

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW
June 25, 2017



Fred Couples (-15)

CHRIS RICHARDS: Congratulations, Fred, on winning the American Family Insurance Championship. I know a lot of people are impressed with you being off for seven weeks and coming in and winning. Are you impressed with yourself?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I'm not that kind of a person, but I am thrilled that I hit the ball very, very well today. So when you're off, you kind of get excited to play. You guys all know, you just get back out there and you play.

I said it up on the green, I really did, I made a putt at 18 yesterday which put me in a pairing with Steve, and that was a big deal because everyone knows there will be 15,000 people all following Steve and I wanted to be in that group. It gets your heart rate going, it gets a lot of things going. And I did do that and I played well on the front nine.

Yesterday when I talked to some people, I had had a not-such-a-good front nine and a great back nine. And I didn't really pay attention, but I was 9 under on the back for the first two rounds and I guess even par on the front.

So today was a very good front nine. I made a long putt on No. 4, but I had chances and I was playing very well. The back nine, birdieing 10 and 11 to really put some space. For me, I didn't know what Broadhurst was doing, but I think on the 13th hole I looked up and I had a three-shot lead. I knew if I just kept hitting the ball well, I figured I could birdie 16 and then someone would have to birdie every hole to beat me. I didn't birdie 16 and neither did Scott. It was a fairly easy 18th hole. It's never easy, but...

Q. Fred, I think a lot of people have the impression you can roll out of bed and shoot 66. How much have you actually practiced and worked at it over the last seven weeks while you weren't competing?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I didn't touch a club for -- I played -- so this week I played Thursday and I played Tuesday. Then before that I had played three days before the week. So, you know, I probably had five rounds and they were all kind of at the end. And I practiced on Wednesday before I flew here, I hit balls for about an hour. I felt like I was -- you know, when I get the bucket out and hitting them, I felt like I'm doing all right. Then it comes down to really short game and around the greens and doing all that.

But I can take time off and hit the ball, that's not really the problem. It's the scoring part. And again, I was a little edgy today playing and I felt like the reason being is because I knew I could shoot a good score. But if Paul shot a decent score, no one was really going to catch him. And it played hard. With that wind and the way the course played and you're leading,

it's not easy to shoot 68 or 69, and I was lucky enough to make a lot of birdies through the first 11 holes.

Q. Fred, what did you get out of Steve's gallery, could you feel it early? How did it compare to the kinds of raw emotion that you feel when you're in contention like on the regular tour?

FRED COUPLES: Well, they introduced us and we hit, and they introduced Steve and it was pretty loud. That's all fun. It's normal and that's the way it should be. But when you're playing, they're loud for everybody. And obviously if Steve would have made a couple putts here or there. He did hit -- I don't know what happened on his putt on 3. I've never seen a ball do what it did, but it looked like it lipped around twice. It was weird. Then he hit one bad shot on 4, made bogey, but then he played extremely well from then on. But the crowds stayed all day, and even on Friday when we played.

We all want to play in front of people, so when you're with Steve Stricker in Madison, you're going to have a lot of people following you. It's just a given. If I was in the last group, there weren't that many people following them and they were leading the tournament, but that's normal. Steve has a lot of, lot of, lot of people here that root hard and it was fun. It was really very nice. I mean, not one person said anything negative that I saw. They were all rooting for all of us, and I felt like if Steve wasn't going to win, then I'm sure glad I did.

Q. How does your mentality change going from in the chase, chasing a leader, to all of a sudden you have a three-shot lead?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. Well, that's a heck of a question because I made a great birdie on 11. Then I hit a shot -- I was first up on 12 and I hit this iron and I was 20 yards short of the green. That didn't throw me off much because I didn't hit a proper shot, but I didn't hit some horrible -- it just was not the correct shot to hit.

Then I had birdie putts, but they were easy holes. No. 13 is a fairly easy hole with the wind, 14 is not too difficult, 15 is a wedge into the green. So I hit really good shots, but I was trying not to make a mistake on those holes and just have birdie putts with good tee shots, which I did.

And then on 16 I got that ball curving to the right, the par 5, and I was down there in a good spot and I totally played a very poor second shot. I went over the green, which you don't want to go, and I made par there. Really in golf terms a blessing that Scott didn't birdie it either because I'm standing on the 17th tee, which is a hard hole, with a two-shot lead. I figured I'm good enough to get in with a couple pars. I hit a good shot on 17 and parred 18.

Q. When you can play, you play to win as you've told us all week. Do you ever wonder and play the same game maybe some of your fans do, the "what if" game? What if you were healthy and how much more would you have done this, or are you at the point of your career where you take these and you really cherish them?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I honestly, on this tour I feel like I can still win. On the regular tour, towards the end it just was so hard to play and practice. If you go watch them -- we have guys that practice really, really hard out here and they're 52, 55, 60. I just don't have the body to do that. So where I miss is when I get on a little roll, I don't know how long it will really last.

Like up until Houston I was playing well every single round every single day, and then I fly home and I wake up the next day and I don't even know what I did but I popped a couple ribs and couldn't breathe. Then I got a little panicky. I said, okay, I'll wait two weeks, then I stretch it to three weeks, then we didn't play for a while. Then I said, okay, I'll just stay home and go to Stricker's event.

But I'm fine. I wish I would have won another major. I had probably four or five really, really good chances and I didn't do it. But other than that, I mean, I just can't ever look back. It's very hard. I wish I could have practiced more, but I think I did it for me the right way by hitting just enough balls to get ready and even coming here. Like I said, I would never come here to embarrass myself and not be ready to play. That's a waste of time.

So I felt like when I went to hit balls Wednesday before we caught a flight, I said I'm going to hit balls and I'm going to pretend like every shot is in the tournament, and I actually hit them pretty well. So it kind of gives you a little bit of a boost, a little bit of momentum, and this sure gives you momentum.

Q. Freddie, obviously the win is the cherry on top of the Sunday, but how was this week overall for you?

FRED COUPLES: Well, we had a blast. I can't say enough about Steve Stricker. He's been one of my favorite people forever. So knowing his name's on this tournament, he's from here, I wanted to play last year and this year is my first tournament back after a long layover.

The people are great, the golf course is really for me, fits my eye. I like the fact that there's five par 5s, which help. I don't think I absolutely killed them, but I played them fairly well. And then I like that there's a lot of par 3s, too, and I struggle on par 3s. But this week for some reason I played them very, very well, so that's all part of it.

You know, when you go play, I don't even know what this U.S. Open course looks like, you kind of have to figure out how to play them. In one quick practice round, which was the pro-am, I felt like going into Friday I knew where to go on most of the tee shots. And there's some tricky tee shots. There's some really, really hard holes. When the wind's blowing, there's some difficult shots out there.

Q. Fred, you've played a lot of golf with Steve going back to I think an Anderson Consulting match play years and years ago. You know his game. Did you sense he

was fatigued because he's played an awful lot of golf the last five, six, seven weeks?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I won't say I could sense he was fatigued, but there's a lot to do when you have your own tournament, too. You're changing your routine a little bit. He played so well at the U.S. Open. Really, the first day we played, he could have been two shots better easily. I mean, for him he three-putted 16 and he missed a short birdie putt, then he missed another short birdie putt I think on 13.

But I'm sure he's tired. He doesn't play that much anyway, and I know he's not playing next week. He deserves a rest. He played extremely well at Erin Hills. He still hits it far enough, but for a 50-year-old guy to do that at the U.S. Open is a remarkable feat. I know he wants to do better, but what he did was great.

Q. Steve said he mentioned to you on 18 that if you win, that means you have to come back. Does that fit into your schedule?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I will be here for sure, yeah. Knock on wood, yeah. Like I say, I was ready to come. I didn't play here, I thought maybe I could. There was no way last year, but I heard a lot about it. Again, I didn't know what to expect.

But even if I didn't win, if I shot 69 today and Scott Verplank won, I would be back. It's a very good course for me. I can't speak for the other 80 guys that play, but I really like the course and that has a lot to do with it. And of course it's like we don't play in front of a lot of people, but you have a ton of people here. It's really a nice environment. And I don't know, were there more people here this year than last year? Around the same? Because Steve wasn't 50 last year, right? No.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Anything else?

FRED COUPLES: Thank you. Thanks for waiting.