

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**June 8, 2023**



**JERRY KELLY**

---

**MODERATOR:** Jerry, thanks for joining us at the 2023 American Family Insurance Championship, making yourself available for this. Just overall thoughts right now being back in Madison this week, home game this week, just everything that's been going on, you've been hanging out with the guys, having everybody back and then Steve being the host?

**JERRY KELLY:** Yeah, what a great week. It's a testament to Steve and the team that he's put together with American Family and what they've done for this event, what they've done for the city, what they've done for the state. It's pretty impressive and it keeps on getting better.

This tournament this year looks very different with the golf course. Very different. It's playing firm and fast. You've got to pay attention off the tee, you have to pay attention into the greens, you have to pay attention on your putts, every single one of them.

There's really no layups on this golf course right now. I don't think you're going to see the scores you've seen in the past. I think it's going to be a difficult test. I think it's going to be pretty cool to see this golf course play the way it was kind of supposed to play.

Yeah, I had a great time already this week, so we're good.

**MODERATOR:** How does it feel with you hosting your own Colouard Classic, but for Steve and the Stricker family to host this, just role reversal, he supports you, you support him, just that relationship and kind of what it means.

**JERRY KELLY:** Yeah, I mean, he's won mine, I've won his, so it's kind of fun that way. We both want to get our own tournaments under our belts. It's always down to the wire at this golf tournament and I think it's going to play no different this year. I think there's going to be a little more spread out pack than there ever has been, but just hope we're contending at the end.

**Q. A lot about Steve, no slight against yourself but he's playing some pretty remarkable golf right now. Does that surprise you what he's doing?**

**JERRY KELLY:** Doesn't surprise me, but I've got to catch up. He's disappointed with second last week, I'm pretty excited. There's your difference right there.

He's used to winning every single week and when he doesn't win, he's taking second place. It's extremely impressive what he's doing. We always thought, you know, what Bernhard did, what Alker did for his time, but right now on this tour Steve is committed to this tour

unfortunately and he's doing exactly what we expected him to do.

Kudos to him, and it's up to everybody else to catch up to him, not for him to fall back. I don't want him to play any worse than he's playing right now, I want him to keep going and I want to catch up to him. That's the mentality you have to have in order to get better. When you see somebody playing better, you need to play better, that's it.

**Q. You put your old irons back in your bag and I want to know like why you switched out and why you went back to them.**

**JERRY KELLY:** I really thought the new irons with the weight moved to the center of the club would give me more movability even than I had and turned out that was not the case. Whether I don't have them set up correctly for the way the club is made, but when I went back with a little more weight on the toe, I was able to turn the ball over much more consistently.

When I look up after a good swing and it's hanging right, there's not much I can do. Then I start flipping, then I'm in trouble, get two-way misses.

It was a new set, it wasn't my old irons, but it was the old style. I was going down the shaft route thinking I had gotten so much weaker that I couldn't turn the ball over, I couldn't get the ball up in the air. The second I put these things in, everything happened. It's just when we look up after making our swings and we see that ball in that window that we want it to be in, then those are the clubs you should be playing.

They felt really good, the other ones, but they just didn't perform. You know, I'll go back with the guys, and they want me playing the new stuff and I'll see what I can do, but that performance is A No. 1.

**Q. I know you were with a special group today for the program, getting to be with Ethan and his dad. I saw you were kind of teaching and helping him out and he raved about you. What's special for you to be able to have moments like that and take time to get to have those moments with Ethan?**

**JERRY KELLY:** Well, that's what our pro-ams are about. If we've got to work on the golf course today, I want to play against that guy. But when these guys show up, especially somebody like Ethan, who's got a rare kidney disease and it's his Make-a-Wish to be able to play in a professional event with a pro, you want to show him the best time that you can possibly show him. He played on the Sun Prairie golf team, he's a heck of a player, but we'll try and make him better, that's the whole point of it.

I usually ask the guys on the first tee, "Do you want to win or do you want to learn something?" I usually don't let them make that choice, but I might drill it into them a little much. But you don't get that chance to play with a professional who has a little different mentality than kind of a swing coach does and teaching mechanics and things like that. A

little more playability-type things. I want to impart as much as I can to him so he can improve his own game and feel good.

He should feel good about his game, he played fantastic. These were tough conditions out here for us, so we know what it was like for them.

Yeah, I mean, having my wife go through her kidney problems and Ethan with a rare kidney disease, and Preventive Genetics that Exact Sciences has acquired about a year and a half ago, that's what they do, they find the mutations in your genes and I think that is the future of medicine completely, to target the individual, not just do the chemo and do the radiation and kill your entire body. They can target these specific mutations and I think that's -- that's such a great thing for the world, but it's just another way Exact Sciences is really getting in the forefront of helping everyone.

**Q. Jerry, you could always see it on your face how bad you wanted to win the GMO and the U.S. Bank back in the day, and Steve just recently talked about how he almost put too much pressure on yourself, but how special could this month be with this, the U.S. Senior Open and just trying to stay within yourself and think about the possibilities?**

**JERRY KELLY:** Yeah, you know I don't stay within myself very well, so I'm thinking about it all the time.

I tell guys, they're like hey, how's SentryWorld? I'm like, I won there in 1984 and I haven't been back. I don't know it well, but I know I have great feelings when I step out there. It's a Wisconsin golf course and that's what we're used to. I hope the rough is deep. I know the U.S. Senior Open will take care of that. I saw some pictures, it looks pretty stout.

Yeah, I just love playing in front of the Wisconsin crowd, they give you so much emotion, so much energy and I love feeding off of that. I'm going to do my best to let it all in and try not to have any blockers up in front of me and soak it all up.

**Q. Jerry, you led off by saying that the course is firm and fast. Do you like that? Does that suit you, do you think?**

**JERRY KELLY:** I like that because you have to hit it in the fairway, otherwise shots into the greens are extremely difficult. But it's also more difficult for me because I'm not a long hitter, so I'm having longer clubs in. The difference between a 5-iron and an 8-iron on these greens is huge. But an 8-iron from the rough, I can beat them with a 5-iron from the fairway.

I have to do my job No. 1, which is get the ball in the fairway and now you're going to have to shape it off the tee to get it into these fairways. And where you have to start trying to carry some of these edges to keep it in the fairway going against the fairway is going to be difficult for the long hitters. It does open up on some of them a little bit further out, but the more distance you get, the more bounce and roll you get, the more it takes these slopes and goes

into the rough. Then it can play very difficult with a wedge on some of these greens.

Definitely going to have to pay attention. A lot of the long hitters are not going to be bombing driver as they normally do at this golf course. I think there's going to be a lot more technical play to it. I'm still going to hit the driver because I can shape it both ways and kind of move it in the direction of the fairway. I just have to make sure I'm not getting greedy and just hit the fairway and that's it.

**Q. I'm sure there's been a lot to digest as a pro player this week with what's going on.**

**JERRY KELLY:** You're the first one, there it is, all right.

**Q. How have you processed just taking in all that and coming to some conclusions, or what questions do you have that you would like answered about what's happened this week?**

**JERRY KELLY:** Yeah, there's a ton of questions out there of what's going on. Why? How? What's going on?

There's a new for-profit entity that is married to the PIF. The Tour organization as a 501(c)(3) corporation is still a separate entity from that, and I think for our sponsors and for our piece of mind, we keep that separate.

I don't know how this is going to play out, I don't know what it's going to look like in its final -- I don't think anybody knows. I don't think they know. We don't even know how it came about. It blew up on us just like it blew up on you guys. I haven't talked to anybody. Steve's got a much higher reach than I do in this game, I just go play.

At the moment, we have no trickledown economics in the Champions Tour, so I think we're kind of off on our own little island and I think we like it that way, but we can't be blind to what just happened. It is a lot to digest and it will be interesting to see how it plays out.

**Q. You talk about being on our own little island. Champions Tour does feel like a family. Thongchai Jaidee, first win last year, he is the defending champion. Just what have you seen from him in the last year and kind of what he's brought to this tour?**

**JERRY KELLY:** He's such a happy guy, he is a fantastic individual. He was so excited to cook for all of us at one of the tournaments, I can't remember which one it was, but it was fantastic. I loved watching him back there stirring the pot.

But he's so much more outgoing now like he is. He's more back to the Thongchai Jaidee of old. I think he was really struggling to get his footing. I know he couldn't even get out of Thailand and he lost his card because of it. I think they should have given him another exemption for that one, but that's water under the bridge now luckily.

Those are the personalities that we have out here. Even some of the rougher personalities, the guys who used to be that way, they're much more at ease, they're much more comfortable. They know they've done what they needed to do in the game and now it's time to give back and it's time to enjoy the game of golf.

You know, if you want to call this the last bastion of the true, you know, game of golf that we all knew back in the day where we're not -- most of the guys out here don't need the money, they're not chasing it for trying to amass capital, it is purely for the love of the game.

I hear all the time, oh, Tiger would never come out, Phil would never come out, all these guys. Why do they come out? They don't need the money.

It's not about the money, it's purely about the competition. It's about beating the same guys that you beat or beating the guys that you could never beat before. It's just about coming out on top. This is pure competition out here and it's really fun. And then that back nine comes around, Sunday comes around and you're fighting just as hard as you were, but you're truly happy for the other individual that won. You see that every single week when guys are meeting the winner after the tournament.

I mean, I'm really proud of these guys in the way they act, and the way they do it in the pro-ams all the way through the tournament. I think it's a great family as we called it. Think of it as a traveling circus, but we're a good family out here and it's really cool.

**Q. Did you really shoot a 59 --**

**JERRY KELLY:** No, no. We were playing for birdies and I swiped away a couple pars. You've got to -- I just shot a course record at Maple Bluff and I putt everything out until maybe I make my first bogey and then it's just fun golf. But I putted everything out and that's the only way I would have recorded a course record is if everything is done. I mean, I had kids come out and hit my putt before I hit my putt. That gives me a line, too. That was for the fans, for the kids, but when they turned that from the daily match and I was the -- and then they turned it into a charitable thing and I was like, OK, that's good. And they said it's going to be 2,000 every birdie and I was like, all right, I'm going to try and make you pay.

And then once I had my first eagle putt, I'm like is this triple? He goes, let's make it quad. I'm like, all right, perfect. I end up making two eagles for quad the money, so 8,000. I was much more thinking of that charitable side of it than any other score that I was shooting, but it's still pretty fun to make 10 birdies and two eagles in a round. My pro-am team was pretty bummed, I made one birdie today.

**Q. Jerry, following up on the answer a little bit ago, last year I was up on the 18th green when Thongchai Jaidee was putting out. As disappointed as you were not to win, I remember you really pulling for him to make that putt and going "Yes!" Would you have been that way with an opponent or another player 25 years ago?**

**JERRY KELLY:** I might have said "Yes," but I probably would have been in the clubhouse. It's almost like we want to be out there feeling that emotion with the guy and showing him that we really care that you did pull it off, that you did win. It means something out here. It's just really cool to watch all the guys react that way, it's neat.