

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: MORGAN PRESSEL
Thursday, June 25, 2015



MODERATOR: Hi, Morgan. Were you going to walk us through your experience last week contributing to Fox's coverage of the U.S. Open, kind of what that was like being on the other side of the camera?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Yeah, it was definitely different. I enjoyed being in Washington all week, I really had a great time. My hours were probably longer than they would be if I was just playing golf. On Thursday and Friday I left the hotel at 4:30 and got home at 8:00 every day. But then by the time you're done, the day's not over, you've still got to try and read the press conferences. I learned a lot about preparation more so than -- I mean, I prepare every week to play golf but I've been preparing for that my whole life. This was different. Having to learn a new golf course without playing it, which was interesting because I just walked the course a couple times on the practice days. And then learning how to ask a question was probably one of the most difficult things that I had to do and something that I tried to lean on a lot of people in the media that I knew for some help there. It was great, I really enjoyed it. Probably my favorite part was just calling golf, sitting in the booth and talking about the shots that were being played. But it was nice to see -- I know a lot of guys on Tour so we don't get to see them very often, so it was nice to catch up with some of them and see them compete on the biggest stage.

Q. Just a follow-up to that, you mentioned kind of also having to make time to prepare. We've seen you in a lot of different events this week and throughout the year. How do you kind of create that balance for yourself where you're still involved but you want to make sure you practice, and obviously it's paid off for you so far this season.

MORGAN PRESSEL: Yeah, even last week I only was able to practice one day, so I was coming with this event next and then the Women's Open in two weeks. I was very worried that I only got one day to practice, so I've been trying to put in a little bit extra time here. It's nice that today I don't play because of the pro-am, I played yesterday, so going to go out and put a few hours in on the range, as much heat as I can take this afternoon. Really just try and get some work done so I can really feel prepared for tomorrow. This is a long week. This is the busiest by far week that I have personally on tour. Every week we have obligations outside of golf but this one is every night, every day. This morning I spoke at the new event, last night Pantene Beautiful Lengths, tonight Taste of Northwest Arkansas, an event with the Food Bank. So there's a lot going on, just trying to manage my time and get rest when I can and still try and practice.

Q. You just mentioned the Pantene Beautiful Lengths event last night. Can you talk about why that's so important to you and how it's become such a focal point of this event?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Yeah, that's probably my favorite event all year, Pantene Beautiful Lengths. It's very moving. And I don't know if everyone has heard the story of Courtney from last night, who was the first person to sign up to donate her hair nine years ago and was just diagnosed with breast cancer. Before her chemotherapy treatments took her hair or she lost her hair because of it, she donated, she saved, she had the hair cut off and saved a ponytail to give back to Pantene Beautiful Lengths and is now wearing one of those natural hair wigs that so many people have donated their hair. So it's a sad story but it's an unbelievably moving story and it was very special to meet her.

I watched my mother battle breast cancer for five years, six years and she lost all of her hair, had a wig sitting on a bust. The symbolism of the wig, it seems very small but your hair makes you feel beautiful, and when you're fighting cancer and going through chemotherapy, it's just your whole body hurts. You really have a lot of really, really poor days and that one little thing of a natural hair wig can make you walk outside and not feel like a cancer patient. So that's what's so really cool and to see how that event has grown. I mean, at the amp last night was just the biggest stage we've had and everyone's really excited to donate, which is very cool as well.

Q. Morgan, it's really tough to follow up after that, but back to golf.

MORGAN PRESSEL: Please lighten it. (Laughter.)

Q. You came on the scene your rookie season, great rookie season, had a major victory a year or two after that. That's been a couple years ago. How do you get yourself back on top, back in the Top 10, back to being a major champion?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Just hard work. I mean, I battled some injuries and that was challenging for a couple years and those were definitely my worst years I had on tour. Looking back I wish I probably hadn't played through them and had healed before I tried to continue to play. It was both mentally and physically challenging, but I think having gone through that I've come out better because of it and just working hard. I know my weaknesses, I know what I have to improve on, and I mean it's a very tough competition out here and it's not easy, but I work my hardest every day to improve that little bit better every time and hopefully it will all come together.

Q. You guys have had so many story lines these last couple years on tour from Michelle's always going to be a big draw, Stacy getting to No. 1 as an American and the young players like Lydia, and last week Inbee comes out and plays so well, kind of reminds everybody of how good she is, not that people forgot. But from your perspective as a player, just what does she mean to the tour and how do you view her?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Who?

Q. Inbee.

MORGAN PRESSEL: Well, Inbee has been probably the steadiest player over the last, what, five years let's say. I grew up playing junior golf with Inbee in Florida and to see what she's been able to accomplish and how dominant she's been. I mean, the most unbelievable feat is winning the first three majors of the year. The pressure that she had on her at St. Andrews, I don't even think she expected to have that much pressure on her. I mean, she handled it very well. Obviously she didn't win, but there's only been a handful of people in history that have ever even had that opportunity to complete the Grand Slam, so that was just probably her best golf she's ever played during that stretch. But I read the one quote that was posted yesterday where she feels like she's in a good position, so she obviously feels very confident so I expect to see some more good golf from Inbee.

Q. You played really well these last couple weeks. From a game standpoint, what's been working for you on the course?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Yeah, I don't know if I can pinpoint one thing that I would say this is working. My ball striking's gotten a lot better, my patience has gotten a lot better. I handle myself and my game around the golf course better, which is kind of you look at the range and everybody goes and hits balls on the range and goes to practice putting, but there's so much more to it. It's just putting it all together and putting scores together and being comfortable being outside of your comfort zone, whether you get off to a really hot start and you're well under par, it's just keeping that and moving through the round and not getting ahead of yourself really. So I've been able to do a good job of that, not getting too far ahead of myself but also fighting back at times when I really didn't have the best rounds that I could have and just keep plodding along, that's pretty much what I've been doing.

Q. Does the patience come with added experience and just being on the tour a couple years or is that something that you're actively working on tournament by tournament and round by round?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Well, it's something that I definitely work on but it comes with experience. In my 10th year I think I'm a totally different person than I was when I was 17 and first on tour and a different person than when I was 20, 21 even after a few years on tour. Every week, every experience that I have has set me up for the future and hopefully for success.

Q. Morgan, you've had four Top 5 finishes in your last eight starts. Do you feel like this is some of the best golf you've played in your career?

MORGAN PRESSEL: I mean, it would be hard to argue with those results, so I guess yes, definitely the best results I've had. I feel very good about my game. I don't feel like it's certainly there and I feel like I'm continuing to work on my video of my swing every day. I've been working really hard this week on my putting, I feel like it let me down a little bit at KPMG.

So there's always something, you're never there. Do I feel like it's the best golf I've ever played? Probably not. The best golf I've ever played was probably when I won the Women's Amateur still to this day, what, 11 years ago. But I still hope I have better golf ahead of me, so that's always looking forward to a better day tomorrow and a better year next year and things like that.

Q. So earlier you talked about this event off the course but in regards to on the course, the 17th hole is always one of the best holes out here every year. I'm sure these girls, the junior reporters are going to be excited to be at that hole and cover it and see you. What about this event, this course makes it so special?

MORGAN PRESSEL: I think really the community. I mean, yeah, you have this loudest hole, but that hole doesn't work without the community there to make it loud. I think the tour has done a good job in the event and moving that up. It used to be quite a bit of a longer par 3 where it was challenging to make birdies, but now they've moved it up where it's a shorter iron and you have more opportunities for people to go crazy and it's very cool. Come the weekend, I get a little nervous on that hole. I have so many friends and people that I have known for so many years here in this community that are up there in the grandstands and I know they want to cheer for me. So I have to kind of get that out of my head before I play that hole this week.

It's fun, it's different, it's something that we don't have on a normal week to week. The golf course is in fabulous shape. It's probably in the best shape it's been. I know there was quite a bit of rain last week but it really, really looks good. The greens are smooth, the fairways are lush, and I think hopefully the weather can cooperate tomorrow and it will stay great through the week.

Q. During your practice, how do you work on your mental game to improve on that, and do you use visualization?

MORGAN PRESSEL: I definitely use visualization. I think it's important to prepare how you are going to play. So I try and create the same feels and the same shots. I think I used to not do that, I used to just kind of practice to learn the golf course and now I practice a little bit more to take my golf swing and my mental abilities on the course. So I mean I would go through a shot just like I would a normal shot in a tournament.

But that being said, there's nothing that can prepare you as much as playing and that's where just experience comes in and playing week in, week out and learning. Because you can practice in practice all you want in your mental game and you can prepare for that, but it's nothing like being in contention on a Sunday. The more often you're in that position, the more experience and the more comfortable you'll be.

Q. And then I just wanted to ask, how do you continue to challenge yourself on the course and in your practice and like what kind of motivation do you have? Is it the rankings, is it the golf course or the game?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Good question. It's the game really. I don't even know what I'm ranked, I don't look at that kind of stuff. So it's just I just want to go out there and play well and I know that I'm capable of playing better golf than I'm playing and I just continue to try and work hard to get there. There are a lot of players have different motivating factors, whether they set goals that they want to be No. 1 in the world, and not that I don't do that per se, but that's not what drives me day in and day out to get out there and play and practice.

Q. And then what are your goals for, you know, the next couple years in your career on the tour and just in general?

MORGAN PRESSEL: That's an interesting question because I don't -- well, how am I going to say this? For now I think I probably have maybe a couple more years before we start a family. So that's an interesting -- that will be another interesting part of my career. Whether I continue to play golf after that or don't, I don't know and I don't know if I -- I might not even be the one to be able to decide that, my body might tell me otherwise. So that will be interesting. I'm going to try and get two, three more great years in. I'm saying that now; in two or three years I might not be ready, I don't know. But that's kind of our short-term/long-term plan, my husband and I, so we'll see how that goes. But for now I know that that -- I would like to have a family so just trying to get as much out of golf right now as I can until that happens and you never know, maybe I'll play better afterwards. (Laughter.)

Q. At what point in your life did you realize that you wanted to be a golfer or was that something that you just always wanted to do?

MORGAN PRESSEL: Well, I had played golf for a few years before I qualified for the Open but only kind of in small local things. So I was 12 and I mean, I ended up being 13, I turned 13 before I actually played in the Open but that was the moment for me where I said this is what I want to do, I'm going to work hard, I want to be out here.

Getting to meet the people that I've watched compete forever and looked up to and played on the same golf course as they did in the biggest stage in ladies golf, that was very, very special and kind of an eye opener, like for sure this is what I want to do, no questions about it.

Q. Before a tournament, what drives you to like -- does the competition make you want to play harder, play better so you can get higher up in the rankings or is it just the way you play?

MORGAN PRESSEL: I just love to compete, and I'm also very hard on myself so I don't like to play poorly. I don't like to not be competing and not be in contention, so that's really what drives me. Being in contention on Sunday, that's the coolest thing that you can do out here and love to be there every week. It's not very -- very few players are and I understand that, but I still work towards that, give myself the most opportunities to win tournaments.

MODERATOR: Well, thank you, Morgan for coming in, we appreciate it.

MORGAN PRESSEL: Yeah, thanks. Thanks, girls, for the questions.