

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: FRED COUPLES
Wednesday, June 26, 2013



Q. Fred, maybe just get us started about coming back to Fox Chapel for this event, coming off, what, two straight 2nds, I guess, the last two events.

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, well, it's nice to be back here. It was fun last year. It was hot, the course was awesome and I hear it's even better this year. For us as players, we enjoy playing courses that are as good as this, so we're lucky to be here. Last year I finished 2nd here, too, to Joe Daley, who I played with the last day. He played great. And for me personally I didn't play Monday or Tuesday and got in and was expecting to get in more today, so I'll play 9 and hopefully the weather will hold off and I can practice for a couple hours after. But I like the course and that's really about it as far as playability. I'm looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. How about the overnight rain, how might that change the way the course plays?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it will be longer. If it gets hot, the rough will grow faster, which is good. I think it's a major, so it should play hard. There's a lot of wedge shots in here that are tricky and you're going to have to -- like the people who watch, they talk about at Merion where you hit it up by the pin and it will spin away. Not so much the slope of the greens here but just the big slopes where they go up and down. So you get on a ridge and it looks like you hit a good shot, you spin it a little too much, it will trickle and it will roll 40 feet away from the hole, so that will make it harder, a lot harder. When you have greens like this, I like them rock hard so you can bounce them up there. Maybe once in a while you'll get it too far and it'll bounce over the green but at least that way you get used to it. Like I said, I didn't play yesterday, I'll play a few holes today, and then tomorrow, if we keep getting rain, it will just be wet and long.

Q. Watson was talking about the fact that if the rain alters the course, it gives long hitters like yourself some advantage, but also to soften these greens, it will make them more receptive?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I think on this particular course -- length helps on any course. Like last week I had a great last round and when I was going over it, I hit every fairway. If I can hit every fairway, I had better be shooting under par. When I start driving it in the rough, then you scramble a little bit. So length is an advantage for anybody, but if you're a short hitter, this is not a course that's really, really long. It's got some good holes, it's got a lot of short holes. I think it's more you have to really be able to hit shots and I'm going to pay more attention, although I'm only going to play 9 holes, but to second shots versus driving. For me, if I go out and drive it well, I'm going to hit more fairways than normal. If I don't, then I have to pay attention

out of the rough, getting it on the greens and then go from there. But I don't think this is a course that length is a huge factor, but if you're a long hitter and you drive it well, any course will play easier.

Q. Montgomerie is making his debut on this Tour this week. When you started playing on this Tour, did you think immediately this is just -- it would be an easy transition? Did you think, I'm going to come in and dominate? Or did you think, hey, look, since you played with these guys for so long, you knew they could play, but is there an inherent advantage to being the new guy on this Tour?

FRED COUPLES: Well, there's a few questions that you asked. The one that I heard was dominate. You know, I don't think anyone comes in here and thinks they're going to dominate. I think they think they're the right age. No, I don't think -- for me, I'll speak for me, when I turned 50, I don't think once or twice a year I had a chance of really winning events when I was 48 or 49 years old, and I would say from what I remember, Colin's probably in the same boat but he still plays very, very well.

So when you play well and you play on the regular Tour like at Muirfield, you can finish 40th and play well. You're out of your element no matter who you are. Colin Montgomerie is a Hall of Famer, he's a seven-time champ, but when you go play in Europe when you're 49 years old, you're not one of those guys that can feel like you dominate. So when you come out here, it's a breath of fresh air.

You can look at Rocco. He won his first tournament and I don't think he's struggled since, but he's not saying, it's not as easy as I thought, he's probably just not swinging well and that's what happens. For Monty, I would think this would be a great start for him. It's a perfect course, he drives it like a machine. But I think anyone out here would tell you if they're being interviewed that he's going to be a huge factor in this Tour and he's going to be great for this Tour.

Q. You kind of answered it already, but when you got here you talked about a breath of fresh air. Can that rejuvenate a player sort of, new guys to play against and maybe the courses are set up a little bit differently? Can it be something that sort of puts your game together?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it's fun to shoot low scores, so I think when you get to be a certain age where you are on the cusp and you're on the regular Tour, European Tour for three or four years and you're shooting 69 is a great score. I mean, you come out here, there are tournaments where you get it going you shoot 64, 65 and that's a lot of fun. You don't shoot many of those when you're 48 or 49 years old, but on this Tour it's set up for good scoring on some courses, and then like a course like this, you know, with the rough up and if the greens were hard, you know, 69 or 68 is a hell of a score. But I think scoring tomorrow, no wind, it might be a little lower than that.

But it's all irrelevant. You've got to shoot what you shoot. I do like the fact that it's four rounds. Like last week, I never played the course and I got going a little more and I felt better on the course. I hit the ball better on Sunday than I did on Friday, that's why I shot better, but I kind of liked the course, whereas I've played five rounds here and feel like I know this course and I like 72-hole tournaments.

Q. Could you talk about the appeal -- I know this is asked a lot, but the appeal of the Champions Tour and this tournament? 10 World Golf Hall of Famers are in this field and many of the dominant names from the past couple decades are now moving into this Tour and that's great for the fans.

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, well, I mean the big appeal for me is I'm playing with all my buddies. If you're on the outside looking in, if you're a fan, the big appeal is that in my opinion we all still play very, very well. I mean, a lot of guys will go play a tournament or two on the regular Tour. You know, I don't think anyone embarrasses themselves. I think if they make the cut and they play pretty well, they make a nice little check, and if they miss the cut, they're missing it by a shot or two. So there are guys out here that would like to play the regular Tour at the age of 50. Vijay Singh's turned 50, he's not coming out here. Kenny Perry bounced around. I physically can't do it. This is great for me where I can practice a little bit and I don't have to worry about a huge schedule because the tournaments are kind of spread apart here.

But the people watching, I think when you go watch Tom Watson play, I mean, I played two years ago with Tom Watson when I turned 50 and I've never seen a guy play like that. It was Seattle at the U.S. Open and he hit every shot absolutely perfect. I just played on the regular Tour with Keegan Bradley and Tiger Woods at the Memorial and that's another league. They hit it so far and so solid, so you get all of it. On this Tour you get guys that have a huge resume and are good players and fun to watch.

Q. You talk about (inaudible) and a year ago you were (inaudible) fitness was the key but beyond the fitness it was really the greens, how well they putted. Talk about the greens. Could be a major factor again this year whether it rains --

FRED COUPLES: Sure, they're great greens. The greens, I mean, like last week, the greens, it was a great course, real short, real tight, very small greens. The most important thing was getting them on the green. If you missed the green, you'd struggle because they're so small.

Then you come here, the greens are a little bigger but they have a lot of slope. So you have to pay attention, you have to have good feel on where to hit a putt and where to take a slope and roll down there. I only played with Joe on Sunday and he putted very well, hit the ball well.

So that's a good point that he said or you said, that getting the feel, whether it's raining every day or if it's hard and fast, these are, I think, hard greens to get the feel of because they're tricky. There's a lot of slope out there. Another thing is a lot of times you'll hit a good shot -- I can't think of a few of the holes back here, but you can hit a wedge that starts to spin and catches a slope and it will go 40 feet from the hole. That's something that you're going to have happen, you just have to suck it up.

There are other holes -- for instance, par 5s you can reach in two, you can drive the 7th green. So, you know, it gives you everything here, but you have to have a lot of patience and you've got to really get to know the greens. The greens are tough.