

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 5, 2020



FRED COUPLES

Q. Fred, you had some time off, but you're back in Phoenix here before the Masters. Just your thoughts on being back at Phoenix Country Club.

FRED COUPLES: Well, I really like the course. I don't know, I don't think I played the last couple years, but I played three years ago and I love the weather. And I don't live far from here, so it's a one-hour flight. I love everything about it.

And I've been trying to stay COVID free because Augusta is my favorite tournament of the year and as I got closer to it, I really started to not do anything but maybe practice a little bit. Now we're here and I'm ready to play. I've played a couple days in Phoenix up at Whisper Rock to practice and I'll get a practice round today and start tomorrow.

Q. How do you feel just in general?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I have a bunch of new clubs. I've been a Bridgestone guy forever and I'm still a Bridgestone guy and a Bridgestone ball, but I put some Pings in and we'll see what happens. I have a brand new set in there that I came and worked Monday at Ping and they seem to go well with this green ball that I'm using. I'm not really worried about that at all.

I am excited to start playing and then obviously next week will be a real treat like it usually is.

Q. Can you just assess your 2020 for us?

FRED COUPLES: Well, there's been a couple really, really good tournaments. I lost in a playoff and then lost to Ernie at Newport, where I live. I was on a little bit of a roll playing well, and I did play a lot during the pandemic. Then I came back and I just played so-so for no reason, for a reason that maybe I didn't work on my short game enough. But I was playing a lot of golf, so it has nothing to do with -- I kind of felt like I was throwing away a stroke every day, so at the end of the week, four shots out here you go from top-5 to 20th.

It hasn't been disappointing because I feel good, but I want to finish strong and then really start next year and play the 10 or 12 tournaments and keep playing well. I think I have a couple more years of this. But I do enjoy it and I love watching -- Jim Furyk, I played with him when he won at the Pure, we were in the last group together and he was phenomenal. It was the easiest round I've ever seen him play.

And then you have Phil maybe play, and if the Ryder Cup was over Stricker would be out here. So we're getting stronger and stronger and as a person who hasn't played, watching,

it's intriguing to me to see these guys playing and how well they're playing.

Q. Does it motivate you even more now with this new rookie class coming out? These are guys you played with on the PGA TOUR and like you say, it's getting more competitive.

FRED COUPLES: I will say this, I turned 52 and I came out here and I did very well for two or three years. Then 56, 57, sporadically I won a tournament here and there. So if you're 50 and you're considered a very good player, you'd better start winning.

There's no saying Jim Furyk won't win when he's 60 and he may not even be playing out here, but those are the guys you want to beat. So is there motivation? You know, I'm going to probably get paired with Phil and Furyk, so I don't want to come out here and lose by six shots to them every round I play with them.

I mean, the motivation is really inside myself. So far I have yet to start embarrassing myself at these tournaments. And honestly, I'm not going to come play golf to shoot 72s and 73s. Am I going to shoot 72s and 73s? Of course, I am, but I'm not going to do it for months and months in a row. It's no fun.

But it is fun to watch the best players play. If all those guys played, they'd win all of them, they really would. Furyk and Phil and Ernie. Give me some help, who else? Retief, all those guys, they'd win them all because they're just young and they're talented.

Then you'll get some other guys, Padraig Harrington is coming out soon, he'll have no problem. And then you've got other guys you think are going to win and they don't. It's not an easy deal to do. But once they get the taste of it, you know, doesn't look very hard for Phil at the moment, or Furyk. They're two top, top players in the world, so they should come out here and do well.

Q. I love how you call them young.

FRED COUPLES: Well, they're 50. When you look around out here and Phil -- Furyk does it a different way, Phil hits it 320 and Jim hits it pure. And again it was fun to play with Jim at Pebble. Then I hope to get paired with Phil soon. I'm out here and as I'm staring right now, I see Hale Irwin about ready to tee off. He's so old, but he's still amazing. He's going to shoot his age tomorrow and I just get a kick out of all this stuff.

But now with these guys playing, the Champions Tour has gotten a lot, lot better.

Q. Looking to next week, what are your expectations for a November Masters?

FRED COUPLES: Well, my expectations are I've been watching the weather, it seems to be warm, which will help a little bit. You know, I'm there to make the cut. I didn't make the cut last year and I played 13 and 15 on Thursday horrifically. Then the second round I shot 70

and if I wasn't choking to make the cut, I probably could have shot 67 or 68. But I kept looking, okay, I need to do this and do that. You can't do that.

But this year it's definitely to make the cut. I think I'm playing well enough to go there. It's so long and so tough for four days to play every hole well that my days of really, really competing there are to make the cut. Sad to say, but it is what it is.

Q. Tiger's not had the year he would like obviously, but what do you think he's going to do?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I talk to him every day. We're playing Monday. I've got to get there and get tested, somehow get my test back fast so I can join he and JT, Thomas.

He's wound up. He's sent a couple pictures, he's a funny guy. I think he'll be just fine. He loves the place. He can play there at any given time, it just depends on really how he feels and I can relate to that, but whereas when I don't feel well, I can still slap it around, but when you're the greatest player to ever play, it kind of wears on you a little bit. But he'll get used to it and if he's feeling healthy, he'll be one of the 10 or 15 guys to beat.

Q. Fred, quick one, among '86 Jack and 2019 Tiger, are there any similarities in those Masters wins?

FRED COUPLES: Well, similarities. Jack was older, Tiger hadn't won in a little while. The similarities are that they're going to go down as 1-2 or 2-1 of the best players to ever play, so they both won at an older age. I wouldn't say Tiger was really old and Jack wasn't old, either, but it was kind of a surprise. The similarities, it was probably just a little surprise.

I was on the 18th hole, just finished, when Jack birdied 9 and I never heard a roar like that. Then I missed the cut last year and I flew home in time to watch Tiger tee off and Koepka, Molinari, all those guys. It was very riveting golf for about five hours, so it was fun for me.

Q. How do you feel?

FRED COUPLES: I feel great.