



PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: FRED COUPLES
Thursday, August 22, 2013

DAVE SENKO: Fred, thanks for coming in and welcome back to Seattle. Maybe just get us started. You had a chance to see the course today, maybe how it looks and maybe how things are coming into this week.

FRED COUPLES: Well, I say it every year, the course is beautiful, it's in perfect shape. The greens, which I like, they're firm and fast and I did not have the pace of them at all today, and tomorrow I'll be playing, you know, 1:00, so it will be a lot faster, probably firmer. Forgetting last year, the other years I felt like I played the course pretty well except for a couple holes, and there are other holes that I heard people talk about that they struggle on and I seem to do well on those. I just need to pay attention to play some of these holes better to shoot 1 better than I normally do. My goal's always to play well.

I've had three weeks off. It's been a little better practice in the three weeks than I usually have because it's important for me to come up here and play well, so I have played a little bit of golf. By getting in the regular Open or British Open, that gave me like four out of five weeks to play, and I chose not to go to Dick's to play, so three weeks is enough to get a little rusty on. Tomorrow will be a big day to get off to a good start. If I do, then I feel like I'll get a little confidence and get going.

The golf course is great. I think all the players love it. Obviously since I've been on this Tour playing here we've had very good weather. It is in August, you should get good weather, but everyone always talks about weather up here and it's never been a problem and the course is perfect.

Q. Fred, I think you played five tournaments in the Seattle area and you haven't won, you came close. I know this is not as great as the Masters, but from your comments in the past you really want to win here in front of family and friends, don't you?

FRED COUPLES: Well, yeah, yeah, I would love to win this tournament. It better happen in the next two or three years because after that I might be slowing down to just a slasher of the ball. In all the times I've really hurt my back, I mean I skipped Augusta one year but I didn't hurt myself at Augusta, but that was as big a bummer as I've ever had because I was playing really, really well, and not because I thought I was going to win but I was playing really well and it's a touch embarrassing to me. I mean, you hurt yourself, you hurt yourself, but you come all the way up here and you get ready to play and people are driving in cars to the course and I was driving away from the golf course, so it was a little weird. It took a couple months to get over that. I played at the end of the year and I felt like I lost a little bit of the scoring touch to be

honest with you. I've had a few chances to win this year and there have been a couple key shots every single time that have been mediocre at best. I haven't whiffed one or shanked it in a hazard or done anything, but I'll be cruising around, I'll know it's an important shot and I don't hit it quite right and end up losing by a stroke and I just feel like you've got to get back into winning rhythm. I think Kenny Perry is in a winning rhythm. It took him a while, I don't know why, it's not that easy to win anywhere, and now he's going to be a force for however long he wants to be really. It's just hard to win a tournament. This one, I don't tee off tomorrow making it any harder but I do want to win, so that's my roundabout way of trying to win this thing.

Q. What's it like going to the Hall of Fame and having Jim Nantz introduce you? What was that like?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, that was a thrill. As soon as I got that call I actually called Jimmy that night and said you're my guy. There were a few other people, Paul Marchand, my teacher, could have done it. My brother could have done it, probably wouldn't have wanted to. But I think Jim was perfect and it was nice. Obviously then I think a month later Kenny Venturi was then voted in, too, and he was going to do his speech also. It was a great night, I had a lot of friends there. I was there for two and a half days, I guess, and it was a thrill.

Q. Fred, in your unfortunate history with back trouble, how bad was last year? Was that maybe the worst experience for you?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it's like really the third time, fourth time it's ever happened like that. The very first time I was on the range at Doral warming up probably 20 minutes before my tee time and I was in 2nd place playing in the last group and I tried to play. I didn't go on the course but I was in the training room with my teacher. I said, Paul, I've got to go play, and I tried to get off the massage table and I couldn't move.

So here as I was walking down to my ball, I told my caddie, There's no way I can play, there's no way I can play. If there was film on it, as soon as we got down there, he picked my ball up. So then I was either going to take a two-shot penalty and try and chip it, and he says, Well, if you can't play, then why are we wasting our time? But I said, Well, why did you make me walk all the way down here if you're going to pick my ball up? So that's my story.

But it happened in Tampa and I stayed in Tampa, I was in John's house until the next Thursday and I didn't really -- Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday I just laid in bed and he brought food and I tried to get up a little bit, and it just gets so locked up that just putting your foot on the ground is like excruciating pain. A lot of it had to do with the drive home in the car and then when I tried to get out, it was worse. But it would have been the same anyway. Then it just becomes a process of laying flat and letting it thaw out and getting on some medicine. A few weeks after that I was

able to walk around a little bit and then a couple weeks after that I started hitting balls. It's usually six to eight weeks and then I'm okay so far.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the rookie crop this year and kind of what your impressions have been from year to year, getting better?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it's usually the same guys that you pay attention to until the rookies come on. I think Rocco won his first tournament, is that correct, and Esteban Toledo. You might want to help me out with a couple other guys.

DAVE SENKO: Elk, Monty.

FRED COUPLES: Elk, who's a great, great player every week and now Colin Montgomerie the last month, month and a half. So those are all top players that played on the regular TOUR and fought in majors and won majors and know how to play. I honestly believe this Tour is a really strong, sharp Tour, fun to play.

To be honest with you, I didn't know, I thought maybe I would try and play really, really hard for three or four years and if I started winning, could win as many as I could, which could be two, three, five, 10, and then kind of just slow down. And I'm kind of going the other way, I'm having so much fun that I don't want to play -- when I say as hard as I can, meaning when I'm home practice and play, play a few more tournaments. I want to play a smaller schedule now so I can maybe play until I'm 60. Tom Watson and the Hale Irwin stuff, those are two in a lifetime really. But other guys, I just know my body and that's really how I've changed because it is really fun. I kind of thought I might miss the regular TOUR when I was 50, but not really at all because when you're out there playing your best and at the end of the week you finish -- maybe you finish in the Top 10 a couple times, 20 times or 18 times, it's nice but it's really not for me. I thought it might be, but I would rather play out here.

I think Vijay is way better than I was when I was 50, I think he could come out here and dominate but he's still playing extremely well on the regular TOUR. Davis Love I think is going to maybe do the same. But I think when they come out here, like I don't think Vijay's ever played a Champions -- so he's never even played out here, may not. But Davis will probably bounce back and forth a little bit and he'll enjoy it and that's the same view I have. They're great players and I couldn't tell you who's coming on the Tour in the near future. It's not because I don't care, I just don't know. You might tell me --

DAVE SENKO: Scott Verplank.

FRED COUPLES: There you go, Scott Verplank, I know Davis.

Q. Do they bring a new energy?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, if Davis Love played out here next year, he would bring great energy to this Tour, no doubt.

Q. Are you still doing the Germany treatments?

FRED COUPLES: I went last year and I'm not name pinching it, but I take this Anatabloc and I just went and had some more results and they're even down lower, which is really for inflammation in my body. The guy in Germany is the one who told me about that. I mean, your back can be your back but my whole body, I'm always stiff. It's not really arthritic yet, but I probably won't see him. I might go in January but it's really, for me, unless I really hurt myself, it will be every 14 to 18 months I'll go in. It's a very easy procedure. I like to go to Germany to see him. They do do it in another spot in LA, but I think it's so key to go where I went the first time because I could not have felt any better.

Q. (Question about captain's picks.)

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, are any of my guys doing any good?

DAVE SENKO: It's been raining.

FRED COUPLES: Well, from number probably 8 to 16, I mean, all kinds of things could happen. Jordan Spieth's making a huge move for a one-year point getter. Furyk's played great of late. Webb's kind of slipped out a little bit. Stricker is maybe 11th. Bubba slipped a little bit. All those guys have played a lot, so those are really the names that I have. I could go 11th and 12th, it's my last time so I don't take any pressure at all, and they would probably want to know that but I don't think I'll probably take that way out but I think they'll all be right there. No surprises. I mean, I'm an old school guy, I think what I see, I like. The rest of the eight or nine guys are extremely strong and it's just these -- it's never really been like that, those five or six guys from 9 to 15 are deep. Dustin Johnson's another one, Zach Johnson, they're so bunched up that there's no reason for me to jump the gun just yet and tell anyone I'm looking at them, I think they all know.

Q. In retrospect, it's pretty amazing that your decision two years ago (inaudible regarding Tiger Woods.)

FRED COUPLES: Well, it's valid because I think everyone was, you know, kind of picking on all kinds of things. When I talked to him way back when, I said you're my guy. If you hurt your knee and you didn't play for eight months, I would still pick you. We're not going to rehash that. I understand you're hitting one drive over there and one drive over there, but when nitty gritty comes to town, I will tell he's my all-time favorite player and I knew he would be ready. I think if there was another guy maybe hurt himself, Hunter Mahan, who was leading a tournament had to go because his baby, he would have got points there, you know, these guys have other things to do

and I have a lot of faith in all that stuff. So if Hunter finished 11th, I probably would pick him, it would be that easy.

So it's not -- for me, they're different choices. Whatever Ryder Cup captains do or whatever they do is their business, I just have a feel for a certain amount of players and I go with that. But I didn't think that was a real tough pick last year. He played very well and he's played well since.

Q. Do you get the final vote or is there a consensus of two or three people?

FRED COUPLES: No. I haven't talked to Davis as much because he's playing. It's just kind of a weird thing that when he's out there performing, I know you don't have to be a rocket scientist to go hit a driver off the first tee, but Jay and I've been talking a lot and Jay's been my captain for two years. But I'll go to Phil and I'll go to Tiger, and normally it would be Stricker and Furyk, but they're both, I think they're both on the outside, so I'll talk to Phil. So it will be four, five of us with Jay and then the other two guys, so we'll bounce it around. I'm going to talk to Phil tonight, he's got a couple ideas. He sees these guys. He's not bashful, and neither is Tiger, to say hey, look, this guy needs to play on the team, he deserves it. But that doesn't mean I'm going to pick them. But they see it every week and they know if a guy's a great player and wants to be on the team so bad that it's affecting his point spot and if he finished 11th they feel like it would have been better if there was no Presidents Cup to worry about. So it just comes that way to me, I like hearing from all those guys.

Q. But then you make the final decision?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, pretty much I sit there and name the two guys. You can't go wrong.

Q. What's that like?

FRED COUPLES: It's a weird day. It's the 4th of September, I think that's a Wednesday because Boston ends on a Monday and they don't have a Tuesday I think in case there's a rainout, so it's Wednesday that's either the 4th or 5th of September.

Q. Does the course ever factor in?

FRED COUPLES: That's the only thing I've looked at. I've looked at about 10 guys and how they've played at Memorial. For instance, Dufner, who I text and talk to all the time, love the guy to death, he's never made a dime at Memorial, he doesn't even play. This year he didn't play Memorial and I said, Are you crazy, you're not going to play there and you want to be on the team? He laughs, and then finally he wins the PGA and he said, Am I on your team now? I texted back, You should ask Keegan that, because Keegan won the PGA and I didn't pick him. But Duf's in the top, Duf's

on the team, he's in the Top 10 and he'll stay there. But you've got to bring them down, these punks. You can't let them win, that's for sure.

Q. If you made him mad, would you know it?

FRED COUPLES: You know what, I've been on a lot of Ryder Cup teams and Presidents Cup teams, you're only mad with yourself. I've never seen anyone else really get mad. If they do, they work harder, they go practice or putt. I've had more fun being a captain, which has only been twice, than on any team and that's not because I don't want to deal with -- it's fun to watch what these 12 guys do and how they do it. Steve Stricker, most mild mannered guy in the world, so frustrated after the Ryder Cup, you would think he'd never want to play again and he changes his schedule and he bounces back and he plays great every single week. And you get a guy like Tiger who wants to win so bad and when he loses he wants to take it out on anybody and everybody, whether it's in ping pong or gin or the next day on the course or whatever. Then you get guys like Dufner who's only been on one team, last year at the Ryder Cup, everyone loved him and they all want him on the team. He was someone that I thought I might pick if he finished high up there and I told him I was very proud of him and so happy to have him on the team, because not many guys really, really know but he's very funny.

Q. Is he the life of the party off the course?

FRED COUPLES: In a prodding way. I mean, I don't know what he does, I don't know if he's a partier or not, but his texting and tweeting has become a big deal. They have fun with each other. I'm not a Tweeter, Twitter, so I don't know, but they have fun. He and Keegan go at it.

All right, we'll see you tomorrow.