

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: FRED COUPLES
Saturday, November 2, 2013



DAVE SENKO: Well, Fred, 3-under 68 today and you're at 15-under, looks like right now a 5-shot lead heading into tomorrow. Maybe just take us back through your day.

FRED COUPLES: It was a good day. It was hard out there. I don't know how the scores were besides I know O'Meara was playing well and Lehman, I saw them work their way up there, but for me it certainly wasn't a great start. Peter and I both bogeyed the 1st hole and I think I had 105 yards and hit a sand wedge about 90 yards and then three-putted from 50 feet. I worked my way around and got it under par and made a great par on 18, which there's a lot of shots you want to save and that was one of them.

DAVE SENKO: How far was your putt?

FRED COUPLES: Probably four feet.

DAVE SENKO: You birdied No. 4?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, the par 5. I hit two good woods up in front and pitched it to about four feet. And then No. 9, is that correct?

DAVE SENKO: Yeah.

FRED COUPLES: I hit it on in two but on the right fringe maybe 50 feet and left it eight feet short and made it for birdie. Then the next hole I hit a good drive, could have reached easily but fatted a 3-wood right in front of the green and got it up and down and made about a five-footer. I guess it would be up the hill, 14, I hit it to the right and got a nice clean lie, hit a 9-iron to about 15 feet and made it.

Q. Fred, Billy Ray closed out the telecast talking about your short game. Underrated, it seems. I remember going back to your win at Westchester a couple years ago and how you got it up and down there and just brilliant today. Is that a thing you practiced as a kid at Jefferson Park, do you practice it a lot, is it natural? How does it come to you?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I'm either really good or mediocre. Not many times when you'll say that. And I like this kind of rough, you know. If you put me in the soft fluffy stuff, I don't do very well. It takes a lot more practice out of that stuff because there's more of a fine kind of where you hit the ball. Here you can almost hit like little bunker shots. On 18 I drew a pretty good lie but it was still very difficult and I just feel like I can get my club through this grass. I grew up on it, you know. They certainly don't have it in Palm Springs where I play and practice but basically it's a heavier grass.

And Westchester, same deal. And even when it grows really, really tall, I just feel like I know how to get it through the grass and that's a big help. Just like when you're in the sand they tell you to hit as close to the ball as you can and sometimes when you're not -- when your game is a little off you're further away and your bunker shots are kind of more sporadic. I'm the same way out of this kind of grass except I just feel comfortable out of this stuff.

Q. How big was the putt for you on 9 leaving it short eight feet and making that putt? You missed a couple of short ones early in the round and it seemed like that was kind of a nice moment for you to --

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I missed a lot of putts and I hit a couple decent ones, which at least I felt like I wasn't putting that bad. And then the one on 9, it was kind of up the hill and down the hill, and to be honest with you, it was downhill and I just felt like if I could get it started on line, I know it sounds funny, I needed to hit a good putt even if it lipped out. I had a four-foot birdie putt on 7, I didn't even hit the hole. No. 6 I had a pretty makeable birdie putt, a couple other ones I left short, so that was a big putt. Then I went right on and made a nice little five- or six-footer on 10, too.

Q. Real quick, do you expect Kenny Perry to give you a pep talk before tomorrow's round?

FRED COUPLES: You know, I don't even know what he and Bernhard are shooting. They're 8 back, so they're both 7-under? Hopefully they're paired tomorrow, hopefully the Tour can set that up.

Hey, I'm going to go out, I have a big lead. Personally, it's way better to have a 5-shot lead than a 1-shot lead. But this is a good course, I enjoy playing it. I really feel like the worst -- I only got it up and down on 18, I get all that, but the worst I could have shot today is what I shot and it had nothing to do -- you know, it was cold for me, like everyone else. My body tends to do different things. I thought when we started it was really, really cold, my hands didn't feel very good but I hit the ball solid, and that's what I said yesterday and I hit it solid yesterday but I narrowed the gap. My misses weren't too bad. Today there were some to the right, some to the left, but not too much of a harm. So I have to pay attention tomorrow, I think it's supposed to be a little windier and cooler, but that's why it's important for me to get this lead today. You could get a guy shoot 66 tomorrow, have the round of his life in windy and cool weather and I've got to shoot 70. So I get all that and just go out and play and see what happens.

Q. (Inaudible.)

FRED COUPLES: I borrowed some gloves, never put them on. Not golf gloves, mittens.

Q. You had all of those runner-up finishes earlier in the year including Pittsburgh. Is this the best you've played this year?

FRED COUPLES: I played really well at Pittsburgh the first two rounds and in kind of not real difficult conditions, but not as easy as it was the last two days. So yeah, I'm pretty -- I'm right there. When I can hit the ball semi where I'm looking and go, to me that's when I feel like I'm playing well. I mean, I never stand up there and knock flags down with 7-irons and hit everything stiff. I have this week, but my game is more pound it, hit it solid, where I never really get concerned.

When you start miss-hitting them, then you start thinking about your swing, then you start trying to miss it here. I've had that feeling, too, and this week I pretty much am just stepping up to it and hitting it and most of them are going above par.

Q. One of the other players said you've always been a great front runner when you get the lead. Why is that, do you think? Do you still play aggressively or do you go into protect mode?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I think, A, it's because I'm playing well; B, I enjoy having a lead. I think sometimes you know when you're out there playing and you have a lead, you try and expand that lead, and when you're behind, you're trying to catch up so every shot, everything is really important, and to be honest I don't do well with that. When I'm doing well and playing near the lead or one behind or one or two or three ahead, I try to put the hammer down. But if I'm two behind top players, it seems like every shot becomes like I need to make this five-foot putt because I'll only one back. But when I'm ahead, you know, I don't say if I make this, I'm four ahead, if I make this next one I'm five ahead. It's the complete opposite. I wish I had more leads than I had in my career, I'd have a few more wins. But tomorrow is a day, you know, I don't want to say by not winning this year it's going to be hard, it's a hard course and so far I've made it look easier because I think the guys that are 8-, 9- and 10-under probably feel like they played pretty good golf, but I have to get off to a good start, try not to make too many mistakes and go from there.

Q. How much of your success this week comes back to the par 5s? I think you're 7-under.

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I would have thought I was better. How many par 5s are there, three? So 7 out of 9? Yeah, I know the couple that I parred they were missed short putts, but I have hit 7-, 8-, and 9-irons pretty well. I've hit some beautiful shots and the par 5s are, you know, I think I've gotten 9 and 10 every day. So that's, wherever you were, 1-under or 3-under, 20 minutes later you're 4-under or 6-under, so those are key holes for me. I've driven the ball really well on those holes, and for me tomorrow I need to make birdies somewhere, it might as well be on the par 5s.

Q. What did you have in on 9?

FRED COUPLES: I had a 5-iron.

Q. How far was that?

FRED COUPLES: 203.

Q. Watching your body language on 1 when you were walking off the green it really didn't seem like you let it affect you, the opening bogey, too much. Mentally, is that kind of the case or what was your takeaway?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I guess my way of answering that is I hit a good drive, it trickled in the first cut of the rough, I had a sand wedge and I hit it 50 feet. I'm not going to go back and say yeah, I three-putted the 1st hole. I hit a sand wedge 50 feet, that's not very good, so really I don't get down on my putting. I missed a little three- or four-footer there but really the whole thing was, you know, I could stand up there a hundred times and probably not make a bogey and the one time I had to play the hole I made a bogey. It's almost laughable, that's why.

Now if I'm standing there tomorrow with a 7-iron to the hole and I hit what I consider a stupid shot and push it in the rough and don't get it up and down, I pretty much get more upset at those things than I do when you do something that's as simple, with a good drive on the 1st hole, making a 5 is ridiculous.

Q. Some of the bombers that you had on your team for the Presidents Cup four years ago at Harding Park, is there anything you take away from the way they played some of these holes?

FRED COUPLES: No. It was fun watching them, I remember some of there shots, but no.

Q. O'Meara was saying you guys obviously go way back, he recalled rooming with you maybe first stage of Q School in '80 and paired with you in a subsequent stage. Can you reflect, it's such a circle out here with guys you've known an awful long time?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I've known Mark for a long time and I won't expand too far but I was sleeping in a truck at Crystalaire and the guy he was staying with missed the cut, so he said come on and stay with me, so I finally got a bed and I didn't have to shower and shave at the clubhouse. And then next week or two we were paired in Fresno and we were paired together the last day and we were -- I was the last guy to make it. I think he was one shot better than me, but we both qualified and neither of us ever had to do that again. So we were in the same spot, Crystalaire and Ft. Washington.

Q. (Inaudible)

FRED COUPLES: The finales, yep.

Q. I was going to ask the same question but to take it a step further, to play with Mark tomorrow, how does that change the dynamic to play with a guy you know? What's that going to be like to play alongside him?

FRED COUPLES: I played with him yesterday. I love playing with him. He's so -- Peter Senior, if I would have had -- I guess Peter bogeyed the last hole so Mark's 10, he's 9? It's the best thing about the Champions Tour, to be quite honest. The best thing is the pairings. We all get great pairings Friday and then you go by score, so if you're playing well you're going to get Tom Lehmans and Tom Watsons and the Corey Pavins and the Bernhard Langers and tomorrow I get Mark O'Meara. It couldn't be any better for me.

Q. You guys talk much?

FRED COUPLES: Sure. We play really fast, to be honest. Yesterday not that much. A little bit, but you're twosomes, you're moving. There's not a whole lot of time for much conversation.

Q. One more followup about O'Meara. You parallel so closely. Is he the next guy to get into the Hall of Fame?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. Well, he won't be this year because Montgomerie and I started to make them think a little bit so they're taking the year off. But yeah, I would think he would be the next year, yeah. And then the other guy, probably Davis Love pops into mind. But yeah, he's definitely a Hall of Famer.

Q. He pointed out (inaudible.)

FRED COUPLES: He points out a lot of things, yeah. I have two more TPCs than he does. And I hope to have one, what is this tournament called, the Schwab Cup? But I have to play well to beat him. That was a great round he had.