

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 24, 2023

JIM FURYK



CONNOR STANGE: Jim Furyk, thank you for joining us here at The Ally Challenge, you're the 2020 champion. Just to start, how does it feel to be back here at Warwick Hills this week?

JIM FURYK: It's always good coming back. I loved this tournament back when it was the Buick Open. There's a reason -- I always said there's a reason why I made this kind of my first Champions Tour event here at Ally. I've always loved the golf course. I always feel like coming back to Flint and the Grand Blanc area has been fun. We've got a lot of support from the community and I've always liked this golf course. I've had a lot of success here in the past, so it's always fun coming back to a place that brings back good memories.

Q. I have a question. Usually you come in here, the last couple years you were on fire, had great stats. I was looking today and I was like, you've had a tough run in tournaments so far this year.

JIM FURYK: I have been off for the last, I don't know, eight to 10 weeks. I've been kind of nursing a back injury, something that's been kind of bothering me for about the last year and a half.

Really, when I came in here last year I really hadn't been playing very well, but coming in '20 and '21 my game was in good shape, I was ready to go. I had some pretty good finishes.

Just been kind of battling my health a little bit. I kind of tried to address that the last 10 weeks. I'm nowhere near 100 percent, but being Warwick Hills, being The Ally Challenge, it's something I wanted to come and try to see where I'm at.

Q. So does the doctor -- backs are tough, I've got a back problem, but you're making a living with you playing golf. Do they tell you to kind of stay off that, or do they give you kind of a regimented routine so you can come out here on fire?

JIM FURYK: Well, it's the first for me. I've had some wrist surgeries and some injuries along the way, but I've been very, very lucky with my back throughout my career, never really had a lot of issues. I'm not really in a lot of pain, I'm just not very strong. I lost a lot of strength in kind of my right side and I think it's caused some bad habits in my swing.

So really I think first just getting back and quit being stubborn and going to the doctor and kind of figuring out, OK, there's something wrong. Now trying to figure out how to get better is kind of the key. I'm still putting the puzzle pieces together.

They don't want me out there playing golf if I'm in pain, or making it worse. I've been trying to do a lot of PT and get a little stronger. I've had a couple of injections already. Just trying to put the puzzle pieces together and figure it out.

As I said, kind of the rest of this year I'll use hopefully to gain some momentum, figure out some things for '24. My goal in a perfect world, I could kind of hit the ground running, maybe be a little healthier in '24, maybe understand what my limitations are, what I can do and maybe see some positive things in my golf game.

Q. A few years ago, the year you won the tournament, you had mentioned that nobody hits the ball as far as they did in their 20s and 30s out here, it was the equipment that kind of -- you hit the ball as far as you ever have because of equipment.

JIM FURYK: For me personally, yes.

Q. OK, personally. Is that still the -- do you think with your back improving and --

JIM FURYK: No, no, I've lost the last -- when I was 50 I hit it every bit as far. In fact, the stats on Tour show when I was 49, 50, I think I averaged 281 yards on Tour, and my longest ever was 282. At my oldest, I was as long as I ever was off the tee on average. I haven't really lost any distance on my irons. Now three years later, and especially the last year and a half, I've lost distance and some speed.

You know, I think equipment's helped everyone whether you're 25 or whether you're 55, but there still are guys like Paddy Harrington, he's probably creating more speed now, clubhead speed than he ever was because he trains for it. There's some ways that guys know how to train to get stronger faster and create speed in their swing. You know, there's guys that really believe in that, Paddy's one of them. He's bombing it, he flies the ball 300 yards. You know, equipment obviously helps, but that's a good -- it's a good athlete and we have bigger, stronger athletes now as well.

Q. What's it like to play on a tree-lined course like Warwick Hills that has more of that old-school kind of feel to it?

JIM FURYK: Love it. It's what I grew up on. I grew up in eastern Pennsylvania, so playing a lot of tree-lined golf courses. For me, it kind of frames the hole for you, a lot of greens sloping back to front, trying to keep the ball below the hole.

Standing on -- I went to school in Arizona, so standing on say a desert golf course where there aren't a lot of trees and there's nothing vertical to frame a hole, it's a different look. It's something that took me a long time to get used to because I'm used to kind of having, we'll say, some goalposts on either side that you can kind of -- you can use as kind of a reference. It's easier to aim, I believe, and I think it makes you focus a little bit more on spots in fairways.

Q. I understand you're getting a little bit into golf course design?

JIM FURYK: Yeah.

Q. So Pete Dye is notorious for saying golf is not an easy game, why build an easy golf course. I understand your philosophy's a little different than that.

JIM FURYK: Pete made a great living and obviously one of the most famous architects of his era, if not the most famous. His golf courses were very difficult. I think they were deceiving to the eye, they made you uncomfortable. Most people did not come close to shooting their handicap on a Pete Dye golf course, but they tended to love that, and he kind of thrived on that as well.

I think one of the things that Mr. dye was so good at was tackling difficult pieces of property. TPC at Sawgrass was really a bunch of swampland, so he made something pretty darn good out of a very subpar piece of soil. That was kind of his claim to fame, moved a lot of dirt and moved stuff around.

I think when you're building a golf course, one, I like to have fun on the golf course. So what you said is true, I want to build a golf course that's fun to play not only for golf professionals or low handicappers, but that's a very minute, small amount of the golf population. So I think for a large part of the golf population to enjoy your golf course, it's got to be playable for everyone.

I think you see that even in a course like this at Warwick Hills. You can bring the best players and some Hall of Famers out here and we can have a tournament and it can be challenging, but I think your average member can get around this golf course and have a good time as well. I think that's key.

Also, I think when you're building a golf course what's most important is what does the owner want, what do the members want. You're building the golf course for someone, what do they want? I think when we're critical sometimes probably about architects as players, we're not really sure what was set out to happen originally. The owner may have said I want you to make the toughest, hardest, I don't care if it's fair or not, I want you to penalize the best players in the world, and they do sometimes.

But in the case of the design I'm doing, as you mentioned in Port St. Lucie, it's a project called Glynlea, it's a neighborhood that's kind of targeting 55 and over. The back tees are going to be 6,700 yards. I don't think we're going to have many people back there, right? We're going to have a lot of people that are playing 6,200 and forward. So we're keeping that in mind. With the homes that they're building, the folks that are building the golf course, they have a vision of how they want their golf course to play. It's my job to kind of take that vision and put it into the dirt and make a golf course that's really fun, challenging, but is accessible for a lot of different people.

So we're really keeping the forward tees in mind a lot. Too often the forward tees get shoved in bad areas, bad angles. We're trying to -- as the tees move forward, we're trying to make the shot maybe have a little bit better angle and be a little bit more accessible and let some folks have some fun.