webcam? How weird is this for you?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: To be honest, it doesn't really feel that strange. The PGA TOUR has done a fantastic job making sure that we all feel safe, and we wouldn't be here if we didn't feel safe. But the protocol is in place and what the TOUR has done has been top-notch and first-class. The absence of fans really hurts. That would be a lot of fun to play a round like that with the gallery kind of getting into it, but yeah, the new

normal is here, and we're all just going to try to adapt and do our best.

Q. Could you tell me what was the best club in your bag today? What was the key to it? And also, could you walk us through mentally what you were thinking about on the last two shots?

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Yeah, so I would say without doubt, the putter. I think I made two, three putts over 25 feet, so right there off the bat, you're gaining a lot of shots on the field doing that. And just made a lot of putts from like that 10- to 15-foot range, so I gave myself good looks and was able to capitalize on those. And then from there, the last two holes or last two shots, my approach into 9 was actually in a great spot, just had the worst lie I think I've had all week, and certainly in a long time. Just really like nestled down and the rough was really thick around my ball, so just kind of came out really dead and I was trying to get one to land in the middle of the green and chase back there, but it just came out like a marshmallow out of the rough. And then on the putt, I was really trying to make sure I just gave it a chance and rolled it past the hole, and I don't know, just didn't hit it, and the line was perfect, but yeah, still super excited about shooting 60, and it's a round that I'll remember for a long time.

THE MODERATOR: That wraps it up. Mac, well done today, best of luck tomorrow.

MACKENZIE HUGHES: Thanks, guys. Appreciate it.