



PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: FRED COUPLES
Wednesday, October 29, 2014

FRED COUPLES: Let's get rolling. Nice course, good shape, good to be here. Thank you.

DAVE SENKO: Well, Fred, you had a nice little break there from your win in Calgary and you played last week and you had a chance to play a pro-am today, come in as the defending champion. How's your game right now?

FRED COUPLES: My game's okay. It's a little rusty. I did play last week just so I could come here and it was a good golf course in San Antonio, but I just didn't want to take that many weeks off. And I played all right there. I did a lot of good things but a lot of mediocre things. I think this golf course is playing a little different, it seems to be a little softer and longer, but the greens are really, really nice and starting to firm up. But it's a fun spot to be.

DAVE SENKO: Questions?

Q. Fred, what you just said about your game sounds very similar to what you were saying last year at Harding Park before the start of the event. Can you compare your game this year, last year?

FRED COUPLES: You know, I don't really remember last year. I played really well. I may have practiced a little more before. I know I didn't play San Antonio, I don't even know the last time I played before Harding Park.

I tweaked my wrist about three or four months ago. It's really never felt great but I've taken some time off where it will feel good. And at the British Open I hit it in some deep rough the last day, hit it out of there and that's the only problem. Hitting the ball is no problem, shaking hands is a problem. But actually playing golf, so it's the little things.

My back's feeling pretty good. What's kept me a little bit from playing is my wrist, I've babied it because I've never really had a wrist problem. I played very little this whole summer for reasons that I didn't miss it at all, so I just kept staying home and home and home.

Then I did want to play San Antonio. I heard maybe it was the last year we were going to play there, I don't know if that's true or not, but I wanted to go back and I certainly wanted to be ready to play this. This is a -- I mean, I remember the scores were pretty low. I played with Jay one day, he shot 60. I know Lehman won here and

I don't remember how many under par, but it's a really good golf course. I think the scoring will be a little different than it was before.

Q. So you said you were rusty. What does that feel like to you? What's the difference between you being rusty and you being sharp right now?

FRED COUPLES: Well, you know, when you're sharp, there may be a shot or two on a golf course that you don't like and you can get around it. When you're not sharp, it's almost impossible to get around it. And then there are other shots that to keep a round really going you have to hit. You don't have to pull off great shots. You can go play a round of golf and do well if you just hit the ball solid.

For me when I'm rusty, I don't play much and I don't -- I just don't see the shot as well as when I'm playing a lot. It's got nothing to do with my swing. I mean, obviously I don't know how many weeks I had off in a row, four or five, maybe six or whatever it was, but for some people rusty is if they play a lot and they don't play a little. I have a tendency to take a lot of time off, and when I come back it's more like seeing the ball go where I kind of want it to go and that's the rusty part. I can still hit it fairly solid. I might hit them in the rocks or hit shots that you don't want to hit, but you can do that if you play every single week. But for me, you know, I just like to visually see the ball go, and when I don't do that, then I kind of panic.

Q. Your name has been thrown out there in terms of people looking for the next Ryder Cup captain. Is that something you're interested in?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I think -- I'm not throwing my name out there because personally if it happens, it happens. But I think the whole thing is, you know, it's a little much on what's happened here maybe the last three or four, five weeks.

But I don't think anyone should panic. I don't think we need a task force. I don't think we need the PGA of America straining about this. What I really think they need is to get players that have been on a lot of these teams to get a feel for what kind of captain they need. You can say whatever, whatever you say about whoever was the last captain, it looks like you're saying things that are negative. If I could say anything positive, that I was on the team that Davis Love captained and he couldn't have done a better job but basically he never hit a shot.

Tom Watson, maybe he could have done a better job, but he never hit a shot either, so it's all the feel of the week. I've been on -- captained three Presidents Cups teams, which is much easier to do than a Ryder Cup but it's still 12 players in a room, and I think they all are different in certain ways and there's no way that no matter who the next captain is or the next one or the next one, you can run the ship with a big stern. It's impossible. You've got to let the players get involved.

And the one guy I talked to when I got the first time as Presidents Cup was Joe Torre

and it was amazing what he said. The only other guy to compare that I really, really liked was Popovich in San Antonio and I've seen him go in time-outs in the huddle and grab Tim Duncan and spit and chew's going everywhere, and I've seen him other times grab him and you can physically see saying you handle the time-outs. So those are kind of fun things. I would never get mad at a player, would never be disappointed in a player because they're trying as hard as they can. So a lot of it is basically the team that you have.

So to answer your question in a roundabout way, I think anyone would love to be the Ryder Cup captain. I particularly don't think it's really that hard to do, I really don't. I keep hearing it's a two-year process. Well, what would I do right now? I don't even know who's going to be on the Presidents Cup team let alone the Ryder Cup team. So I could go have dinner with Rickie Fowler for two straight years and tell him everything and then he might not make it. So I think it's all -- it's just a little bit much. We need a little more fun and that comes with winning.

Let me tell you, in Chicago we were all having a great time and then Sunday night they were really disappointed for Davis more than anything because, you know, it's become such a big deal. I don't know why we can't win it, I really don't. You know, not taking a jab at Tom, I know one thing, I will play Phil Mickelson on Saturday of the next Ryder Cup if he's on the team. That was the only thing I could see that maybe you could say that Tom, something happened there. Other than that, Tom did a great job. Because we lost three and a half to a half, and I guarantee you it was because Phil wasn't out there playing. I guarantee it.

Q. You said that it's easier being Presidents Cup captain. Obviously you've been on both teams as a player. What makes the Presidents Cup captaincy easier to handle?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it's another day, everyone plays. Saturday I think you sit two guys in the morning and two guys in the afternoon, but everyone plays Thursday, everyone plays Friday. You get teams set.

But as I look at it, you know, I think the easiest part is just really not panicking. If you get ahead or behind, you've just got to stick with what you have. I consider Graham McDowell an unbelievable player and he played alternate shot the first day and he played alternate shot the second day with Victor Dubuisson. I believe they were a team for probably a month or two months or three months and that's what they were told they were going to do. If they went out and lost their first match, they were still going to play the second match.

I think for us we sit there and everyone wants to play, but you just, you know, you're sitting four guys in the morning on Friday and the morning on -- Friday afternoon and then obviously the morning on Saturday, or morning Saturday and afternoon Sunday. So you've got to have your teams ready and just get points and it's not easy to do.

They make it look easy because they're winning and their formula, whatever it might be, is not because they're closer and they're friendlier to each other. That's the biggest crazy thing ever. We have great -- every team I've been on has been phenomenal and I'm sure every team Europe's ever had has been phenomenal. They just win so it looks easier.

Q. What was the Joe Torre message, do you remember?

FRED COUPLES: Well, yeah. It was six years ago. It was basically you've got to -- it wasn't really treating egos, but you have to ride your top players. So by listening to that, I know he mentioned Derek Jeter and he mentioned Posada and obviously Rivera. So when I got this captain, I picked Jay Haas, but when we got to Harding Park, in every meeting we had it was just Jay and I and Michael, Michael Jordan, and then it was Tiger, Phil, Stricker and Furyk. The rest of the eight guys -- you were there. We were in a mobile home. We weren't hiding, I would just call them. I would kind of make sure everyone knew, too. We would go in there, we came out and we basically had pairings and we knew when they were going to go. And the Ryder Cup is different but the Presidents Cup you go try and match up.

I think that worked out great, and I think what any of these top players, you can't give Jimmy Walker the open floor to pick a Ryder Cup captain, but Phil Mickelson has been on 10 of them; Tiger Woods, I don't know, eight or 10, so those guys should really have a say.

You know, we're a team for the Presidents Cup and the Ryder Cup, but they want to say it's who they think should run the show and I think that's going to be what's going to happen from now on.

Q. Without being specific, have you received calls from a bunch of players saying we want you to be captain?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I've called a couple but I text usually all of them. I don't know Jimmy Walker at all so I can't say anything to him, but there are several of them, you know, that I text and talk to all the time and I did during that week, too. I mean, some of the texts were disheartening, some were exciting. Some when they all got home they said you need to do this. It's the same guys because the Presidents Cup team is fun and I was part of the thing in Chicago, too.

Let me tell you, we were rolling in Chicago. Davis, again, I was probably a poor assistant because I didn't really do much, but he did it all and everything he did was etched the correct way. So that's a format that instead of talking about Paul Azinger, if the guys would have got -- I don't know, did they have three and a half points? What the hell was it? It wasn't much. It was a snowball and it was bad. I mean, everyone in this room was probably there. But I think for me, Sunday night was hard because Davis, the 12 guys took it hard but I took it a little bit because of Davis. A lot

of them are on Ryder Cup teams and play, but it was a big deal.

Q. I know your Royals are coming on here so one more if you don't mind. Are you surprised this has never come your way before and -- I'm sorry, going to squeeze two in, and Jay said you never made a speech in your life as a Presidents Cup captain. Is that true?

FRED COUPLES: Never what, a speech? Oh, no. You mean to the team? No, no. I've given speeches like in front of everybody. In a team room? No. What would I tell them? I want you guys to go out there and I want you to play really well and Royal Melbourne -- honestly.

I will tell you why it's so much fun. Because I'm not going to make any of them nervous. I'm not prepping for this, I'm just saying, I'm just telling what happens. I don't make them nervous, I make them relaxed because I'm just another guy. When we had Curtis -- I've had unbelievable captains. Ray Floyd gave a speech in Europe that was the craziest speech of all time. He just got up and said all 12 players' names, these are the greatest 12 players in the world, and you've got Seve and Faldo and all these guys sitting there. I don't know who I am, 1987 and I'm just a golfer.

So when you give speeches, you've got to really be careful. I did have Michael, I asked him to give a speech on Sunday in San Francisco and that's the only rah rah only anything. It wasn't even rah rah. It was a very, very nice speech that he gave.

Q. Are you surprised it hasn't come your way to this point in time and now it is?

FRED COUPLES: Well, not surprised because they have unbelievable captains. I mean, Tom Watson is amazing. It just didn't work out. Before that was Davis Love. Maybe Corey Pavin, right? So, you know, I've heard it all. I've been on tour for 34 years. I've heard this guy tell me he's got a contract from Bridgestone that's way more than yours and you have this and I have this putter and I have that. I mean, I'm excited for all of them. I just wish we would win this -- somebody would win it.

So if I ever get the choice, I hope it's the next one, but if it's not, then they'll pick great guys. But you just need guys that the players want to look at. That's my opinion. Everyone's got one, and David Toms is in there, Steve Stricker, Jim Furyk will be one one day. Phil Mickelson, you just wait. He'll say I don't want to do this, I want no part of doing this, but I particularly think it's fun if it can be fun. Sometimes, you know, it's not that much fun.

Q. Freddie, do you ever think we'll see the day where the Ryder Cup pairings are going to be like they are at the Presidents Cup? Are they always going to be blind pairings, do you think?

FRED COUPLES: I think so. I mean, there's no reason to tweak. Yeah, if you could get a couple more matches somewhere along the Ryder Cup, and it's very difficult now because everyone is so good. To make the team and only play -- I mean, you know, they had Stephen Gallacher that they had to play one match and he didn't play well so he didn't play again until the singles. I think we had Webb Simpson. But guys kill themselves to get on this team, so I personally think if they tweak anything, maybe got a couple more points, maybe one more match.

Q. But as captain, wouldn't it be easier in the way that you talked about the Presidents Cup, wouldn't it be easier if you had pairings?

FRED COUPLES: No, no, all the same. You have to be -- but you do all this way in advance. You don't do it Tuesday in the hotel and say, well, wow, everyone's playing good. They'll all tell you they're playing great. There's not one guy on the team that says I'm not going to get a point for you, but you have to sit four guys down and now you have to figure out who they are.

If you learned anything by all these Ryder Cups is there are guys you need to look just right at them and say, You're best ball. Unless you physically go watch them and they are playing horrible, then you might not play them the next day, but that's -- that's neither here nor there, it's irrelevant now. More points would help, but it's easier in the Presidents Cup because they're all playing and they're all having fun.

I always say if your son made the team and you flew to Europe and he didn't play well in the very first match and I didn't play him until Sunday, you would think I'm the biggest prick in the world. I would hope you would be, but that's what happens. So if you've let them play, you know, then they'll get to show their stuff. Stephen Gallacher may never be on another team, I believe he is, but I just think it's a little bit harsh that you don't have to make a guy play a little more because he's earned a spot on the team.

Q. Two quick ones. Do you think the Fed Ex cup champion absolutely has to be on the Ryder Cup team given that he's peaking at that moment? Did we miss something there?

FRED COUPLES: Well, we missed Dustin Johnson, let's be real. Dustin Johnson is a phenomenal player.

Q. What about Dufner?

FRED COUPLES: Well, yeah, I'm not getting there but Dufner is great, too. But that's -- we missed one of those guys. We were -- and Tiger's not too bad, either. We all know Tiger. Billy Horschel --

Q. Two out of four tournaments and wins the FedEx Cup?

FRED COUPLES: No one's ever thought of that until -- almost every guy that's won the FedEx Cup has been on the Presidents Cup or Ryder Cup team, correct?

Q. I'm not sure about that.

FRED COUPLES: Well, I don't know. Jim Furyk, Tiger Woods has won it a couple times. Vijay's won it, he's not worried about it on the Ryder Cup. And you've got Jim Furyk won it, Bill Haas won it, Snedeker won it. So all those guys so far have been on every team.

Anyway, would it have been nice? Yeah. Billy Horschel, Billy Horschel will be on the Presidents Cup team and the next Ryder Cup team. If they had waited, he would have been picked, no doubt. I don't know who Tom would have left off. Hunter, Webb or Keegan, but Billy would have been on the team. But those were all written rules.

Q. So you as a Ryder Cup captain want to make your pick up to the FedEx Cup instead of after the PGA?

FRED COUPLES: I would have this year.

Q. Well, especially since we missed the other two guys, yeah.

FRED COUPLES: I can't answer that because I think the Ryder Cup is such a -- it's been tweaked like years when Europe did a few things where a lot of guys were playing here, I think they got more picks. I think it's all good for tweaking, then they change it a week here or there. But yeah, probably this task force is going to come up with a lot of things, I'm sure, and that will be one of them.

Q. It's been talked around that --

FRED COUPLES: How about the PGA Ryder Cup Committee, can I say that? That sounds way better. And if I ever got chosen, I would ask them to change the name.

Q. Or drop it altogether?

FRED COUPLES: No, because those are pretty good guys on the thing. It would be fun to chitchat with them and they would help me immensely. But I don't really --

Q. You just stated a few minutes ago, I heard you, that you don't really think it's all that much brain damage that it's been made out to be.

FRED COUPLES: Who's going to coach at Chicago, you just said? Joe Madden? How did he do at Tampa? How's he going to do in Chicago? Is he going to make

them better? Yeah, so these guys bounce around. Byron Scott. I'm from L.A, he's coaching the Lakers. Good luck. Does that make Byron Scott a bad coach or a bad pick? He's got players that aren't going to win 50 games like LeBron and Chicago and all that. So it's just a timing thing.

I'm not saying Jay and I didn't make mistakes at the Presidents Cup and we won because the guys played incredible golf. I didn't do anything. If anything, every time I made a pick when we walked out I thought, oh, my God, Jay, what have we done here? Phil wanted to play fourth and we have him first. Then they all love it. I'm going to be honest, they make you feel better so it's a win-win thing.

Like I said, Joe Torre, if I was ever going to want to play on a team, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't want to play for Bruce Bochy either or Ned Yost because I don't even know them. Obviously they're all pretty good. Some coaches get in and out and they get fired. I'm not even sure we shouldn't have a Ryder Cup coach. I don't even know why it's got to be a golfer. Why?

Q. Well, of course tradition.

FRED COUPLES: Why? Why would we need a golfer?

Q. I'm teasing you.

FRED COUPLES: If they picked someone over me and I wanted it really, really badly and they picked someone and I thought holy cow, that guy's really qualified, I certainly wouldn't say what does he know about golf. He doesn't need to know anything about golf. They all have their teachers, they're all cooked food, they all have an incredible hotel room, they all have caddies, they all know the course and they go out and play. I can't tell them anything on the golf course. What am I going to tell them, it's a cut 5-iron or this putt breaks to the left? But the one thing that I see personally with me is I don't intimidate any of the players.

Q. Is that because your personality has been and continues to be --

FRED COUPLES: No, I think --

Q. It's so laid back, things don't bother you, you're not hysterical?

FRED COUPLES: Tom Watson, every time I had a question, I would ask him and I just think by watching, he didn't cradle his boys enough and that's what they need. They need some love and they need to be --

Q. But who could have loved them more than Davis Love and you and everything at Medinah and they still lost?

FRED COUPLES: We did everything Monday -- we had a blast. They didn't lose, they just got beat. They got beat and it didn't work out. Just like when the guys went out to Brookline and picked up an insurmountable amount of points. I don't even know who their captain was.

Q. Can I ask you about the golf courses real quick?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. Which one?

Q. Well, the PGA of America picks the golf courses and it's been talked a little bit that the golf courses that are picked on the American side are courses that the players don't play very often, and when they do, the other players around the world are playing too, too. For example, Medinah. As opposed to the European teams that tend to pick courses that they play all the time or certainly more often. Is there anything to that?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, there is. No, there is.

Q. But if you were going to pick the golf course for the next Ryder Cup --

FRED COUPLES: Don't they have a European Tour event at that course, Gleneagles, that they just played? Yeah, so they all play, none of our guys went.

Q. If you were going to pick the perfect course, what would you pick?

FRED COUPLES: Seattle Country Club if I was the captain because I'm from Seattle.

Q. Because all our players play there a lot, right?

FRED COUPLES: Perfect course? Wow, you know what? That's probably an unbelievable Ryder Cup, but don't we have these things slotted for years to come?

Q. Um hmm, yeah.

FRED COUPLES: So it's a little late now.

Q. Do you think we should be picking courses that we're more used to?

FRED COUPLES: (Inaudible). But you're correct. So if I was in my prime and I could quietly go to the PGA with Phil and Tiger and say, look, man, we've won at Riviera -- Tiger doesn't play. We've won at Doral, wherever, and I finished second and I love it, let's go to Doral, they should go to Doral. That's my opinion. I would agree with you on that.

Q. Firestone? There's a number of courses.

FRED COUPLES: I have to watch myself here because what's the name of the course in Minnesota?

DAVE SENKO: Hazeltine.

FRED COUPLES: That's a hell of a course, but I don't want to see too many more PGAs at Valhalla. Sorry, I know they own it.

Q. But we won a Ryder Cup there.

FRED COUPLES: That's fine because we play there a lot, but there's so many great courses. You have a great point.

Q. Why do we play there a lot?

FRED COUPLES: Because the PGA of America owns it.

Q. There you go. I didn't say that.

FRED COUPLES: The PGA of America should put some money in and build or buy a course and have the Ryder Cup there every single year and have pictures of Phil making putts and Poulter making putts and it's the Ryder Cup and they can charge \$300 a round and do that and have a great course. We don't need to move it around.

It might be 40 degrees next year. Does that help us to play in 40 degrees in Minnesota next year? I'm not bashing it because it's irrelevant to me because I'm not on any of these teams, but if I was and they had a task force, I'm sure that's what Phil -- but by the time they get to pick a course, Phil will be 50, Tiger will be 46 or more, right?

Q. Way more.

FRED COUPLES: Right. So Rickie Fowler's on the task force because --

Q. There you go. Phil is so outspoken and disappointed and let down by this whole experience, do you think Phil ought to be the captain?

FRED COUPLES: I think Phil will be captain one day.

Q. He will be captain for sure. What about right now though?

FRED COUPLES: Phil Mickelson is the best guy on every team I've ever been on by

far. Others are great players. Phil's gone where he didn't win many points, South Africa, and he didn't change clubs in Chicago or Detroit, all that stuff. But as far as he's trying as hard, maybe some of the things, he loses matches but he doesn't want to be on these teams where they don't win and neither does Tiger and neither does Furyk and neither does Hunter and certainly Patrick Reed doesn't or Jordan Spieth either.

So we have good years ahead of us, but Phil I think -- I didn't have a problem with what he did. Someone said, well, it could have been done differently. He didn't play Saturday. He shot 6-under from what I hear on Sunday and won his match. I really think he feels like if he had played Saturday, it may have been a different story. He was frustrated.

Q. Do you think that had anything to do with two years earlier at Medinah he didn't want to play on Saturday afternoon?

FRED COUPLES: No.

Q. Doesn't have anything to do with it?

FRED COUPLES: No.

DAVE SENKO: Are you guys okay?