

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**August 1, 2018**



**TIGER WOODS**

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**MODERATOR:** All right, Tiger. Just welcome back to Firestone Country Club, Bridgestone Invitational. If you could, some comments on being back here.

**TIGER WOODS:** Oh, I'm excited, I'm excited to be back. I haven't played in a few years, but it certainly wasn't exactly easy to get back in this event. I've had to play well this year, and just really excited about being back here and playing the South course. As I said, it's been a while and looking forward to getting out there today and checking it out.

**Q. Tiger, you've obviously had tremendous success here. Your thoughts on the tournament moving and playing here for the final time?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I've always been a fan of this golf course ever since I first played here in '97. I've always enjoyed it. I remember playing here before it was even the World Golf Championships, the World Series of Golf. So it's always been one of my favorite golf courses on the entire Tour and it's unfortunate that it is leaving. The people have always come out and supported this event. This has been one of the very few tournaments that is kind of a small-town atmosphere. It's a very simple, straightforward golf course, which we don't see very often anymore. This is away from the stadium golf that we seem to play a lot now on Tour, and I'm just excited to be here and be able to play.

But as far as the future of this event, I know it has to move and it has to go forward and off to Memphis, but it's one of the reasons why I tried so hard to get in this event, is because it does mean something special to me.

**Q. You've won in playoffs and (inaudible) in the dark, over the roof (inaudible) there's got to be like, I don't want to say a favorite memory, but one that strictly comes to mind?**

**TIGER WOODS:** You know, there isn't just one. I mean, I've done it so many different ways. I think the best I've played was probably that year in 2000. I really played well that year and I shot 21-under, I believe it was. Yeah, I remember Hal and I just running to try to get it in to make sure we don't have to come back here on Monday for one hole. I already had a significant lead at the time, and to be able to stuff it in the dark was something special.

**Q. Do you remember the runner-up that year?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I don't, because I remember Hal -- they gave us an option of playing the par-5 16th. They came up to us and said, You probably aren't going to be able to finish in time and the group ahead of you is making a run for it and do you guys want to do the

same? And Hal says, I'm not playing on Monday, are you? I said, I'm not playing on Monday. So we just made a run for it. Played the last three holes in, I don't know how fast. It was probably under a half hour, but we got it done.

**Q. Tiger, you tempered your expectations because of your back. You hadn't played in two years. Have you changed your expectations?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I think that I went from just hoping to be able to play the Tour, you know, to now that I feel that I can play the Tour. I certainly can win again. I've had an opportunity to win a couple times this year. I had a great chance at Valspar early in the year, and even a week ago I had a great shot at it. Yeah, my game's gotten better and good enough where I feel like I can win again out here on Tour.

**Q. (Question about getting back to this tournament.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah. You know, I think Bob was the one who brought it up to me at Tampa. He said, I need to get in the top 50, or somewhere around there, to be able to make this event. That was certainly a goal of mine. I was just hoping to, one, play the Tour long enough to be able to get an opportunity, but I also had to play well to do it and I was ranked pretty far in the world there. Starting last December, I was about 1,200 in the world and within a year to get down to 50, I think is a pretty good accomplishment, but it also got me into this event.

This event has been very special to me over the years and it's sad to see it leave Firestone. We certainly understand it. But for me, I've always had such great memories of this golf course. And I played here when I was an amateur with my dad, and we played both courses that day. But to be able to play when I was an amateur, or basically a junior golfer, to be able to play a Tour golf course, that was always a pretty neat thing to say. We played Riviera, we played Torrey Pines South, you're playing Tour courses. For me, to be able to not only play a Tour course but be able to win on it a few times, that's very special.

**Q. (Question about playing the course as an amateur.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** My dad has a friend up in Cleveland and we were visiting him and we drove down from Cleveland down here.

**Q. Do you remember what you shot that day?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No. It certainly wasn't very good.

What's that? We had a great time. We were in Switzerland. The kids and I and Erica were just on vacation, just had a great time. Rob brought his family over, too, as well, and we just toured Switzerland. Had a great time hiking, being up in the mountains, and just enjoying one another's company.

**Q. Did you reflect at all during that time on The Open, what you were able to do on Sunday?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I did. As I said, it was going to sting for a while, and it certainly does because I had a great chance at it. I played myself into a great position. I was tied for the lead at one point and I actually ended up leading outright for just a little bit.

You know, I was kind of laughing at it because most of the media at the time were skeptical of my game plan. My game plan played myself right into a lead. So that part I was very positive about.

But just the way I made a couple mistakes there at 11 and 12 ended up costing me a chance of winning the tournament. I certainly did not think that the top three guys were going to shoot the scores they shot. I figured one of them would place themselves at 9 by the end of the day, but it ended up being 8 as the winning score, which was very surprising.

**Q. (Inaudible) not knowing how much you could play. Looks like the possibility of three in a row for the Playoffs. Any trepidation about that at all, and obviously (inaudible) remains the same. Can you reflect on that?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah. Kind of midway through the -- sorry, early part of the summer, if I played well, this is what I was going to have to endure, coming with a pretty big schedule at the very end. We built a pretty good physical game plan for it. My training schedule, how to build myself up, my recovery breaks, even had to factor in how much I can practice, just to make sure I'm physically fit enough to get through this section.

But also, I want to play well and win tournaments through this. I feel like my body is good. I need to keep it that way. I still need to train really hard and limit how much I do practice, the wear and tear on the body, because I'm going to be putting it through its paces in tournament play, which as we all know, we hit the ball harder in tournaments than we do in practice.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** Because as athletes, you're not always going to play well. We can't control always how we play, but we can control our effort level.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** No, I've always tried to encourage them in how they participate in sports, is that especially team sports that they play, that you just don't -- you may have a good game, but your team may lose. But still, it's your effort level. In team sports, you can hide. In individual sports, you cannot, you're exposed.

They saw their dad get into contention, end up leading the tournament and end up losing the

tournament, but I tried to the very end. They saw me make that birdie on the par-5 14. They saw I stuffed that shot at 18, even though that yahoo was yelling at me on the tee shot. But they saw how much I was grinding. They said, well, you weren't going to win. I said, I know I wasn't going to win, but that doesn't stop me from grinding. So yeah, that is a teachable moment because they were there, present, in person, and sometimes you can't always see that on TV.

**Q. Is it hard for you to remember that the trying -- I mean, you guys are (inaudible) do you find yourself sometimes mad that you didn't win, even though you tried?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I'm always mad when I don't win. Part of playing golf is you're going to lose far more than you win. That's just part of the deal.

Just like if you're a hitter in baseball, you fail 70 percent of the time, you're a Hall of Famer. In golf, it's a pretty high mark, it's in the 90s, 90th percentile that you can still be a Hall of Famer that you do fail. So failure is part of what we do out here, but there's also things you can learn from it.

**Q. (inaudible) How would you assess your position?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Play what?

**Q. Two rounds (inaudible).**

**TIGER WOODS:** Play two matches in a day? Yeah, no, I have no problem with that. I play 36 holes all the time at home. Granted, we are in a cart and zip around there in two-hour rounds.

It will certainly be different, but my job is to still get on the team. I'm outside the top-8 and I'm going to be there either case, but I would like to be there as a player as well.

**Q. As vice captain, how do you assess yourself?**

**TIGER WOODS:** What would be the word ... "trending."

**Q. How is your confidence level different going into the PGA to the other couple majors?**

**TIGER WOODS:** To be honest with you, I really felt the best I was playing was going into that Open Championship last week. I was really playing well. I played well at the National, but also my practice sessions were very good. So I knew that if I executed my game plan, I was going to be in contention, which I did. Unfortunately, I just didn't win.

This summer, excluding the U.S. Open, I feel like I'm starting to hit the ball a little bit better, a little more crisp. And since I've switched putters, I've started to make some putts. As we all

know, when you make putts here and there, it changes everything.

**Q. (Inaudible) expectations, has that ever been an issue for you?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, well, it's changed. At the beginning of the year, it was can I handle playing out of the rough. I hadn't played out of the rough in about two years. That was a big mental hurdle for me to get through, is hitting the shots I did out of the rough at Torrey. To go from 100-something miles an hour to zero because the rough's going to stop it, I didn't know what my back was going to do. From there, I made some tweaks and some changes in my game, and it paid off. This entire year has been one that I've been evolving and I'm changing a few things. Golf is very fluid, and I've been able to make change on the fly and they've worked.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Probably not since '09, you know, when I blew out my knee and had the reconstruction. I didn't know if I would ever be able to hit it hard again. And yeah, even then, at that time I played around the knee. I definitely didn't put it through its paces. I definitely didn't hit shots the way that I was prior to that. I certainly played around it for the better part of a month or two, and ended up winning. I think Bay Hill was my first win back. But even that tournament, I didn't really do the things that I was doing the previous years, not until probably the middle of the summer.

**Q. Do you take more confidence from your play or from the fact that you're physically feeling much better?**

**TIGER WOODS:** The physical health allows me to do the things that I can do. I've been looking at some video and looking at my swing back in my early days, and there's no way that I can rotate like I used to. I can't do that anymore. But I'm still finding speed other ways.

The thing that I've really enjoyed is being able to actually practice my putting again. There was a period of time where I really couldn't putt because I was -- that's what hurt the most, bending over like that. Even when I struggled there for about a month or two, about a month and a half with my putting, I've been able to do the legwork to get myself out of it, which, you know, for a number of years there, that wasn't the case, I couldn't do it.

**Q. Did you have to relearn how to (inaudible)?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, this year's been very different because I haven't been able to truly say, okay, this is what I'm going to do for the Masters, this is what I'm going to do for the U.S. Open, the British, the PGA. I hadn't been able to build a schedule like that because a lot of it was unknown. I'll certainly be a lot better next year going into the season about how to prep and be ready, but this year has been just getting ready for the next week and then the week after, not really trying to -- trying to have everything come together four specific

times a year. I just haven't been able to do that this year.

**Q. How do you think it will get easier next year (inaudible)?**

**TIGER WOODS:** A hundred percent, because I know what my body can do now and it's a matter of still just maintaining its strength and flexibility. But going into this year, boy, there were so many unknowns. Even my clubs. I've changed shafts I don't know how many times throughout the year, because my swing has changed, my speed has changed, and I've had to change the settings on my driver, my 3-wood, my 5-wood. There's been so many things that have evolved this year that I've just had to try and wing it on the fly. As soon as things start to settle down -- as I said, next year will be a little bit better.

**Q. (Question about Bellerive.)**

**TIGER WOODS:** Correct, we got pulled off the course, yeah. I was playing -- I was playing a practice round with Weirsy at the time and the first plane hit, and then we got pulled off the golf course. By the time we got in, unfortunately, we had the chance to see the second plane hit. So that was the last time I was there at Bellerive.

**Q. You have no recollection of the course?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No, pretty much everything was a blur. I mean, pretty much the only thing I can remember is just being carted in because of -- the attacks had just started. Yeah, I can't remember anything about the golf course except for those moments.

**Q. How did you get home?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I drove home the 13th. Obviously, everything was grounded in the States. I took the courtesy car and basically drove, I think, 17 hours home. I had a lot of reflecting to do during that time. That's one of the reasons why I changed my foundation from a golf-based foundation to an educational-based foundation, because of what happened with the towers.

**Q. Not to minimize the attacks, but did anyone recognize you when you stopped for gas?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No. I think pretty much everyone throughout the country were pretty much in a blur. Hard to believe that happened to us on our home soil. Yeah, everyone was focused on something else.

**Q. To change the subject, this course, the new game that you have, how does it fit Firestone now?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I don't know. I just got here, you know, so I'm going to go out and play a practice round today. I'll play nine holes. I'll do a little bit of work here on the short game

area to get used to the speeds. I hadn't putted on greens this fast in a few weeks, so do a little work there and go take a look at the golf course and make sure I'm ready by 10:20 tomorrow.