

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 23, 2023

TIM O'NEAL



Q. Tim, thank you for joining us here at The Ally Challenge. This is your third week in a row at a tournament. How does it feel to be here this week?

TIM O'NEAL: It feels great. First time here. Well, first time to a lot of these courses, but first time here. The course is in great shape, the greens are perfect, and yeah, just can't wait to get the week started.

Q. Yesterday you played in the pro-am here at Warwick Hills. What are your thoughts on the golf course?

TIM O'NEAL: It's good. Rough's up a little bit. You have to drive it straight, it's definitely going to be important hitting the fairways and being able to spin the ball and get it closer to the flags. Yeah, I feel like if I drive it well, I should play well here.

Q. The fact that you're here is pretty darn cool, and quite a journey. Not everybody knows the Tim O'Neal story. Do you have an elevator speech version of how hard it was for you to get to this point?

TIM O'NEAL: Just perseverance, I guess. You know, I've played everywhere pretty much. For me to get through Q-School, ultimately probably the hardest to get through with five spots. Yeah, definitely great to be here.

Q. What did you do with all the years of "am I ever going to make it" thoughts and doubt? Because every golfer has doubts, but when you're trying to pursue it as a profession, those doubts can get kind of loud.

TIM O'NEAL: Yeah, absolutely, you definitely have doubts. You have your ups and downs, but you just keep going, and then believing in yourself that I could make it. I always believed in myself, and I still do, that's why I'm here now.

Q. Was there ever a time when you thought not going to happen?

TIM O'NEAL: Yeah, there was at one point, there was that time. I was in a pretty bad spot. Everyone knows it's expensive to play golf. Not really having the backing to really pursue it like I really wanted to and like you need to be able to play. But yeah, there was that one time where there was some serious doubt there because I wasn't able to afford to pay the entry fees and travel and all that stuff. Everything worked out.

Q. What got you through it?

TIM O'NEAL: Just believing. And things worked out in my favor, I was able to get some tournaments and play well, then kind of got things back on track.

Q. So you come in to The Ally Challenge, you have a couple tournaments under your belt, but you're still amongst people who have won a lot in this game. What's it like sharing a locker room with some of those names that you used to just watch on TV?

TIM O'NEAL: It's pretty cool. You know, playing with -- all these guys are really good out here. Watched them all my life playing the PGA TOUR, and for me to be out here playing with these guys now, happy for the opportunity to be able to tee it up with them.

Q. You want to beat 'em, but do you also find yourself kind of watching some of them and remembering what you've learned about them over the years?

TIM O'NEAL: Yeah. I mean, got a chance to play with Freddie last week, that was pretty cool. It's also, you know, playing with guys that you've watched play all your life and I'm out here teeing it up with them, so that's always a good thing for me.

Q. So in these early stages of your Champions Tour career, what does success look like?

TIM O'NEAL: Ultimately, I want to win. That's why I'm out here. I made it out here and I'm not here just to have fun and just kind of compete. I want to win. That's why I've worked really hard and still working hard trying to get parts of my game that are weak stronger because that's what it takes to win out here. These guys are really good.

Q. What part of this -- is parts of this course -- I know you only played it once, but parts of this course that really suit your style?

TIM O'NEAL: I mean, you have to drive it well here. I think hitting fairways is definitely going to be key. If you're -- if I'm driving it well, I think I'm going to have a little bit of an advantage to be able to hit shorter clubs into some of these holes, but you still have to make the putts. The greens are rolling really good. I think driving, go back to driving I think is definitely going to be a premium.

Q. Have you heard anything about this, The Ally Challenge, kind of as you were moving along? Did it have some kind of a reputation amongst the golfers?

TIM O'NEAL: No, I haven't personally. I mean, I know that the Buick used to be here as a PGA TOUR event, but that's about it.

Q. You talked about the Q-School and how grueling it is. We've heard stories over the years, you can go out and shoot a couple of 64s and not make it. Is it more competitive than what you thought it might be when you started that journey?

TIM O'NEAL: Q-School?

Q. Yeah.

TIM O'NEAL: Any Q-School you go to is never easy, but Champions Tour Q-School is only five spots, so you know you have to play well.

For me, I played well at the last two rounds to be able to get a spot. No matter if you're playing for 10, 15 spots, it's still hard, because you want to make it, you want to have a place to play the next year. That's what makes it tough, because if you don't make it, then you have to wait until the next year.

Q. You've been chasing this game all over the world, right?

TIM O'NEAL: Yes.

Q. What's the most far-flung, crazy location you competed in that you have memories of?

TIM O'NEAL: Probably Asian Tour, the Asian Tour. I had to go to India to play in New Delhi, just outside of New Delhi, so that was kind of crazy. Just the location and everything that goes along with that. Yeah, that was probably the furthest and craziest. I had to go to Thailand to get a visa and all that stuff before I went over there.

Q. You've got a book in there somewhere, right?

TIM O'NEAL: Maybe, maybe, yes. Yeah, that was probably the craziest. I had to go to Thailand to get like a visa to be able to go to India, something like that.

Q. You don't do all that unless this game is in your blood.

TIM O'NEAL: Absolutely.

Q. When did it first get into your blood? Who started you in golf?

TIM O'NEAL: My parents started me when I was like 5 years old and then from there just kind of always played.

Q. And your passport proves it.

TIM O'NEAL: Yes, totally.