



PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: LEE WESTWOOD

Tuesday, January 21, 2014

MARK STEVENS: I would like to welcome Lee Westwood. Lee, you're making your first start here at Torrey Pines since the '08 U.S. Open and just your second start in the Farmers Insurance Open, your first was '04. Like to talk about some comments on coming back here and starting your year here in the U.S. and then we'll have some questions.

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, obviously I'm looking forward to starting this year. I had some good time off, about five weeks, I think. It's been a while since I've been here. Obviously the Open in 2008 where I played well, and I didn't realize it was 10 years ago since I played in the tournament here, the Farmers. Nice to be back. I've forgotten how beautiful a spot it was and my memory was soon jogged this morning when I came out and I'm looking forward to this week. It's a good golf course for me this week.

MARK STEVENS: Questions? We have a microphone on each side.

Q. I'm curious. The Board hand-picked you to be on the PAC and your willingness to do it. Does it almost feel like you're fully entrenched in this tour?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I think it was an honor sort of get the phone call and be asked to sit on the board. I don't know what they're expecting. I don't know what to expect. I think I'll just sit there for a while and listen. Obviously I've 20 years on the European Tour and the PGA TOUR, I've seen a few things, so I might be able to contribute a little bit.

Q. (No microphone.)

LEE WESTWOOD: No. I may have been if I would have been asked, yeah, yeah. I don't think I'm controversial or anything like that, but occasionally sensible. Occasionally I have a good idea.

Q. (No microphone.)

LEE WESTWOOD: Do you think I'll have one today? I don't know. It's early. I haven't thought too much today yet. I've got time out there to have a few to think a bit about it.

Q. Lee, how did it work with your schedule this year that you decided to come here?

LEE WESTWOOD: Normally I would play in the Middle East on the European Tour, but then end of last year I felt pretty tired so I decided I would cut back on the jetlag a little bit and not do the early Middle East swing. I could start here earlier. This is obviously a tournament I haven't played for a long time and been looking forward to it. And next week in Phoenix, I've never played before. And my sponsor, Ping, they've always said we'd like you to at some point play Phoenix because they're based there. I want to experience that tournament and play the 16th hole and stuff like that. I've always heard a lot of good things about that tournament, so it made sense to play these two, start my year off here.

Q. What is the rest of the West Coast Swing?

LEE WESTWOOD: L.A. and the match play and then back home for Honda.

Q. Lee, how would you grade your year last year and what, if anything, last year would spur you this year?

LEE WESTWOOD: Last year was pretty average. I gave myself a few chances to win tournaments, most notably the Open Championship and probably at Quail Hollow, the Wells Fargo. But I played consistently well but not good enough really, so obviously I'm trying to improve certain areas of my game. Got Billy back on the bag for this year as well. I obviously played well when he was caddying for me a couple years ago, got to World No. 1, so hopefully he can be the catalyst for getting my game back into shape where it should be really.

I think last year was tricky as well. We were making a move, a house move and I was moving Tours really as well and so there were a lot of variables to be taken into account last year.

Q. At what point did you feel like you were fully settled?

LEE WESTWOOD: I feel fully settled now. Last year was a tough year, there was a lot of stuff to think about, so my mind's a bit clearer this year starting off.

Q. Kind of a silly question if you can indulge me, but of the six, seven, however many really close calls you've had in majors, is there one shot you'd like to have back? What would be your one mulligan in a major?

LEE WESTWOOD: Probably the first putt on the last green at Turnberry. You know, I ran it near the hole. I don't think I needed to make it to get into a playoff with Tom Watson behind. Then he bogeyed the hole obviously, but I 3-putted as well, so I missed out on the (inaudible) shot.

Q. Lee, the '08 Open has become one of those iconic majors that everybody

remembers and you were such a big part of that. Even though you didn't win, is there anything you remember or do you think about from that week or coming back here that kind of has been rekindled? You had a great chance there. Any special vibes or memories from that?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, obviously I played well all week, but it felt like it was one that got away. I lost a bit of momentum in the middle of the round there on 10, 12 and 13 I think it was, second shot on the par 5. Was it 12? 13? I was going for it in two and it's in the hazard and made 6. That was really sort of a mental error. I played pretty solid to come in. I birdied 14 I think and then parred in, missed a couple of chances for birdie and obviously missed out on the par 5 shot there.

But I remember it being a good week. I enjoyed the golf course. I think it was the first year that Mike Davis really took over the setup of the place and he got it spot on. And I think it was a memorable Open partly because of that, because the setup was so good and they played as they would want a U.S. Open to play. I think winning score was par or maybe 1-under. And obviously it was nice Southern California weather from what I can remember and it was a great finish. It's one of those iconic U.S. Opens, I think. It was nice to be so involved right in there.

Q. Going back to that last round, you birdie 9, you have the lead at that point. Do you know that you have the lead at that point?

LEE WESTWOOD: Oh, yeah.

Q. So were you feeling more pressure? What was the sense of going to that back nine and what you were looking to do?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, of course. Anytime in any tournament you feel pressure when you're leading the tournament, even probably more so in major championships. I think I hit it through the back on 10. It was a long time ago now. I hit it through the back on 10, bogeyed 12, which was playing long, a long par 4. I think I missed the fairway. Then I made a mental error on 13 going for it in two. I should have laid up and tried to make birdie that way and it was just too far. I tried to hit it too hard.

Q. Do you remember what your thinking was at that time as far as going for it versus laying up?

LEE WESTWOOD: I was probably, you know, the usual me going for everything. I know I drove the green on the next, so I was in a fairly aggressive mode.

Q. You made birdie at 14?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah.

Q. 18, you have a 15-footer?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, a bit longer than that maybe, left to right, tricky long.

Q. Not enough speed, right?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah.

Q. When you walked away, did you regret the shot at 13 a little bit more than --

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I thought 13 really was where I let it slip. Everybody hits bad shots, but that was a poor mental process really, poor thinking that led to that bogey.

Q. Do you feel like if you got into the playoff that you had as good a chance as anybody with the way you were playing that week?

LEE WESTWOOD: You never know. I don't really think about it like that. There's no point. It would have been nice to have been in the playoff and I was playing well, but who knows.

Q. You had good opportunities in majors, obviously here in '08 having that chance. You talked about 13 and being aggressive on that par 5 there with your length. Being aggressive there in that major in that sense and also being aggressive with that putt that you mentioned there in that other major, Muirfield. When you look back on it now, does that help you know that, hey, in my moment there I gave it a good shot on the aggressive side?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I don't think you can change the way you play. I mean, obviously you try to occasionally, but I'm naturally an aggressive player so when I'm under pressure I'm going to do what comes naturally for me and fall back to type and that is to be aggressive. You know, situations like the thing in the U.S. Open is where maybe a caddie should step in and say maybe this is a layup where you're trying to make birdie pitching it up there. I don't regret being aggressive. That's the way I've always liked to play. I'm not going to change that. I play golf for the enjoyment and the fun. You don't go in the clubhouse after a round of golf and say, "You should have seen the great layup on 18," do you? You say, "You should have seen the great second shot I hit on the green and holed it for eagle." So I've always generally done the aggressive thing on the golf course. Sometimes it's worked, sometimes it hasn't.

Q. Follow up on a major real quick. You played well at Valhalla in 2000, tied for 15th there. What do you make of Valhalla? How does it suit your eyes in general, the sightlines of that course?

LEE WESTWOOD: I think Valhalla's a good solid test of golf. I think if you play well

you can make a lot of birdies and if you're not on your game it can punish you. It's a good design. It's Nicklaus, isn't it? Yeah? I think it's one of his best course designs. I think he's done a real good job. It's a nice piece of land that he's used. He's used the lay of the land and the natural sort of resources around there and it's a great finish. There's some tricky holes coming in, and then obviously a really good birdie chance at the last, so it provides for a thrilling finish as well as you saw with Bob May and Tiger.

Q. Continuing our journey down Memory Lane, there was a long time --

LEE WESTWOOD: Is this the '90s?

Q. Actually I was going back to high school.

LEE WESTWOOD: A little bit hazy, not for any other reason than it was a long time ago.

Q. For the longest time you were the only guy who had ever come from more than one shot behind in the last round to beat Tiger. That was at Deutsche Bank around '03 maybe, '02, '03?

LEE WESTWOOD: No, it was '98, I think, or 2000.

Q. Long time back.

LEE WESTWOOD: Last century.

Q. Do you remember that era and the talk at the time that guys would -- when Tiger had the lead, guys would buckle? You've obviously disproved that. Do you remember that era and what were you thinking when you heard that kind of talk?

LEE WESTWOOD: I think that era was like a lot of maybe like when Jack was dominant and when Greg Norman was dominant and other players where they would play well the last round and win the tournament. They would play average and other players would get in their own way and give them the tournament and they didn't do that much to win it. I think that's just the way it's always been. Some people have a -- you know, they build up an aura and players look at that and think, "I've got to do something." You look at it statistically afterwards, they didn't have to do that much to win. But at the time they think, "I'm going to have to go out and shoot a course record to win this," when actually they didn't have to, and that's when the dominant players were actually given tournaments rather than having to win them, mainly through poor thinking on the other players' parts.

Q. Off subject, but when we talk about all the great par 3s in golf and they're

mostly the short ones we think of, can you think of any great long par 3s?

LEE WESTWOOD: 16th at Carnoustie is one that comes to mind. I can't think of many more. 17 at Bay Hill is a long one. I think it's a good par 3, yeah. They've softened it a little bit in recent times, haven't they? You don't have to go for the flag. When the pin's back right there, it's a safe shot over to the left and you can make a long one for birdie or two putt for par. And par's a really good score on that hole. It doesn't make it a bad hole just because you can't fire at the flag and knock the flag out. But I prefer to see short par 3s. I think all the best par 3s seem to be short par 3s that come to mind. The postage stamp and the 12th at Augusta, 6 at Pebble, yeah. 7, sorry.

Q. Did you like 4 at Riviera last year? You haven't played there in a while. That's a long one, No. 4?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah. I think it's my least favorite par 3 on that golf course. I don't think it's a bad hole as such but if I was to put them in order, Riviera is one of my favorite golf courses. I love going back there. I think it's a great, great place and a great golf course. But I think if you ask people, it's probably going to come last in the order of par 3s.

Q. Is that the kikuyu, because you can't really run it in?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I think if it was a links golf course it would be a great par 3, but because of the grasses in that area, you land it on the front and it can stop dead. You land it a yard on the green and it can go through the back. So you're relying on a bit of luck there and I think that's what puts it fourth in the order of par 3s at Riviera.

Q. Looking ahead to this year, major preparation, are you a go-to-the-course-in-advance kind of guy and scout it out, and are you going to continue to do that, and what do you get from those visits?

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, I have been in the past and it's worked sometimes and it's not worked other times. I've been to Augusta in advance a few times, but that's mainly because I just enjoy being there with nobody else there and I love playing Augusta. You don't really learn anything because the golf course changes so dramatically from the Monday of the tournament when you get there to the Thursday when you tee off. If you're there two weeks before, you might as well be playing on the moon as far as a practice round is concerned because it's completely different, which is what I think what makes the Masters at Augusta so appealing to everybody, the fact that they can change the golf course dramatically over a couple of days and the fact that, you know, the more times you play it, the more -- it certainly took me seven or eight Masters to finally get the hang of it and find a game plan.

But I've been to tournaments, U.S. Opens and Pebble, went in advance and then

didn't play that well. And I've just turned up at tournaments, I went to Muirfield last year a week before and then turned and played well. I think one of the main reasons people go there in advance now is just to have a practice round with nobody else there so it's no distraction of signing autographs and doing press, stuff like that. They can just focus on making a game plan, have a week to think about it, and then when they get back to the tournament, it doesn't -- they don't get too worked up and too stressed the two or three days before the tournament.

Q. (Inaudible.)

LEE WESTWOOD: It doesn't take six hours like it does Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday of a major championship, yeah. You can get there and if you want a practice round to take six hours, you can take six hours. If you want to go around in three and a half, you can go in three and a half, which I probably prefer.

MARK STEVENS: Well, thanks for your time, Lee. Good luck this week.