



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: TOM WATSON

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

MODERATOR: Well, Tom, welcome. I know you've maybe just been idle for a little bit here. Maybe just catch us up on your health and --

TOM WATSON: Sure.

MODERATOR: -- maybe a little rundown of what exactly happened, and then we'll open it up for some questions.

TOM WATSON: Well, the answer to the question is I mowed too long. I was on the mower too long. I, you know, right after the match I came back home, did some mowing, and then a couple days later I didn't have any strength in my right hand, went to the doc, said it's a compressed nerve, compressed nerve caused the weakness in the right hand, said it will be two months, maybe a little longer, before you get strength back. And here I am. So I played a couple weeks ago in a tournament that I had in Kansas City and didn't play particularly well, but it seems like the strength has mostly returned and I'm ready to fire away again.

MODERATOR: Have you, I don't know, have you ever played at this course before? Have you had a chance to take a look at it?

TOM WATSON: No, and I've been remiss not to play here. This is one really, really good golf course. This is really an excellent test. It's fun to play. I mean, it's just from hole 1 to hole 18, it's just a lot of fun to play this golf course, and it's testing. The greens are contoured. They're big greens, but they play small. They're contoured. They if you miss the greens on the wrong side, you've got those vertical slopes to deal with and the bunkers. It has it's just a great combination of wonderful greens, skilled shots, beauty. It's just I can't say enough about it. I really, really like what Seth Raynor did here. Again, it's an unsung jewel, I think, in golf. People should wake up and realize what a great course this is because that's what it is.

MODERATOR: How about your schedule, you've got

TOM WATSON: I've got four more in a row after this. I'm playing against the kids at the Greenbrier Classic. Next week I represent them at the pro emeritus. Then the U.S. Senior Open at Indianwood up outside of Detroit. Then I go to both British Opens, the British Open at Royal Lytham St. Annes and Senior British Open at what's the name of that place? Turnberry I guess they call it, something like that.

MODERATOR: Questions. Jerry?

Q Tom, two questions. One, are there some birdie stretches out here you played yesterday, correct?

TOM WATSON: Um-hmm.

Q Are there some birdie stretches out here that maybe you need to take advantage of? And you mentioned Seth Raynor. Some of his trademark signature holes, just curious about your opinions of those, like the Alps hole and the Redan green, things like that?

TOM WATSON: Well, the golf course has such a variety to it. You know, you can that's what makes it wonderful, the variety of these greens here. Is there a birdie stretch? I don't know. I haven't played it enough to really kind of get comfortable with it yet. Hope I can get comfortable with it somewhat more today. One practice round doesn't get it, you know. I've tried to work on my golf swing which hasn't been in competition now for over two months, a real competition in two months, and I'm trying to learn the golf course, go for combinations. So it puts a tax on this old body and old mind of mine, but I'll find out more about the golf course. Actually I'm taking a camera out with me today to take some pictures of some of these green complexes because I like them so much. In my design business, these thoughts and green complexes should be reproduced. You know what they say, copying something is the sincerest form of flattery.

Q Tom, for all you've done in golf over your career, amazing career, congratulations. But in recent years everyone keeps talking about that great run you had at the British Open. Do you get tired of being asked about that? Just your thoughts on, you know, what would great (inaudible)?

TOM WATSON: No, I don't get tired of talking about it. It would have been better if I had won. But as I say, I scared the kids. I put a little fear, what's this old man almost on a gurney doing winning this golf tournament. Like Saturday Night Live said, Tom Watson, he's on a gurney, he's old enough but what I took from it was like any loss, it hurt, it hurt a lot. Like I said, it tears your guts out when you have it in your grasp and something goes wrong and it doesn't work.

But on the other side of the coin, what did become, what the response of people sent me, couple thousand letters, all the emails, a constant theme not a constant, but a pretty prevalent theme in those letters, you know, I was pulling for you because I'm of your age and I've quit on something in my life because I thought I was too old. You've given me the push to go and make it happen again. That I guess that's the one really nice or good theme that came from the loss. I guess, people ask me, you know, how does this tournament sit in year career? And I said, well, the one fortunate thing is that I've won enough times at the British Open that this loss wasn't the only time I had a chance to win. So in reality, if it was the only time, I think the loss, I would have taken it a lot harder than I did.

Q Tom, as a followup to that question, what is it that allows you, Greg Norman

the year before, almost does it in '08 and you do it in '09, what is it that you rely on or draw upon that allows you to get into that position on the last day in challenge like that when, you know, really your best days for the most part are behind you?

TOM WATSON: Well, I think there's a skill set there that we still have. It just doesn't work as consistently as it used to. The courses there are courses for horses. Turnberry was one of those courses that I felt that I could compete on. The advantage that I had playing there was that that was my sixth major championship there, and those kids, that was their first time at Turnberry. And they hadn't they played that golf course with a south wind in their practice rounds, all three practice rounds, and the wind turned to the northwest, completely changed the golf course. So they had to relearn the golf course. I played it in north winds. I didn't fare particularly well the second day starting out going into the really tough holes in the wind, but I brought it back and stayed within right there at the lead. But for a lot of those kids, you know, that course was new when it started on Friday. It was a new golf course, and they had to learn it. And I think it gave me somewhat of an advantage there.

Come on you kids, what do you want to ask? Are you Eagles? Are you eagle? You're an ace. Eagle, all right. How many years have you been in the first team?
(Inaudible.)

TOM WATSON: You worked up the ranks quickly, haven't you? Good. Come on, you've got to have a question. All right.

Q You obviously are sponsored by Adams Golf. Do you think that helps you a lot in the wind, especially on the other side of the pond when you play in the British Opens?

TOM WATSON: Well, the equipment probably doesn't help as much as your ability to hit the equipment. And Adams is a good, very good quality club and I've played it for many, many years. They've just been bought by TaylorMade and going to be soon to see how they evolve under the wings of TaylorMade and Adidas. The way you play in the wind over there is make every putt. People ask me why was I such a good place player, and I think the real reason was that I made more putts than the rest of them did.

Q Tom, what are your thoughts on this event being in Pittsburgh?

TOM WATSON: I hope they keep it here forever. It's a wonderful golf course. I am so impressed with it here at Fox Chapel. I feel remiss not ever having played this golf course. I've heard about it, but I've never played it. It's a great test. Both Corey Pavin and I said yesterday, we were at the sponsors party over there at the Heinz center. He made the comment, and I agreed with him 100 percent, he said when I finished 18, the 18th hole, I wanted to go start playing again. That's the true measure of a great golf course, whether you want to go continue. I just don't want to stop playing. And that, to me, I'm a few feet over this because it is really a great test of golf. I hope we keep it here. Hope that Constellation Energy and Fox Chapel can come to terms and keep it here for the foreseeable future because this is a wonderful event.

Q Tom, over the years, the Champions Tour has evolved in a lot of ways, and right now there's a lot of good players who are in their early 50s, like Fred Couples is 52, I think in a year or so Vijay Singh will be eligible. Davis Love is coming up pretty soon. Just your thoughts on the quality of talent on this tour right now and what do you see in the future for this tour?

TOM WATSON: Well, the advantage our Champions Tour has over the regular tour is that the rookies who come on the tour, you know their names. You really do. And it's always the story every year, every year it's the same story. Can the new name player, the guy that has the best resume, when he plays the senior tour, can he dominate? Then you always have the sidelight of this, the stories of the player that you never you basically never heard of who come out and win tournaments and do well out here. They are a story unto themselves. You have, you know, a dual story line going on out here on the Champions Tour. I think that's what keeps I think that's what keeps the sponsors interested in helping us out here and sponsoring golf tournaments. And we older fellows know how to service the sponsors better than the young kids frankly. We know which side of the bread is buttered, and we know that, you know you know, we go out and play in proams today, trying to help the guys out, trying to help them with their golf games, you know, trying to get to know them, whereas some of the kids maybe not they don't do that as much. They're out there, kind of the high strung racehorses, they're out there just to compete and compete only.

Q I know today you'll be playing with amateurs. In the past has playing with amateurs benefited you? Have you had experiences that you've learned from them, things like that?

TOM WATSON: Yeah, playing with the amateurs, if you let it, playing with the amateurs does benefit you from strictly the way the golf course plays. You can see where the amateurs hit it. Sometimes they hit it in the wrong places and you say, I don't want to be there. You know, you look at the shots that they have and say, huhuh, stay from here. The other part of it is I try to help them read the greens, get a feel for the breaks and understanding the greens. Yeah, the flags aren't in the same places they'll put it in the tournaments, but being able to read the greens, the breaks, and the speed, you know, when you're helping your amateurs do that, you're helping yourself.

Q Can we just talk a little bit about your confidence level coming into this week, how you're feeling? Do you think you're going to do pretty well this week?

TOM WATSON: Well, I don't know how my confidence level is yet. I made a slight adjustment on the golf swing before I came here, and it seems like I'm hitting a few really good shots. Consistency is certainly not there, so I'm not sure about how I'm going to be playing this week. Again, every playing golf, every golf shot is a tournament in itself. And when it's all said and done after that round is over, you take an assessment of, you know, okay, how did I play today? You think of the shots you hit very well, but you also think of the shots you didn't hit well. They didn't come off the way you wanted to and you ask yourself why? And you go to the practice tee and you work on that. I hope I don't have to ask myself too many whys this week, but I'm

prepared for it if I do.

Q Tom, would you typically play two practice rounds before a 72hole event or is part of that because of your inactivity?

TOM WATSON: No, two is the minimum. These are like, for a new golf course, three is the more practice rounds you play, the better. But everybody is kind of in the same boat here on this golf course. They're playing two, maybe three practice rounds. I'm not sure how many guys got here on Monday to play. So if the wind shifts to the south, it will be a new golf course. These long par 4s we're playing downwind right now, we'll be playing into the wind. Can't get to 18. That's sort of you know, the golf course will change. So like I said at Turnberry, nobody really has an advantage here unless somebody has played here a bunch of times.

Q Tom, one other question about 17, the Biarritz green. Is it worse when the pin is up or back?

TOM WATSON: Back, it's the longer shot. And the other thing about that green, the green cants from right to left. Most of these greens have a cant to them, which is beautiful. I love it. It's the basic plate of the green has a slight has a cant to it. Percent, maybe even up to two percent slope, which is a lot for speedy greens. Then you have the bumps, humps, ridges, and things like that in these greens and you've got a great set of greens, really good. I built a Biarritz green like that. I did it at Loch Lloyd in Belton, Missouri, outside of Kansas City, but I made the bottom of it pinnable as well. I widened the bottom. I wanted to make sure you had three distinct areas you could hit it to. It's a neat green. I used to play in Hawaii, the fourth hole at Wailea was that way, always liked that green. It was they always three of the four rounds, they always had it back, so you kind to carry it up on top and hold it. One of them they had at the front of the downslope there, you know, just made you think. I like that design.

Q Tom, the temperature is supposed to increase as the weekend goes on. Does that change your approach as to how you start off the tournament, how you go through?

TOM WATSON: Not really, no. The warmer it is for old bones, the better?

MODERATOR: All right.

TOM WATSON: Thank you very much.