

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 14, 2023



TIGER WOODS

MARK WILLIAMS: Welcome, everybody, and welcome, Tiger Woods, tournament host of the Genesis Invitational as we all know. Also, Tiger, we all know that your TGR Foundation benefits from this event this week, but I think we're all curious as to kind of what other aspects went into your decision to actually competing here this week.

TIGER WOODS: Well, the plan was to play. Whether or not this body would listen to me or not was the main question. And I've been, as I told some of you guys that were down at the Hero, and the Father-Son, I could do the Ranger Rick thing, so I can hit golf balls and do all that stuff, it's a matter of whether I have endurance in my leg. And we've been pushing it pretty good and able to recover each and every day, which is great.

So I'm excited about being able to compete and play and play here at Riviera where basically it all started. I'm excited to get out there and play, play tomorrow and get a nice little taste and feel for it, a little cooler than I thought, get used to that and get ready for Thursday.

MARK WILLIAMS: Before we take questions, you mentioned where it all started where you hit that opening tee shot, everybody saw that video, it's everywhere. When you look at now and the young kids from your foundation being involved, can you just talk to the progression of your foundation and the situation where it is now.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, just to have some of our attendees of our Learning Lab to be able to come out here and experience this and to see how their lives have been impacted because of this event, because of the support from Genesis and everyone here, the media and all of our STEM programs all benefit from this event. To have the kids that watch this event have been through our STEM programs to be able to have the ability to come out here and look at the best players in the world play golf, but also showcase their confidence and what they have developed into and some of the conversations some of the players have had with our past attendees from the Learning Lab, it's incredible, it's inspiring.

Q. Tiger, two things. Could you just, a little more specificity on what it is physically that you needed to kind of overcome to be able to play?

And then on a lighter note, LeBron breaking the scoring record last week, curious if you have thoughts on that and any golf record that's sort of an equivalent of the regular season points title?

TIGER WOODS: Okay. As far as the recovery, it's more my ankle, whether I can recover from day to day. The leg is better than it was last year, but it's my ankle. So being able to



have it recover from day to day and meanwhile still stress it but have the recovery and also have the strength development at the same time, it's been an intricate little balance that we've had to dance. But it's gotten so much better the last couple months. I'm excited to go out there and compete and play with these guys. And I would not have put myself out here if I didn't think I could beat these guys and win the event. That's my mentality. If I wasn't ready to win at this level, I am very rusty, but I've come off a rusty situation before and I've done well and I've had to utilize a lot of those tactics in practice in buildup. Plus, also I know this golf course. I know I haven't had a lot of success on this golf course, but I knew what to practice for, shots to hit at home getting ready.

As far as the LeBron record, what he accomplished is absolutely incredible of just the durability, the consistency and the longevity. I never thought -- I grew up watching Kareem here, never saw him play in Milwaukee, but he was the cat, that's all I remember, the Showtime Lakers and watching Cat run down there with goggles and hit the sky hook, that record we never thought it would be surpassed. But what LeBron is doing -- but also the amount of minutes he's playing, no one's ever done that at that age, to be able to play all five positions, that's never been done before at this level for this long.

As far as our equivalent to that, I don't know, maybe you look at maybe me and Sam at 82? It takes a career to get to those numbers. That's how I think probably best how you look at it.

Q. What did the PNC tell you about the state of your game and how to impact your prep for playing in another event?

TIGER WOODS: As you watched that PNC I was able to play out of the cart and hit shots and do whatever I wanted, but I just didn't have the endurance in my ankle, so we've been working on that and getting it to where -- I can still hit shots, but it's the walking endurance that's hard. That's something that we've had to work on, walking distances on the beach, just basically stress it out but also be able to recover by the next day and see how it is inflammation-wise and then keep practicing. I may have overdone it a couple times here or there, but here I am.

Q. Being from Norway, I just have to ask you about a guy who's done really well at your events, Viktor Hovland. He's done well here, done really well in Bahamas. Just your thoughts on him as a player and a person and how far he can go?

TIGER WOODS: The sky's the limit for Viktor, the way he drives it, he doesn't really have any weaknesses in the game. Initially it was probably short game and putting but that's turned around. He's done some really good work with that., but just how he strikes the golf ball, I know he's not one of the longer bombers out there, but look at how many fairways he hits and how many good iron shots he hits, that's going to take him a long way.

And then his fitness, he works very hard at getting explosiveness and endurance and he's able to play. I think he's just getting started and the sky's the limit for him.



Q. Hi, Tiger. You just said that you wouldn't tee it up in the tournament if you didn't think that you could win. From the PNC until now, could you just take us through your lifestyle and your day to day to actually get yourself to that point where you can sit here and confidently say that?

TIGER WOODS: I hit balls basically almost every day. I chip and putt. I've got a neat little practice facility in my backyard so I can do a little bit of short game work there and a little bit of progression. I've gone out to Medalist and hit balls, I've walked the golf course when I've played. Then I'll play, I'll hop in a cart when I get a little tired. And it's gone from a few holes to nine holes to the back nine and then to 18 holes and go back home, practice. So it's just a buildup, and it's built up fantastic to get to this point. Then after this event we'll analyze it and see what we need to do to get ready for Augusta.

Q. You've always had that thirst for knowledge, whether it is about golf or just the game of life. What have you learned about yourself over the last year since your accident that maybe you didn't know before?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think that I've had an incredible support staff and people that have, really have helped me get to this point. It's been hard physically as we all know, but I've had great people around me. My training staff has allowed me to get to this point. I've gotten stronger, more pliable, more endurance. Just great friendships I've had. Even on the Tour, these guys texting me and egging me on, the banter back and forth, just incredible support and I would never have gotten to this point or made it back to this point without their support.

Q. Tiger, have you walked 72 holes four days in a row?

TIGER WOODS: No.

Q. And do you ever see --

TIGER WOODS: This year?

Q. Yeah.

TIGER WOODS: No.

Q. Do you see a scenario when it's not so touch and go, when you might be able to depend on the leg, or do you think it will be kind of this day-by-day thing forever?

TIGER WOODS: As I've been saying to you guys, I'm not going to be playing a full schedule so I've got to be able to pick and choose my events and how many events I'm going to play. I alluded to last year it's going to be probably the majors and maybe a couple more. Would I like to play more? Yes. Will it allow me to? I don't know. I have to be realistic about that. Being realistic about the recovery and the training and -- sorry. My bad.



MARK WILLIAMS: We've all done it.

TIGER WOODS: No, it's just about I know I'm not going to be playing a full schedule and I've got to pick and choose what I'm going to be playing in and it will be very limited. So I'll put all my energy into those events.

Q. Tiger, anticipating the Masters, it's going to be the first time that you're in a room in a group with LIV players. Wondering that what anticipation is like for you as far as how you may handle it, what your demeanor is going to be when you're around them?

TIGER WOODS: That's a great question because I don't know because I haven't been around them. Some of the players out here have. For instance, Rory's in Dubai with some of those players.

I don't know, I don't know what that reaction's going to be. I know that some of our friendships have certainly taken a different path, but we'll see when all that transpires. That is still a couple months away.

Q. Champions Dinner may be uncomfortable. Would you anticipate it being uncomfortable?

TIGER WOODS: The Champions Dinner is going to be obviously something that's talked about. We as a whole need to honor Scottie, Scottie's the winner, it's his dinner. So making sure that Scottie gets honored correctly but also realizing the nature of what has transpired and the people that have left, just where our situations are either legally, emotionally, there's a lot there.

Q. Tiger, over the past month, Tom Brady retired, now Aaron Rodgers is considering it, different sports obviously, but can you relate or understand their plight at all, whether walking away not necessarily because their physical skills have diminished, but because they don't feel like they have anything mor to give.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I didn't think, there was a touch and go whether I would be back after my back fusion. I didn't know if I was going to walk again after that and I came back and had a nice little run. Same thing with this leg, I didn't know if I was able to play again and I played three majors last year. Yes, when you get a little bit older and you get a little more banged up you're not as invincible as you once were. That's just a reality of all of us just aging.

Those are contact sports. I don't know how -- Tom playing as long as he did and the level that he played at was phenomenal. We just have to just look at him as an outlier of how great that was. I remember as a kid growing up watching John Elway speak and just cried that I could do it but my body won't allow me to do it anymore. He won the last two



Superbowls, but he could just not physically do it anymore.

I've got to that point a couple times where you kind of think about it, but our sport, there's no contact, I don't have 300-pound guys falling on top of me. It's just a matter of shooting the lowest score. We have the ability to pick and choose and play a little bit longer. We've seen -- my hero, Arnold Palmer, like all of us, hell, he played in 50 straight Masters, 50 straight. I'm not even 50 years old yet and he played in 50 straight Masters. Looking at Gary Player who played in 51 Masters. We're different sports.

Q. Do you feel grateful to be here?

TIGER WOODS: Yes, yes.

Q. I figured as much, but at what point in your career did you start to feel grateful to be out here? I'm not suggesting you ever took it for granted, but you know what I mean, injury-wise?

TIGER WOODS: I had some knee surgeries early on in my career but nothing like what I experienced with my back. When my back went, man, those were tough surgeries and tough rehabs. I could power through my knee and the meniscus and no ACL, I could power through that, but I could never power through my back. That's when I started realizing the mortality of this game and just sports in general. I didn't think I was -- I was immortal, just what we all think as athletes, but there comes a point in time where a couple of my friends in the NFL, when you become afraid to get hit, you take that one little flinch of I don't want to get hit. Well, when I had my back I didn't want to hit certain shots because I may end up on the ground, so that was tough.

Q. Second thing I wanted to ask you about are expectations, which you can ignore but they're still out there. If you go back to like early 2000s where if you went a month without winning you were in a slump, the expectations were that great, to later in your career where the expectations from some were you'd never win again. Which one do you enjoy hearing more?

TIGER WOODS: I look at that -- me personally? I looked at the fact that I haven't won in three years, so there you go.

Q. Yeah, Tiger, we're a couple designated events into the new look PGA TOUR, I'm just curious how you think it's going and how different you think it will feel throughout the year?

TIGER WOODS: We've had three already, and I think it's been received -- there's obviously mixed emotions about it, but from a marketing side of it and from the Tour side of it and the future of our sport, it's been very positive. We need to keep going with it and need to stay aligned and keep progressing and making it better. We need to produce the best product we possibly can to sell to all the viewerships. There's so many different distractions out there



now, there's so many different options that you have now, so it's about us creating the best products so we have more eyes on it, more stars, people want to come out and either watch the game of golf, participate, either on social media or the different streaming platforms. Just the fact that they're able to watch our sport, so in order to do that we have to create the best product, and that's what we're trying to do.

Q. Mixed emotions, have you gotten a chance to talk to guys that have different types of --

TIGER WOODS: Absolutely. It runs the gamut. From top players to players who obviously have injuries or the fact that you have guys that are journeymen, back and forth, yes, I've talked to the whole gamut. As I've said, there's mixed emotions, but at the end of the day we're trying to create the best product, and how do we do that. That's what we're trying to do and we're still figuring it out. We have a lot of top players that are aligned since the Delaware meeting, and we're trying to create that atmosphere of across the board and understand that players need to be able to have access and ability to play at these elevated events and how do we do that. We want to create the next stars.

I was lucky enough to get a sponsor's exemption here at 16 years old. So is that possible in that new model? We need to create opportunities like that. I look back, I got lucky and I was able to play in this event, Byron Nelson asked me to play in his event, Arnold asked me to play in his event, so I got those opportunities very early in my career. We don't want the next stars to not have those opportunities.

Q. Tiger, is the plantar fasciitis an issue in the foot?

TIGER WOODS: Yes.

Q. As much of a --

TIGER WOODS: No, not as much, it's better.

Q. The LIV talk kind of came to a head here last year. Looking back over the last year with what the PGA TOUR has done, the things you've just talked about, is LIV more of a threat, less of a threat?

TIGER WOODS: How can I -- the past year since, if you go back to this week at Genesis last year to where it's at now, we all have to say it's been very turbulent. We never would have expected the game of golf to be in this situation, but it is, that's the reality, and I was alluding to trying to create the best product. Obviously, they're a competitive organization trying to create their best product they possibly can, and we're trying to create the best product that we think the future of golf, how it should be played. How do we do that? We're still working on that. We have so many of the top players aligned, and how do we support our world partners and the DP World Tour, we need to have our top players understand we need to play around the world and again create the best product possible.



It's been an ebb and flow, it really has. And it's been difficult, there's no lie. You've seen our ambassador, Rory, go through it. It's been tough on him, but he's been exceptional. To be able to go through all that, I've been with him on all those conference calls and side meetings, and for him to go out there and play and win, it's been incredible.

Q. Tiger, along the same lines with the designated events, obviously this whole thing came together very quickly from last fall until now, a lot of things had to happen to make this work, scheduling and everything. One of the things going forward that's being discussed, at least there's rumblings about, is making some of these limited fields, no cuts, sounds like the invitationals would be on the docket for that. Where do you stand on that and also, would you have a say in it for this tournament?

TIGER WOODS: We are in the process of figuring all that out and it's been a variety of different models, different opinions, trying to figure out what is the best product and competitive environment and what we should do going forward. Yes, limited fields, what's the number. Cuts? Yes or no. What's the number, what do we go to. How many players are playing the event?

OK, what is the ability to get into the designated events? How is Jay able to sell our product to all the different sponsors across the board? There's so much give and take. It's still ongoing. I mean, it really has, it's been difficult. A lot of the players have been very forthright which is great, it's the way it should be. We're a players run organization, so yes, we should have the voice and ultimate say with you we're trying to help our commissioner create what he can sell so that all of us can benefit.

Q. Going back to your first tournament here as an amateur, what are you thinking? Are you thinking, hey, I got in, I have to prove myself that I'm deserving from this, or are you just going out and playing golf normally?

TIGER WOODS: Well, there's a couple things I realized. One, number one, I had never seen as many fresh range balls that were nonstriped, being able to hit those brand new Balata balls I would normally find in creeks and stuff and use in tournaments. And then come out here and what did I shoot, 72, 75-ish if I can remember here or there, I was like 17 back of Davis. I realized yes, there is a disparity and there's a gap.

Could I have played a little bit better? Yes, I could have probably played four or five shots better, but I was not that good. Realized I needed to go back to high school golf, get better there, better at the junior golf, hopefully play in a couple more events that I was alluding to that Mr. Nelson asked me to play in his event, and I was getting opportunities to kind of figure it out where I need to go and it allowed me to get better in the junior events, in the amateur events. I was able to have more success because I got a chance to experience what I needed to do out here, pick their brains and how they went about their business.

Q. You referenced Arnie and Gary played in 50-plus Masters. Is there any part of your



competitive DNA that would allow you to enjoy --

TIGER WOODS: Nope, nope, I'm not playing that many, sorry.

Q. But in tournament golf --

TIGER WOODS: Sorry.

Q. If you're 60 and you don't wake up with the irrational belief, I could win this tournament, could you still enjoy any of it?

TIGER WOODS: I don't -- I have not come around to the idea of being -- if I'm playing, I play to win. I know that players have played and they are ambassadors of the game and try to grow the game. I can't have my mind, I can't wrap my mind around that as a competitor. If I'm playing in the event I'm going to try and beat you. I'm there to get a W, OK? So I don't understand that making the cut's a great thing. If I entered the event, it's always to get a W. There will come a point in time when my body will not allow me to do that anymore, and it's probably sooner rather than later, but wrapping my ahead around that transition and being the ambassador role and just trying to be out here with the guys, no, that's not in my DNA. Ambassador role in hosting events like this, in hosting the Genesis Invitational or the Hero, doing those type of things, I totally get it. But as a player, I flip the hat around and become a player, and from a player standpoint, I'm here to get that W.

Q. Tiger, when people write you off, how much of a motivational factor is that for you?

TIGER WOODS: It used to be early on in my career, yes, but I don't think that it has been later, middle part of my career, back side of my career it really hasn't.

It was honestly, can I actually do this still. As I alluding to with Doug here, those back operations were tough. That proved to myself more than anything that I could still do it starts at home, starts in practice, starts with the guys, starts playing 18 holes, then come out here and having the belief I can do it. Ultimately it's within me and whether or not I believe I can do it. It's not the motivating factor of outside.

It used to be, it certainly did, but not towards the later part of my career.

MARK WILLIAMS: Tiger, thank you for the time as always.

