

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**November 30, 2021**



**TIGER WOODS**

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**JACK RYAN:** Thank you everyone for being here and welcome to the 2021 Hero World Challenge. We are pleased to be joined today by tournament host Tiger Woods as well as Dr. Pawan Munjal, chairman, CEO, Hero MotoCorp.

Dr. Munjal, I'll start with you today. After a year away from the tournament due to the pandemic, can you share what you're most looking forward to as the Hero World Challenge returns to Albany this week?

**PAWAN MUNJAL:** Thank you. Good morning to all of you here at the Hero World Challenge at Albany and a very, very warm welcome once again after a gap of one year. You're back here after two years in fact. I'm personally thrilled to be back here this morning amongst all of you. More importantly, once again sitting here with my friend Tiger after many, many months. It's always -- it's always bliss for me and for all of us from Hero to come back here at Albany for the Hero World Challenge. It's always a treat to be amongst friends, with Tiger and the 20 other fortunate pros who get to play the Hero World Challenge, a very unique event, a very different golf event, a fun event, yet part of the PGA TOUR.

I don't want to talk too much about the pandemic. We've all been talking about it for so many months, a new talk now since the last couple of days, a new strain, but life has to go on. One of my friends here was just saying we're lucky that we play outdoors. We are not bowling, we wouldn't be allowed to do that then. From that point of view, God has been kind to us, to this game. All of you are playing again, all the Tours are playing, the pros are back on the courses. Now this week let's all have fun, let's have a treat here at Albany, let's enjoy Bahamas, and let's watch the best of golf on this beautiful golf course here. Thank you.

**JACK RYAN:** Thank you, Dr. Munjal.

Tiger, it's great to see you looking healthy. Seems like the recovery is progressing nicely. Can you share what it means for you to be back here hosting at Albany, after a year off last year.

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, it's been a long 22 months for all of us, not being able to play last year, we completely understand the reasons why with the pandemic, trying to keep everyone safe and it was the right call, but it's exciting to have it this week. This is our sixth time here, seventh time with Hero MotoCorp, so we're excited about that and our future with them. Look at the field this year, strongest we've ever had. It's been -- it's incredible. The players that have shown up, I think there's eight new players this week that are being introduced to this format and this event. A lot of the players who were -- who have been first-timers that have come from this event have started knew charities or new foundations from what they've

learned here at this event, so we're very proud of that. Some have expanded on that, on what they've been doing from their own charities and own foundations from what they learned at this event, so hopefully that trend conditions. We have a great week weather wise, course is immaculate, so it's a lot of fun this week.

**JACK RYAN:** Recently your foundation celebrated its 25th anniversary and reached more than 2 million students served through its educational programs. Can you share how important this week is to the TGR Foundation?

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, a couple months ago we reached 25 years of doing this and serving the under youth kids [sic] in the United States and around the world. We've reached 2 million kids either through our different various platforms, but we continue to push our STEM programs and continue to push or reach as far as how many kids we can serve. There's so much potential out there if they have access, and accessibility is something that not everyone has. And especially it has unfortunately dramatically shown its ugly head during this pandemic, the haves and have-nots, and we've seen students fall back an entire grade so we want to make up that gap and we have some great plans for the future of that and working with other companies in other states to make that happen.

**JACK RYAN:** Now we'll take some questions from media.

**Q. Tiger, welcome back. The Hero has served as a place where you've staged comebacks before or a comeback from injuries, surgeries, various different things. I'm just wondering this year how different you feel compared to coming back from other surgeries or injuries in the past?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I've hosted this event, unfortunately not as a player in the field. This year is one of them. Yeah, it will be fun watching the guys come here and play and tee it up and be out there. I miss, because I've been away from the game for -- call it the entire year. I missed the jabbing, the needling and how's everyone doing. There's only so much you can do via text and phone calls. A lot happens and we get caught up a lot out here on Tour in locker rooms and having dinners and off-site stuff like that. To be able to catch up with the guys this week, it will be fun. I haven't seen the majority of them since February. Some have come over to the house, most of them have texted me over that period of time, but I haven't physically seen a lot of them, so it will be nice to catch up.

**Q. You've been down this road before in recovery. How much more difficult has this one been?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, this one's been much more difficult. Either -- the knee stuff that I had on my left knee, those operations were one thing, that's one level. Then you add the back, that's another level. And then with this right leg, that was -- it's hard to explain how difficult it has been just to be immobile for the three months, just lay there and I was just looking forward to getting outside. That was a goal of mine. Especially for a person who has lived his entire life outside, that was the goal. Finally got to that point when transitioned

from wheelchair to crutches to now nothing. It's been a lot of hard work.

I'm very thankful to all the surgeons and especially the nurses who, the unsung heroes, through all of it, who were by my bed, kept my spirits up, all my friends and family. There were some tough times in there, there were some really, really tough times. Pain got pretty great at times, but they helped me get through it and I'm on the better side of it, but I've still got a long way to go.

**Q. And is it too early to have a target tournament to zero in on like the PNC or Augusta or The Open?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I'll put it to you this way: As far as playing at the Tour level, I don't know when that's going to happen. Now, I'll play a round here or there, a little hit and giggle, I can do something like that. I certainly like -- you know, the USGA suggested Play It Forward. I really like that idea now. I don't like the tees on the back. I like Play It Forward. Come on, let's move it up, let's move it up. To see some of my shots fall out of the sky a lot shorter than they used to is a little eye-opening, but at least I'm able to do it again. That's something that for a while there it didn't look like I was going to. Now I'm able to participate in the sport of golf, now to what level, I do not know that. I'll keep you abreast, all of you abreast as progress continues to go on, whether I'll be out here and at what level and when.

**Q. Tiger, I'm wondering what you remember of the accident. Obviously we all saw the result and it looked so horrifying and scary, and I have a follow up to that.**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, all those answers have been answered in the investigation, so you can read about all that there in the post report.

**Q. Can you speak about what some of the most difficult moments were in these last 10 or 11 months for you? You skimmed on it a little bit, but what were some of the times that were most difficult?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I think just laying there, laying still. I was in the hospital for only three weeks. I was in a hospital bed for three months. That in itself is difficult. Being assisted everywhere I go, not being able to move anywhere. As I said, just looking forward to just getting outside. You know, eventually I got to a point where they could wheelchair me outside safely and I could feel the sun, that was like a milestone, you know. It's little things like that that added up. And then eventually when I started crutching around the house, I never -- I built a really nice house, but I didn't realize how big it was until you start putting crutches on. Yeah, there were times where I had to take breaks, but I tell you what, though, there's a point in time where my triceps got pretty jacked, so that was a lot of fun.

As a whole, it's been tough at times, yes, some dark moments, but then again, as I was making progress through it, too, I could see some light and that was giving me hope. I'm able to participate more with my kids and their activities and more just in life in general. I'm on -- as I said, I'm on the positive side.

**Q. A couple quick ones, Tiger. First of all, do you recall the day you first walked without crutches?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Say again?

**Q. The day you first walked without help, without crutches?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It was probably about two months after the accident. Two months after the accident before I walked with crutches. I was in a wheelchair.

**Q. I mean the first time you were able to walk like you did coming into this room without --**

**TIGER WOODS:** Without? Well, I did it maybe probably a little earlier than they suggested.

**Q. And secondly, you've had, I've lost track, nine, 10 surgeries before this?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I had 10 knee -- sorry, five knee, five back, so even 10.

**Q. None of them involved the kind of drama, the adrenaline-induced fear that this involved. I'm curious if you ever have any flashbacks to it. Do you ever think about it? Do you have any memories or anything like that?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I don't, no. Very lucky in that way.

**Q. Spinal fusion surgery, you needed to climb Mount Everest again, and yesterday you said you don't really, you might not have the body to do that. What has that shift been like for you mentally and personally?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I've made the climb up there a few times and I've had a pretty good run in my career. I just knew that once I came back from the spinal fusion surgery, I still had my hands. The only thing that was holding it back was my back, and once I realized that was good and it was solid, I wasn't going to have the zinging down my leg, I wasn't going to have the drop foot anymore, I wasn't going to have any of those issues, okay. Well, can I make a swing? Yes. Oh, I have power. Didn't think I'd have power.

**All of a sudden I would play at home and I would shoot scores, not the 77s and the 78s, and they were in the mid 60s without really trying. Like okay, this is new, let's see if we can push this a little bit further.**

So I came back here in 2017 and played in the Hero event and took full advantage of all the players in the field and their world ranking points because I was 1,299 at the time. Was able to climb in the world rankings because of that.

Then I started back in '18 and started playing a little bit more and I started building. Once I started building, I realized after Tampa that I could win, okay? Then I proved to myself that I could take the lead in the British Open. Okay. Well, I could close. Even though I did not win, I closed pretty good at the PGA at Bellerive, and then '19 I won the Masters. Well, I don't see that type of trend going forward for me. I won't have the opportunity to practice given the condition of my leg and build up. I just don't. I'll just have a different way of doing it and that's okay and I'm at peace with that, I've made the climb enough times.

**Q. Have you played golf holes, like a full hole or 18 holes?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I play full holes, yeah, but not from my tee markers.

**Q. You've spoken again there about your career being different and being reduced and probably curtailed. This is because of an accident and because of injury. It's not because you reached 75 years old. Is that easy for you to compute in your mind or is it difficult that you're going to be stopped or held back because of external --**

**TIGER WOODS:** No, it's very easy, given the fact that I was able to come back after the fusion surgery and do what I did. I got that -- I got that last major and I ticked off two more events along the way.

I don't foresee this leg ever being what it used to be, hence I'll never have the back what it used to be, and clock's ticking. I'm getting older, I'm not getting any younger. All that combined means that a full schedule and a full practice schedule and the recovery that it would take to do that, no, I don't have any desire to do that. But to ramp up for a few events a year as I alluded to yesterday as Mr. Hogan did, he did a pretty good job of it, and there's no reason that I can't do that and feel ready. I may not be tournament sharp in the sense I haven't played tournaments, but I think if you practice correctly and you do it correctly, that I've come off surgeries before, I've come off long layoffs and I've won or come close to winning before. So I know the recipe for it, I've just got to get to a point where I feel comfortable enough where I can do that again.

**Q. I have one question for Mr. Munjal and one question for Tiger.**

**Mr. Munjal, you've been friends with Tiger for a long time and you've known him for a long time. What is the one character trait in him that you really admire?**

**PAWAN MUNJAL:** That's a tough one, though. Clearly his resilience and desire to come back, fight back.

**Q. Tiger, I wanted to ask you, speaking to so many people before this tournament and even playing in your heydays, if I were to ask someone what do you think of Tiger at the major, 90 percent of them would say that he would win. Now when I ask people, more than 80, 85 percent of them still think that you will be able to come back and win a major. What does that kind of expectation mean to you, and do you feel a little**

**afraid that you might let down almost billions of people of your fans if you don't do that?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I think it's awfully flattering that people think that highly of my game. I think I've proven that I can play this game at a high level for a long period of time and it's awfully flattering that they think I can come back from this and win tournaments and as you said, win major championships.

For that to happen, I have a long way to go. I have a long way in the rehab process of this leg and it's not the fun stuff of the rehab. It's just reps and breaking up scar tissue and things that really hurt. So that part of it's not going to be fun, but the challenge of it is. I enjoy the challenge of getting in there and trying to push it to the next level, sometimes it's two steps forward, one step back, but you've got to go through it. I enjoy that part of it and maybe one day it will be good enough where I can get out here and I can compete against these best players in the world again.

**Q. Good to see you again at a golf tournament.**

**TIGER WOODS:** Thanks, Bernie.

**Q. I was going to ask you, are you in any pain sitting there now?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah.

**Q. I don't want to get too personal, but what are you experiencing there at the moment, sitting there?**

**TIGER WOODS:** My back hurts and my leg hurts.

**Q. Can I ask you, you probably answered this question a little bit already this morning, but what gets you through these dark patches you've had sort of in your life? What does it say about your character --**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, it's having a great support system, great friends, great people around me that are positive and upbeat, but it's also the unfortunate part, experience. I've gone through tough procedures before in the past and been sidelined and have had to recover and having that past experience has helped. Just understanding the patience of timelines. When someone says -- like when I blew out my ACL and broke my leg, it was, you're out for nine months. Well, that's kind of a bummer. Nine months without it coming back to sport. Then back fusion surgeries, knee operations and all those different timelines, just understanding, having the patience within those timelines, how much can we push and how much we can't push. That's -- you have to push until it hurts, but then you can't go overboard. That's the hard part, but I've had so much experience in that regard, I know, okay, we've taken it a little too far, let's pump the brakes, we'll stop it right here. Okay, you haven't pushed me enough, this is a good day, let's continue to go.

**Q. Good to have you back, Tiger. One question for Tiger and one for Dr. Munjal.**

**Tiger, you've often spoken about your children, Sam and Charlie, with whom you want to be able to play golf with them; Charlie in particular. This is the first time that they are seeing you go through what you're going through right now. Before that, they were far too young. Like what's been their reaction and the way you're trying to kind of get back to the golf course, especially for Charlie?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, they have known me more for being injured than healthy. Most of their lives I was going through my back operations. I was the guy sitting in the chair right in front of the TV playing Call of Duty while they're at school, and I would just have to sit there and let it heal so they would play around me, they were so little.

It was a surprise to them when they realized I could play the game. That's why the Masters was such an important family moment for all of us, for my mom, Sam and Charlie, all of my friends, because it was -- that's what they've seen, that's what they've grown up with. They don't remember any of these other times because they weren't alive yet or they were too young to remember.

In this case it's like, back to normal again, Dad's not able to move. So little things like that. To be able to go out there and do activities now with them, to watch my daughter play her soccer games and Charlie to play tournaments and to talk to them about it and see them grow up and hear the verbiage that has changed as kids grow up. A little bit of an eye-opener at times to hear the words that come out. I'm definitely not in the know on a lot of things. I'm not the hip, cool dad at times, so I'm trying to keep up with that. The lingo changes very quickly, so I'm trying to keep up.

**Q. Dr. Munjal, so you've known Tiger now for seven years, you joined hands with him at a very crucial stage when a lot of people thinking if Tiger's going to be Tiger again, he did. In these last 10 months or eight months, since February, what kind of interaction have you had or what kind of expectations or hopes have you had for him and how have they been?**

**PAWAN MUNJAL:** I've been interacting with Tiger on messages, talking to him off and on. Clearly we all know what happened and what he's been going through, and I know, I understand like you do, and to come back from this kind of an injury, this type of an accident is something which is not impossible, but very, very difficult and very tough.

As I just said, that one trait in Tiger that I best admire is his comeback, his resilience and to fight back. Having said that, my only hope has been that he gets well, gets better, be with his family and keep doing the good work through his foundation that he's been doing.

I've said this in the past, that my association or Hero's association with Tiger is not around his current game or his current form. It is because of what he's done in the past for the

game, through the Foundation or sports in general. That's what I admire and that's why the connect.

**Q. Tiger, I know you said earlier that it's difficult to put a timeline on a return, but an event like the 150th Open at St. Andrews next year given your history with the Open, your history with St. Andrews, how much is that an event you would like to be ready for?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I would love to play at St. Andrews, there's no doubt about it. It's my favorite golf course in the world. To be a two-time Open champion there, just being a part of the champions dinner is really neat. From my first one in '05 I got to attend a champions dinner, it was pretty neat to be a part of. Peter Thomson was still alive, and I sat right next to him and to hear him tell stories of when he came over and he played and shots he played and how he did it, that was awesome. Those are things like at the Masters, those dinners are priceless and those stories and listen to them talk about how they played, when they played it and what they did, it's just an honor to be a part of a room like that. Yes, I would love to be able to play that Open Championship, there's no doubt about it.

Physically, hopefully I can. I've got to get there first. Tournament's not going to go anywhere, but I need to get there.

**Q. Tiger, your 46th is coming up in 30 days.**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, thanks, man.

**Q. Is that still a day you look forward to or is it just another day or how do you approach your one more year around the globe?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, four more years, I'm in a cart.

No, this year's been a year I would like to turn the page on. It's been full of some tough memories and some tough times, but also some great times, too as well, but again it would be nice to turn the page.

**Q. Couple more things, Tiger. Best case scenario in the process of your recovery, and you can play a pick and choose, limited tournaments a year, how determined are you to win again?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I've got to be good enough to do it, okay? So I've got to prove to myself in practice that I'm good enough. I'll chip and putt any of these guys, but the golf courses are longer than just a chip-and-putt course. We're not going to be playing the par-3 course at Augusta to win the Masters, so I got to get a little bit bigger game than that. As I said, I've got a long way to go in the rehab process to be able to do something like that.

**Q. Did you just commit to the par 3?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No. I committed to I can play courses of that length. Now, if the Tour wants to not have golf courses lengthened, they shorten up that much to make it more difficult, that's fine by me, I have no problem with that. If they want to go back to wooden shafts and feathery balls, okay, I'm cool.

**Q. Just a couple more that might be not that easy for you to answer, but even playing a limited schedule if at all or not playing, what is your value do you think to the Tour? What can you still bring to the Tour just being who you are and what you've done?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I think that I've hosted the Genesis event, I host this event here, the Hero World Challenge, and I think those two events alone is a lot. I'm friends with the majority of the players that are atop of the world rankings, and they text, call, FaceTime, do a bunch of different things. I can still be a part of the Tour, yes, even though I'm not playing it.

**Q. And then lastly from me, and this was going on way before the accident, but this push toward a new league or various new leagues made me curious. If a player came to you for advice on whether they should join Greg Norman's league, what would you tell him?**

**TIGER WOODS:** It's going to be his decision, period. I've decided for myself that I'm supporting the PGA TOUR, that's where my legacy is. I've been fortunate enough to have won 82 events on this tour and 15 major championships and been a part of the World Golf Championships, the start of them and the end of them. So I have an allegiance to the PGA TOUR.

And I understand that some of the comparisons is very similar to when Arnold and Jack broke off from the PGA of America to start the Tour. I don't see it that way. I think the Tour has done a fantastic job, Jay's done an unbelievable job during a very difficult time during the pandemic when there was ample opportunities for players to leave, but we were the first sporting tour to start.

So with that, yes, did we have some protocol issues at times? Yes, we had to learn on the fly, but Jay and the staff had done an incredible job of that. I think the Tour is in great hands, they're doing fantastic, and prize money's going up. It's just not guaranteed money like most sports are. It's just like tennis, you have to go out there and earn it.

**Q. Tiger, I think over the last bit of time we've seen you kind of humbled by getting through the back surgery and being able to make that comeback that you did and whatnot. I'm just curious, when you got on on the other side of the surgeries and all the stuff that went on in February and you realized the depth and probably saw the pictures of how bad the accident was, did you feel lucky to be alive, and is that kind of why you're kind of at peace as you speak to us now?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I said it yesterday, I'm lucky to be alive but also still have the limb. Those are two crucial things. I'm very grateful that someone upstairs was taking care of me, that I'm able to not only be here but also to walk without a prosthesis.

**Q. How realistic was amputation as an option?**

**TIGER WOODS:** What's that?

**Q. How realistic was amputation? Was that really --**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, it was on the table.

**Q. Tiger, 25 years at the Foundation, also 25 years since the '97 Masters. How do you look back at that event differently now than you did when you won it 25 years ago?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, our Foundation worked -- my dad and I started the Foundation 25 years ago. I won the Masters there 25 years ago and also, sad to say, but Lee Elder just passed and he was there at the back of the green when I won my first Masters 25 years ago. When he competed and played in his first Masters, that was the year I was born.

Those 25 years have gone by in a blink, but those are three significant moments that happened all at once within the same year.

**Q. I remember now, sorry about that. You seem determined, if physically possible, to play again. Was there ever a moment where you thought is this all worth it again, do I want to put myself and my family through all this, or were you always determined to, if physically possible, try to play at least a limited schedule?**

**TIGER WOODS:** You made a great point. Am I going to put my family through it again, am I going to put myself out there again. We had a talk within the family, all of us sat down and said if this leg cooperates and I get to a point where I can play the Tour, is it okay with you guys if I try and do it. The consensus was yes.

Now, internally, I haven't reached that point. I haven't proven it to myself that I can do it. I can show up here and I can host an event, I can play a par-3 course, I can hit a few shots, I can chip and putt, but we're talking about going out there and playing against the world's best on the most difficult golf courses under the most difficult conditions. I'm so far from that.

Now, I have a long way to go to get to that point. Now, I haven't decided whether or not I want to get to that point. I've got to get my leg to a point where that decision can be made. And we'll see what happens when I get to that point, but I've got a long way to go with this leg.

**Q. You were talking to Henni in that interview that came out yesterday just about the**

**little things that give you joy in the game of golf and I was just wondering if that helped you get through like the joy of a well-struck golf ball and putt and chip?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Oh, yes, it did. They wanted me to go out there and hit a few putts, but I had a boot on. That doesn't do any good. I have a boot, it tilts and it's not the same as putting. Yeah, you're outside and yeah, I did crutch outside and I would lay out there on the grass and just feel the sun because I've been inside for so long. Had to work on my tan.

It was nice to finally get the boot off and then hit a few putts, but then after hitting a few putts, I realized that, damn, that ball's a long way down there, I can't get it out of the hole. So I had Matthew, who works for me out back, I said, dude, no more holes, just sand-filled holes, I can't bend down that far. Little adjustments like that. To be able to go out there and hit old faithful and feel the memories in that putter and then get to a point where I can hit chip shots and realize I could hit that shot and that shot, let me try and hit this one. And my hands and feel started coming back, but then the aches and pains started coming, so back in the ice bath again.

So it would be one of those things where I don't have the endurance to stay out there for long periods of time, but the fact that I'm able to do it was exciting because there was a period of time where it didn't look like I was going to be able to do it again.

**Q. When it comes to the day of the crash, clearly that's something that you're hoping to keep private. Is that something that you feel is sort of your business and not the rest of ours, for lack of a better phrase?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I kind of feel that way with most of my life. Doesn't really work out that way. I understand that it's -- I had friends that insulated me from a lot of the things that were said outside. I didn't have my phone, I didn't have access -- well, I did have access to a TV and I was just watching sports. But I refused to turn on the local channels and news and stuff like that, I didn't want to go down that road. I wasn't mentally ready for that road yet. A lot of things in my body hurt at that time and whether I was on medication or not, it still hurt. And just trying to imagine me coming off of that stuff, how much it was going to hurt, I didn't want to have my mind go there yet, it wasn't ready.

Yeah, people are going to poke and prod and want to know more about my business, I understand that. Just as long as they don't go into -- they can poke and prod at me all they want, just stay away from my family.

**Q. You expressed your body pain before. Could you express your mind feelings? And in the meantime, could you explain to us the goal of your foundation for the future?**

**TIGER WOODS:** My goal and my motivation for the future is to -- right now, it's short term, it's not long term. It's trying to get my leg good. We're working with Hero right now this week, we're trying to grow the Foundation, we're expanding it, trying to help more of the

youths. Right now year we're at 2 million youths served. Right now I think that number is a little bit low. I think we can do more.

And we're working on other programs and other things that are going to be drastically different just because of the new platforms that are available to us and some of the different directions kids want to take. Some just don't want to go to college, they want to have access to the workplace. We have plenty of CEOs and plenty of people we know that can get them interest to an interview, so let's help them with that.

Yeah, so there's a lot of immediate stuff that I have been working on with the Foundation, not having been thinking a lot of long-term golf stuff just because I need to work on the short term and get this leg right before I can even put my mind there.

**JACK RYAN:** That's all the time we have. Thank you, Tiger, and thank you, Dr. Munjal.

**TIGER WOODS:** Thank you.