

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: FRED COUPLES
Friday, November 1, 2013



MARK WILLIAMS: Fred Couples, thanks for joining us, leader after 36 holes by 2 over Peter Senior at the Charles Schwab Cup Championship, another 65 to go with yesterday's. Just give us a quick summary of your round today and then we'll go through the birdies and bogeys.

FRED COUPLES: You know, it was another good round obviously. I hit the ball solid and I made a few putts. And, you know, it's not like you fly around here and shoot those scores, but it's a good round by Peter and then I just am trying to make as many birdies as I can. I know I'm going to make some bogeys, today I didn't, but if I can keep birdieing a lot of holes because I'm hitting the ball very, very well, then I'll be okay.

MARK WILLIAMS: Bogey-free today and you made 15 birdies in two days. Just run quickly through your birdies.

FRED COUPLES: Well, I hit out of the right rough on No. 2, but it hit the path a few times so I had a very short number to the hole and I punched an 8-iron, ran it up to about four feet and made it for birdie.

MARK WILLIAMS: No. 6?

FRED COUPLES: 6, I had a good drive and a 7-iron to about eight feet for birdie. No. 7, hit a sand wedge to about eight feet and I got it up and down from short of the 8th hole and made a nice par. Then hit it on to about 12 feet on No. 9 and two-putted for birdie. Then on 10, hit two wood up in the bunker and blasted out to about 12 feet and made it for birdie. I think that's it until 16, I hit a good sand wedge and spun it back off the bowl to about six feet.

MARK WILLIAMS: The par-saving putt on No. 8.

FRED COUPLES: No. 8 was about five, six feet. And then 18 was another five- or six-footer.

MARK WILLIAMS: Playing with Pete Senior tomorrow, I don't think you've played with him this year.

FRED COUPLES: No, but I've played with him a bunch, yeah. I love playing with Peter, he's very funny, very fast, and we're flying. I don't know, what time is it? I've been done for 10 minutes? We're flying around. I wish we could do this -- I think we're flying. Maybe we're still playing slow, I don't know, but it seems like we're running. Tomorrow even though we're in the last group, I enjoy playing with Peter,

he's got his son caddying and he's just a good guy.

Q. (Inaudible)

FRED COUPLES: No, they're cutting around, we're going straight lines hopefully.

Q. What did you hit on 9?

FRED COUPLES: A 4-iron.

Q. And is that the best example or is another hole an example where your power really helps on this course?

FRED COUPLES: No, I think there's a few holes and there are a few holes where you've got to get it in play off the tee. But No. 9 -- I have hit a couple really good drives on No. 11. I had a wedge in there today, or 12, excuse me, 12. And then 14 up the hill, I've hit two good drives. Anytime if I hit a good drive I'm going to go with shorter clubs, but there are some really long holes out there that -- No. 6 I birdied, you know, so I hit a very good drive and I had a 7-iron left so that's a lot easier to be hitting than a 5-iron.

Q. Did you hit wedge on 12?

FRED COUPLES: I did, yeah. That's as far as I've ever hit a drive there. The fairways are firming up, but when I draw -- you've got to hook the ball off the tee and I pulled it off and I had 135 yards, which, you know, if I could take that drive every day, I would play the hole a lot better.

Q. Best drive this year?

FRED COUPLES: No, on that hole. I had a good drive yesterday and had 8-iron. But again, I don't know that we've ever played -- the American Express, this place was like concrete but that was so long ago I don't remember anything about it, but it's firm. Even though it's lush and green looking, the fairways are firmer than normal. It's beautiful.

Q. You're right, you were flying around. What does it do to your mentality, the psyche, the approach when you're playing without delay, moving right along? Can you talk about what that does to how you play the game?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it goes both ways. If I was 1-under par out there and in 25th place, I would still be playing fast and I probably wouldn't be paying much attention to what I'm doing, just playing. When you're in the lead or near the lead, playing fast is a bonus. But we're in twosomes; if we're not playing fast, we're never going to play fast. I think it will even get quicker over the weekend as people separate. The mojo

out there is really what you're doing and I've played pretty well for two days. I drove it in the right rough on No. 1, I drove it in the right rough on No. 2, but it was nothing to sit there and worry about. I've hit really solid shots, and when I hit really good irons I've made the birdie putts pretty much.

Q. How's the neck?

FRED COUPLES: You know, it's the same, it's okay, it's doable.

Q. Fred, how much would you like to get a win to have at least one win in the season?

FRED COUPLES: Well, if I won it would be the least only win, so it's my last chance. It's a big event. There's the Top 30 players but they're all the best players on the Tour and I want to win, there's no doubt. I certainly am not playing better this week because I want to win. I want to win at Birmingham and Seattle and Chicago and Newport and everywhere else I finished 2nd.

I need to practice and play. I practiced a little bit before San Antonio and then I went there and I made an 8 on the 1st hole from 65 yards from the middle of the fairway. I don't think -- if there was anything such as a brain freeze to make an 8, but it kind of threw the whole week off. I just kept playing and working on my swing and I'm doing well here, but I need to practice, I really do. I can't sit around and expect to come out. And then my goal, as I said, I might be kidding myself but I'm going to try and play more because if I'm going to do this, I know I can win out here, I've done it the first couple years, and lollygagging around, if you're playing well, you need to win. I'm not saying it's easy, but you asked the question and my goal is to win here. If I don't, I pretty much will be ready for next year.

Q. To expand on an earlier question about length off the tee, is that more of an advantage on the Champions Tour? Does power matter more out here?

FRED COUPLES: Well, it helps me. I mean, I'm not going to slow Fred Funk down or Peter Senior tomorrow. I should outdrive Peter Senior, but if I'm standing there leaning on my bag and he's hitting 7-iron 10 feet and I've got at 9-iron, it's an advantage for me. So when I go play, if you get down to six or seven holes and there's a par 5 where I can -- a perfect example was at Birmingham. I drove it a hundred miles down there and David Frost, who's an incredible driver of the ball, pushed it a little bit and it rolled up by the lip of a bunker and he blasted out with a wedge and I had a 3-iron, I hit it literally 60 yards to the right of the hole, so that wasn't too big of an advantage. I wish I would have had a 3-wood into the green, it's my favorite club. But advantage is it's your own game. If I go out and putt really well tomorrow, I'm going to shoot a good score.

Q. Are the courses on the Champions Tour more conducive to if you have

power --

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, I mean, if I go out and hit really good drives and play pretty well, I'm going to shoot better scores than if I was a shorter hitter. You could ask someone else. Like I like Harding Park, someone else might not like it here and they might be shooting 70-69 and playing just as well. I particularly think this is one of my all-time favorite courses so that helps, too. But as far as length, I've been long my whole life and it's really how I play. I don't really look at it as going out there tomorrow, the length is going to give me an advantage. If I hit every fairway, I'll have an advantage all right over my normal game.

Q. What is it about Harding Park that you like so much?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I think it's A, I grew up on a public course and I know how many rounds they get and how a golf course can kind of get picked on even though it's really a nice course. I think this one, you know, they closed it for a week I heard, they did everything to make us have the best playing facility we can and it is and I think that has a lot to do with it.

If you're a golf nut, you just go out, you look at the holes and some of the bunkering is a little bit outdated. If the bunkers were pushed up another 40 yards where we're hitting it, this course would be a lot harder, but it's not and I try and hit it as far as I can. If I'm in the rough, I'm short a club, there's that advantage again to try to stop it on the greens, but I think it's a really, really fun course for everyone to play. You can be a 20 handicap and get it around or you can be a TOUR player, and there are a lot of guys shooting 70s and 69, which I think are great scores but it's not like oh, my God, they're tearing up Harding Park. It's a tough little course.

Q. (Inaudible)

FRED COUPLES: It's a lot shorter and easier but it's public, it's similar there, and they get 90,000 rounds a year. It's really short. The similarity is there's trees down the right and left, they gobble up your balls and the greens are really small. Most courses in Seattle the greens are teeny. That's another thing here, the greens are really small. I don't know, it's just nice. The Cypress trees are spectacular.

Q. Forgive me for prying a little bit about the neck, but you say it's doable. Is that when you play there are moments when you have a little twinge or --

FRED COUPLES: No, no, never. It's just uncomfortable and sometimes when you turn, you snag it. It's more at night when you're laying down, it's kind of like when my back kills me, I don't sleep very much. But to swing a club, I wouldn't be playing if it hurt to swing, it would be dumb to play. I'm going to get it looked at Monday as soon as I get home and I hope it's not much. Something's going on where it's really uncomfortable but not to swing.

Q. How many drivers have you hit the first two days, how many holes?

FRED COUPLES: I'll tell you where I don't hit it. I don't hit it on 7.

Q. (Inaudible)

FRED COUPLES: No, there's nowhere to go. 7 and 16. I hit a 3-wood on 18 today because it's playing so short. I hit a 3-wood on 14. Is that the little dogleg left? 15, 15, 16 and 18 I hit 3-woods.

Q. Today?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. Yesterday I hit driver on 18.

Q. When you talk about coming back after not playing much, there's a mental rust there too as well as physical rust, isn't there?

FRED COUPLES: I'm not going to beat myself up but I always have mental rust, my whole career honestly. 20 years ago I could take a month off and not touch a club and the second week after playing be ready to really, really compete. Now, if I take a month off, it's like all of a sudden I never played before. So then I have to practice a little bit. And I don't play that much out here so I don't want to just -- like last week, now again if I didn't make an 8 on the 1st hole I might be up near the leaders but I did make an 8. That's not my idea of fun on the Champions Tour is to finish 25th. When that happens, then I'll figure out what to do. By not playing I just throw myself -- if someone says are you going to win the Schwab Cup, I would have to have the greatest year ever because I'm going to play 14 times where some guys are going to play 22 times and some of those guys are Kenny Perry and Bernhard Langer, who dominate. So it's a little bit of a goal and that's really what -- my goal is not to win the Schwab Cup because I think it's impossible.

Q. What's the most events you think you could win with your back?

FRED COUPLES: This year I played Augusta, LA and Memorial, 13 out here, so that's 16. There's 52 weeks, I'm playing 16 of them. Wow, I'm really killing myself. 20 would be a lot. But I'm going to play Riviera and Augusta, so 18 Champions Tour events, I think that's pretty good. And if I do well and keep going, I could play like the SAS and Hickory, which would push it to 20.

The Presidents Cup kind of gave me a great option not to play, although I did play the week before at the First Tee, which was a blast. Then I probably didn't play one of those two in Carolina, so maybe I would have played one more. But I'll be honest, I'm never disappointed playing out here. I've been doing it for 33 years and it's important, but when I play it's important to play well, but it's really not important for me to hit balls

for me when I'm home. And there's a lot of guys that don't. They play enough to keep them busy.

Q. Unrelated to every other question here, have you ever worn a golf glove?

FRED COUPLES: One time. Someone will have a picture of me wearing a glove in the long drive contest at Southern Hills in Tulsa. Ray Floyd won, 1982, yeah. It's a great story, I'll tell it real quick. Back then if you were on the Top 5 on the PGA TOUR in driving, you were automatically in the long drive. Back then it was "Big Cat" Williams, remember him? Bobby Wilson was there. It was on the range, it's 400 degrees and you hit a couple, then you wait. I made it to the finals and I'm sweating so bad I couldn't hold onto the club. So you're there and you hit three real quick. So I borrowed a glove and someone actually -- I've seen the picture of me hitting a golf ball with a glove on, it will be the only one ever.

Q. Why don't you use one?

FRED COUPLES: Personally, I don't know how people play golf with a glove. I don't know how you hold onto the club. And if I did wear a glove, it would be the loosest glove. When they put them on and they're on skintight, I don't know how you hold onto the club. I usually put Super Glue on my thumb every day to keep it from getting little razor cuts. I tried, screwed around with it. It's horrific.

MARK WILLIAMS: Good story to end with. We won't be seeing a glove on the weekend. Thanks, Fred, for your time.