

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**February 27, 2019**



**JOHN SMOLTZ**

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**Q. John, tell us about how excited you are to be here.**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Well, I've been thinking about this for the last three months or whenever since I first found out. Planning my schedule and trying to literally calm down, meaning as we get closer, downplay it, but the honest truth is I'm as excited as you can imagine and I look forward to teeing it up on Friday.

These next two days are kind of what I've learned to -- you know, if I was pitching, I wouldn't think about pitching until the first throw in the bullpen. The problem with golf is I think about it all the time. So even when I'm doing my job, I think about what I'm going to do on the golf course.

So learning to slow down is my biggest challenge because I love competing and I always want to -- no matter when I tee it up, I want that to be the day of my life.

**JACKIE SERVAIS:** Do you have a goal for this week?

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** I do have a goal. Honestly, I'm going to be very disappointed if I don't shoot under par a couple times, or one time. Like I'm not kidding anybody, I'm not competing for a championship; I'm trying to compete against myself to see how good I can play against the greatest players in the world. I don't even pretend to think otherwise.

So, you know what? I understand what I bring to the tournament and I understand how great these guys are, and if it brings about the greatness of them, that's awesome.

**JACKIE SERVAIS:** What would be a baseball equivalent of getting a top-10 this week?

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Oh, my gosh. I would say winning the Cy Young three years in a row, something like that. I mean, that would be kind of inconceivable, but the thing about golf and the thing about competition is you play in a group. Obviously if you don't win your group, you're not going to climb the ladder. You see your competitors. I would be foolish to tell you if I didn't think about seeing how high I could finish.

One thing I'm going to have to -- the tournaments I played in have all been Stableford, so it's not stroke play, so there's a big challenge there to kind of stay in the moment.

But you know, I liken it to this: A great high school pitcher could pitch a couple innings in the big leagues and do fine. It's just the longer the game goes, the more that is going to expose him, and that's the way I feel about this golf. I can hang in there in practice rounds and

certainly one round, but it's what they've done their whole life that separates you from the rest. I know I can compete, I know I can play golf, it's just a matter of under this environment and this, so I'm looking forward to that.

**Q. I'm sure you have a pregame routine for every baseball game you've ever played, but is it the nerves for the first tee, just getting a good tee shot and then you think you'll just get into a groove?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** It's a great question. It's usually if I release the first shot, tee shot, no matter where it goes, I'm good. But if I protect or hang on, then I'm wondering why I did that.

Honestly, I don't have -- I have yet to get a work -- I don't have a routine for golf yet. I don't know how many balls to hit on the range, I don't know how many stretches I should do. Baseball was pretty ingrained in what I knew I wanted to do. So I'm learning. I'm a fast learner and I'm not afraid to experiment and fail.

**Q. As an athlete, what do you sort of -- what's sort of the connection for you from baseball to golf? What do you carry over?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** The biggest thing is -- well, the difference is, baseball, you start when you're ready. Golf, you wait, and you have to learn to wait.

On the baseball mound I was target oriented and on the golf course I'm target oriented. Some of my best shots are out of the woods or in the trees or trying to hit a small narrow window.

I've learned to be more positive connected, meaning I don't want to hear somebody say, "Don't Hit it left," or "Water's on the left." You know, I want to hear somebody say, "Hit it right," because the "don't" part, the brain doesn't compute.

So I would say the ability to see my target and try to execute. When I see a ton of space, like a driving range, that's when it gets a little bit interesting. When it's a picture I can see or a glove I'm throwing to, that's where I kind of try to use the same thing.

**Q. Would you say that that's probably one of the hardest adjustments that you've had to make is that when you pitched, you had a really specific small target --**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Yeah.

**Q. -- and here it's much bigger?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** It's huge. There's no doubt that when I was pitching, in the best games I had, there was a tunnel. It was just me and the catcher. The crowd never even came into play, the noise never bothered me. The hitter sometimes was irrelevant.

Well, on the golf course, you look around and you see a lot of things and you're wandering and you're thinking about a lot of things, and I found myself last year at the Open thinking every bad thing that could happen. You know, with too much time, the brain starts wandering.

I make no bones about it, I may be one of the greatest fast golfers in the world, like I play too fast. With my buddies, we get a golf cart, we play in an hour and a half front nine, so three hours and 18. I'm learning to slow that down when I walk. I'm learning to try to narrow into what you're talking about.

**Q. (Question about his ideal best ball partner.)**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Oh, man, that's a great question. I mean, obviously I played a ton of golf with Glavine and Maddux. It would be tough to pick one of those two, so I'm going to leave them out.

I would go with what we call the Codger, Charlie Leibrandt. He was the veteran. In a best ball, I know he's got par covered, so I can be more aggressive.

My caddie this week's going to be Gregg Olson. He would be another one because I've loved our relationship and he would be one to keep me pretty loose.

**Q. From your very first start on the baseball team, first start (inaudible)?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Oh, night and day, not even close. I would rather have the first start be against the greatest team in the history of baseball than the first start in a major, you know, and just some of the things that the Open taught me. The first start here will be similar, but I'll be way more nervous here than I would be then in the big leagues. I played my whole life baseball, these guys have played pretty much their whole life. I'm sure they have some of the same thought patterns that I had in baseball, but they've learned how to overcome them and not let them take residence, and I'm still learning that.

**Q. You mentioned earlier that you jot things down after every round.**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Yeah.

**Q. When you were in your last -- in that celebrity tournament, what did you jot down that you hope you'll carry over?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Yeah, so I jotted down on the way home, I got too defensive with the lead. Even though it provided me to get defensive, I started thinking a little bit too protective. That's not me.

So the fine line between commitment and being guarded against a lead in that case, I probably accomplished 80 percent of what I wanted to, that's why I was able to win.

So now, much like a hitter you can't get out and you just can't figure out why, there's certain holes that it just doesn't work. In that tournament, I played the par 5, the easiest hole, 5 over par in four days. I was so frustrated, but that's all I could think about.

So finding a way in a tournament that if you've hit a bad shot on that hole, so what, just go ahead and attack it. I think I let that bother me more than it should have. As a matter of fact, the last day I just said, "Now batting, Tony Gwynn," because I couldn't get him out. So I figured that was the Tony Gwynn hole for me and I thought that would break the ice and I hit it in the water. That's what I really -- I work on those kind of things that are fresh. If you don't do it right away, I don't think it holds.

And then in my crazy schedule, I try to balance doing my job as best I can, and then when I have time away, figure out those things that I'm working on.

**Q. And it seems like, you know, when you pitched, you had that mentality, you could sort of shake off that bad pitch or that bad result. Now it's trying to figure out how to take that and bring it to the golf course?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Yeah. The biggest difference is baseball's result oriented anyway. I didn't do that well my first couple years at all. I remember Tom Glavine telling me I had better learn how to fake it, and that's what I learned how to do. Then you learn how to believe it. You can't let anybody on the mound know that you're flustered, frustrated or mad. It doesn't work.

And that's the same thing here. Mad doesn't work in golf, frustrated doesn't work in golf. Any kind of tension creates movement away from what you're trying to do.

So I'm learning how to put -- I could tell you which it's not -- I'm not proud of, but I could tell you every shot I hit yesterday or two weeks ago. I wish I could remember that in my recall of information, but I do, I see things and I remember things based on how the results go. Sometimes, like a pitcher, you get bailed out as a pitcher or you don't. Golf is all about you. No one's bailing you out. You might get a break or two, you might hit good shots and end up in a divot. You have to deal with that in golf and that's what's so unique.

**Q. Baseball has obviously been a huge part of your life, but now you're golfing. So what sparked that specific interest to start golfing?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Baseball, actually. I had all this time on my hands. I never golfed until I was 20 years old, I think. Never fished, I've never ice skated and never skied. So for the most part, when I had time, it was playing baseball, basketball or football growing up.

So when I got to the minor leagues, I went, oh, shoot, I've got all this time and I'm going to go crazy, so I picked up golf and fishing. I loved them both, but golf became the passion. I can remember just not really even understanding what club to hit, didn't understand it, didn't

think it was a sport. Just fell in love, and I hope to play it as long as I possibly can.

My goal actually is to shoot my age from 69 on, and you've got to have goals in life. If I break that goal, that's awesome, but I want to be able to shoot my age from that point all the way on and obviously beat it.

**Q. Obviously you have competitive juices, you have expectations for yourself, but at the end of the day this is such a great experience. How important is it that you remember that?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Yeah, that's exactly it. I will be the happiest guy here no matter what the scores are. That wasn't the case at the Open. I was not prepared for a lot of things. I kind of beat myself up a little bit because I was focused on the score, and then I realized this is a great opportunity to learn. I qualified, and the thing I have to keep remembering is that I've learned that last year. It wasn't -- this was something that was hard and this event here will have -- I know I'm going to play in threes, so this is the first stage of trying to be as good as I can be and then learn.

I want to make sure I don't mess anything up with the guys I'm playing with. I'm going to ask them protocol of whether -- I love being around the fans and I love -- this is their livelihood. When I was a pitcher, I would talk to teammates. Some guys don't talk. I would just as soon talk to people, I would just as soon play the kind of normal golf. And I know that's not normal for -- that would be like me having a conversation on the mound with a fan and you just wouldn't do that, right? But that's just my personality.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** He loved his car. It was the oldest car you could possibly have in the big leagues, and we fined him for having the worst car that you could have, and he literally almost broke down because this was his baby. I look back as the guys gave him -- I mean, I could tell that it bothered him so much, but there were so many (inaudible) coats. I don't think they exist anymore, which is a shame, not to the degree it once did. You understood if you were young and you were going to fight things, you were going to get buried, so you had to take your punishment.

**Q. How great is it to be here in Tucson this week for this tournament?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** See, I've heard nothing but incredible things. First of all, just Cologuard and everything that it represents and what it's trying to do to get awareness out. This is an amazing opportunity to shed light on something that has a 90 percent cure rate if you get -- men get tested early.

But Tucson, I've never been, never been. Arizona spring training, never been until I worked for the network. Arizona, Phoenix, my parents live so I've always showed up there. I feel like I'm checking off things on my list, so it's pretty cool to drive from Scottsdale.

When I was driving I was thinking of every possible thing that could happen in the golf tournament, I really did. One thing that I didn't share is that after the press conference on Monday, a week ago Monday, I played a round by myself. I had never played the course. I left every pin in, I played in two hours. I birdied the first hole and I looked around as if there were people watching and no one was watching. I just imagined what it would be like to play in the tournament, and that's what I do or did when I was playing baseball.

**JACKIE SERVAIS:** From all the golf you've watched these guys play, is there something specific or something from a specific player that you're going to take into this weekend?

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** I played with so many great players on this tour and I watch them constantly and I go, wow, there's the separator. If you think you're really good as an amateur and you think you can play, just play in a practice round with some of these guys and you'll realize where your weaknesses are without even having to say it.

It's one of those things where they don't draw pictures, right, on a scorecard, they just put the score. These guys know how to score. So what, I can hit it on the range whatever far and it looks good. It's what you do under the gun of shots that you go, man, I'm not really comfortable with this shot. I'm learning to be more comfortable.

So they just can go low at any time they want. It can be very intimidating. I literally watched the last three events, and the third one I had to turn off because I was like 8 under, 9 under in a round? I'm going -- that's how much appreciation I have for the greatness that these guys have.

**Q. If there's one thing you would want your followers to know about you, what would it be?**

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** I love to laugh and I'm a goofy Dumb & Dumber fan. I know I had a stoic kind of -- I tried to look mean on the mound, I really did. Hopefully it worked, but I would rather laugh and yell it up with just anybody. I just care about people and care about bringing attention to great things, and that's -- I've been blessed to wear a uniform that brings about that opportunity. Generally, 85 percent of all athletes are generally pretty good guys, or people. We tend to focus on the negative and the small percentage takes up most of it and it's too bad. There will be some celebrities here that are playing in the event that do amazing stuff and I just, I'm blessed to be able to do that.

**JACKIE SERVAIS:** We know you tee off in an hour, so thank you for your time and good luck this weekend of.

**JOHN SMOLTZ:** Thank you.