

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**February 13, 2019**

**TIGER WOODS**



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**MARK WILLIAMS:** Good morning, everyone. Just before we get started, I would like to explain that there will be a press conference, the first segment of this gathering with Tiger Woods, and then the second part of it will be a special announcement. So please stay seated after the press conference finishes.

So we'll get under way, and we would like to welcome our tournament host, Tiger Woods, to the interview room here at the 2019 Genesis Open.

Tiger, this marks the 50th anniversary of Charlie Sifford's victory in the L.A. Open, a very groundbreaking victory. It's also the 10th year of the exemption at the tournament. If you could just tell us the significance of Charlie's victory and also the importance of honoring the legacy of the exemption.

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, it meant a lot to all of us who are participating in the game who are nonwhite to have Charlie have had the success he had, to have him go through the struggles that he went through to win here. It's such a historic site, and against some of the best players that ever lived, was something that was very special. If it wasn't for Charlie and others who paved the way, I don't think my dad would have ever played the game of golf and hence, I probably wouldn't be here doing this press conference and be involved in the game like I am.

I owe a lot to Charlie. I always called him my grandpa that I never had, so for us to honor Charlie and what he's done and what he's meant to the game of golf and to do it here at this event at the Genesis Open is special for all of us.

Tim is a well-accomplished player and it's something that Charlie would have been very proud to have him receive the exemption.

**MARK WILLIAMS:** The Genesis Open, of course, benefits your TGR Foundation. It's been rapidly expanding its reach. Can you just talk with the foundation and what's maybe new with it?

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah. The Foundation has grown so much in the last few years with our new digital platforms and what we've been able to create. Our reach has gone from hundreds of thousands to now just under a million served. So we're going to be expanding into the millions here probably within the next couple years, so we're excited about that.

We're excited about what we have done with the Kimmelman project and to be able to do something like that here in Southern California where I grew up. We already have a learning

lab in Orange County, so to be able to expand on something like that and to create more of an opportunity for kids to experience STEM is something that we're very proud of and we're very proud of what we've done for over 20 years now.

**MARK WILLIAMS:** Fantastic news.

**Q. Tiger, good to see you again. I would like you to talk about the relationship with your father and how he helped you to be one of giving back to the community like you are, and also, what does a day like this mean to you as well as the people that you play with?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, you know, I think that Dad was a natural teacher. So when Pops went into Special Forces, what he did as a Green Berets is all about teaching. They're force multipliers. So that is something that was innate in him and he just always enjoyed teaching and mentoring others.

That's something I've enjoyed as well. I think I got a lot of that from him, from how he operated with people and I think that is one of the reasons why our success of the foundation, what we've had over 20-plus years now has been what it is, is through his guidance early on and then has allowed myself and the rest of our staff to expand because of our fundamental teachings that he instilled in all of us.

From that, today's round was a lot of fun for all of us. It was a little on the cool side. We're a little bit cold, but we got in before the rain hit, so it was nice to play all 18 holes with everyone in the group and I think they enjoyed it.

This golf course is in impeccable shape right now. The greens are -- I've never seen them this quick, but I know the rain's going to slow them down. Come the weekend I'm sure they'll be back up to speed again.

**Q. Tiger, I think Quebec was your biggest fan out there this morning, but could you talk about Jake and the couple times you've met with him? What strikes you about him?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I think if you just look at what he's been able to accomplish, the fearlessness that he just attacks life with. He doesn't view himself as any different than any of us and he's able to overcome -- honestly, to play a physical sport like that and not be able to see is just, it's inspiring.

Quebec is, you saw it, I love animals and he was able to give me a nice little kiss there.

**Q. Tiger, your history at Riviera maybe isn't as great as other courses but you said you really enjoy the golf course and you like the layout, it fits your eye. I'm wondering where you think Riviera fits architecturally among the courses you guys play on a yearly basis?**

**TIGER WOODS:** We wish we could play more venues that are classic and simple like this. There's nothing really -- there's no secret to this golf course. It's right in front of you, but it's hard. The greens are, except No. 4, everything slopes from back to front and we all know that, don't go past the hole, but if you do, there's a price to pay. Over the years they've linked this golf course quite a bit. We were joking today coming down 12, I remember hitting a 1-iron and a wedge down there. Today was driver, cut 6-iron. It has gotten a little bit different, but we wish we could play more venues like this that are so simple and straightforward, but that's what makes it just a classic golf course. That's why there have been so many great champions here. You have to hit the golf ball well. I'm sure this week will be no different.

**Q. Tiger, I wondered if you've made any decisions about your upcoming schedule specifically as it pertains to next week?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I'm playing next week. Beyond that, I haven't really decided on what I'm going to be doing. I made the decision yesterday to add Mexico to my schedule, and obviously the Florida swing gets very complicated. So I'm leaving that open-ended right now to try to figure that out. But I'm looking forward to the challenges of this weekend and next week.

**Q. Tiger, there were press reports recently that you were invited to the Saudi International Tournament but turned it down. Just wondering, are those accurate? And what your reasoning was for declining if that's the case?**

**TIGER WOODS:** You know, I haven't really played a lot overseas. I turned the opportunity to go to Saudi Arabia down last summer. It was well before anything had transpired. I'm trying to keep the traveling down to a minimum and just focus on our Tour.

**Q. Tiger, I was talking to Rory yesterday. He said he got a really nice text message from you last week. What is it you like about playing with Rory, which you are again for the first two days?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I've always enjoyed playing with Rory. Great kid and unbelievable parents. We've gotten close over the years. I've always enjoyed watching him play, how he's developed, and the amount of tournaments he's won and the majors and the margins he's won. He's still learning and developing. There's so many more wins ahead of him, but I've just enjoyed being a part of watching him mature on the Tour and getting to know him a lot closer.

**Q. Tiger, last year you were just getting your feet again in the game. This year, obviously you're in very different condition. Can you talk about that and talk about your confidence factor going in this week?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, last year at this time I just had completed in basically one Tour

event. I had played in the Hero World Challenge and was just trying to figure out whether or not I could make it to Florida. So I'm in a very different position now having played an entire season and I know what my body can and cannot do. So I'm looking forward to this week. Hopefully I can finally play this golf course well.

It's been a while. I had an opportunity, I believe I guess Ernie maybe in 2000-ish, somewhere in there, when I was one back with one to go and I put it over there in some beer tent to the right. Hopefully I can do a little bit better this year.

**Q. I know that this week you met Earl Woods scholar alum, Grace Lee. What is it like to meet students from your Foundation as they pursue their careers?**

**TIGER WOODS:** An opportunity to be able to create opportunities for a person like Grace and all the Earl Woods scholars is what we're trying to do. I mean, look at her history. She is an immigrant. Her family are immigrants. She went through our programs there at the Learning Lab in Anaheim. She's going to NASA and working at NASA and creating the algorithms that landed the Rovers on Mars. That's astonishing. Now she's -- you know, heck with that, I'm just going to create something in music.

I'm amazed at some of the talent and just the amount of gifts some of these kids have. But it's up to us, all of us, to create opportunities for them. Having events like this is are things that we need to be able to do to create these opportunities for people like Grace and many others.

**Q. We're very excited about the Presidents Cup coming to Melbourne in December. You recently played with one of the presidents, President Donald Trump. Now, he said you played great. What I want to know is how did he play? What parts of his game is he doing well and what parts of his game is he doing badly because apparently he's been playing a lot of golf over the last two years, I want to make sure it's time well spent.**

**TIGER WOODS:** I understand, I hear you. I played with President Obama the week before in San Diego and I played with President Trump last week. I've had a bit of an opportunity to play with a couple presidents in a few weeks and enjoyed both days. President Trump has been very busy up in D.C., hasn't played a lot of golf, hasn't had the tan that playing in the outside, he's been working.

We just had a great time. I hadn't played with Jack in a very long time and to have his son Steve, who I have gotten to know very well because his daughter and my daughter play on the same middle school soccer team, to play with him and our president. I played well that day, I shot 64, so I enjoyed the way I played. To be able to play with Jack and to watch some of the putts that Jack made, it was pretty cool. So it was a great day to be able to play with our president and play with one of my idols that help inspired me to play the game.

**Q. I read yesterday that Phil's victory is another thing that continues to inspire you**

**because of his age and what you may or may not be able to achieve in the next sort of eight to ten years yourself. Can you talk to that, about how he's proof that there's still a long time yet for you to get a lot done?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I think what Phil has done has been extraordinary, to be that consistent for that length of time. He's been out here since '94 and he's made every single team since '94. He's won major championships, he's won events. He's just been so consistent, and that's the hardest thing to do is each and every one of us have enough talent to have little hot runs out here but to sustain it for over two decades like he has.

And for him to -- trust me, I recognize this, it's not easy to pick up clubhead speed, which he has done, as he's gotten older. That's been extraordinary. That's what's allowed him to stay out here with some of these longer guys, he's been able to hit the ball further. That's something that he's done. He's adjusted his putting. He's made more putts than I think I've seen in years in the last year and a half. One of the reasons why he's won two big events.

**Q. And that pushes you, as it always has, I'm guessing as well?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It has always pushed me. I remember talking to Arnold and Jack about this, any time they saw each other on the board, they would say -- or they're playing, "What's he at, what's he at?"

My entire career, Phil will probably attest to this, we've always looked at the board to figure out where one another's at. So we've always had that type of enjoyment of competing against one another. And to see what he's done or to see what he did last year in Mexico at 47 years old gave me confidence that I could somehow do it maybe last year, and I was able to finally end my season just like he did with a win earlier in the year.

**Q. Your history here at the Riv is well-documented. How do you approach this course every time you play, and what is your relationship with it, is it a love-hate? Is it a bit of frustration, how obsessed are you with the win here?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It is certainly a love-hate relationship. I love playing this golf course. I always have, I enjoyed playing up here when I was young with my dad. For some reason I've only played well here one time in the tournament. It's just one of those courses that, as I said, you have to hit the golf ball well. There's no faking it around this golf course, especially if the greens are up to speed like they are right now. It puts such a premium on putting the golf ball in play and hitting the ball high. You've got to hit the ball high into any of these greens and really control your spin and put the ball in the right spots because getting up and down here, as we've all seen, kikuyu grass is not easy to do. It's sticky, catches a lot, and now with it wet, some of the bump and runs are actually skipping so that makes an added little challenge.

**Q. Just following up on that and your record here. You have some really good scores, some bad luck of the draw years probably, too. A lot of players now are looking at stats and how they play certain courses or even looking round to round how holes are playing. Are you picking up on that trend much? Do you get into numbers, either how you played a course or how a field is performing?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No. I played with guys who was into numbers yesterday. That's not Fred. I'm not like that, no. I certainly look at in the afternoon sessions I like to look what the morning wave is doing on certain holes and see what the -- the low round but what the top 10 to 12 rounds are.

By the time I start off in the afternoon, most guys are done between 7 to 13, 14 holes and I like to get kind of a feel how it's playing. Sometimes when you get, like for instance, if you get a day like today, I don't think this course would have been very low because I don't think anyone was expecting the greens to be this quick. Taking a look at that and understanding that, when I go out on the course in my afternoon session, I have an understanding of what some of the tricks or some of the things that I might be able to take advantage of and also where I need to play defense. I think that's very important.

Because of technology, looking at my phone and being able to look up those scores before I go and in my warm-up process has been a big help. Earlier in my career we didn't have that, we looked up at the board to see what the guys are doing and a lot of times that wasn't updated.

**Q. Tiger, what did you work on the last two weeks since Torrey, and has it been intense or are you more just sort of kind of easing your way into this event? How would you characterize that?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I made one little adjustment, I put a new 3-wood in since I last played. But other than that, just been working on trying to get that club out in front of me, get that ball higher.

I've always been pretty good at taking spin off, but I'm trying to get the ball up for this week and trying to hit the ball high. I knew that that was going to be one of the things I needed to do. And also getting ready if I was going to play Mexico, it was going to be two weeks of trying to get that ball up because obviously it's at altitude next week and the ball doesn't spin a lot. So to be able to send that ball up in the air and have it pretty soft when it lands I thought was important.

I feel good about that. I feel good I've -- that last round at San Diego, I put a few things together and was able to finally make a few putts, which was nice.

**MARK WILLIAMS:** All right. Thank you, Tiger. We appreciate your time.