

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: FRED COUPLES
Thursday, August 20, 2015



PHIL STAMBAUGH: Okay, Fred, thanks for coming in and joining us this afternoon. Just finished the pro-am. I guess you had an eventful day yesterday, you were telling some of the amateurs. But fifth appearance here in your hometown, a couple of third-place finishes. I know you'd like to do a little bit better and get a win in front of the home folks.

FRED COUPLES: Yes. Well, I really like the course, always have. I struggle on a few holes and it seems like I always end up getting way too far behind. But I feel like I'm playing pretty well and my goal is to, like everyone else, play from the get-go and do well.

But being from here, you know, you always want to do well but you want to do whatever you can to compete. It's nice to be up here. I know all the players love it. It's just one of those things where I grew up here and I haven't lived here in a long time, but it's nice to have the players that you see all the time just talk about Seattle. For me, obviously being here, I want to win. I want to win every tournament I play in, and that doesn't happen and you win once in a blue moon. But I would trade a lot of things to win here, that's basically about it.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: I was going to ask how your game is, but I guess it's in pretty good shape after yesterday, right?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. I went out and played with the guy I'm staying with, John, and a couple other friends. To be honest with you, I made this putt on the last hole and Craig said, "Oh, my God, you shot 58." We had caddies and my caddie was walking with us, helping us get yardages and stuff. I had no clue, but it turned out to be 59, but I never paid any attention to what I was doing. We played Broadmoor and I hit the ball well, and I came out today and I hit the ball pretty clean and sharp. And 7:45, it's a tough time to pay any attention to your game. But I'm going to leave here and go downtown and maybe go with John on his boat and try and take my girlfriend and her little son around town.

The course will play different tomorrow, I play at 1:10, but I like how it's playing. The greens I won't say are rock hard, but they're very firm and it's in great shape. There's a little bit of rough, but it's like it always is. There will be good scoring, there always is. I feel like I can play this course. And like I say, yesterday is just one of those things. I played the blue tees, which weren't the black tees, but still I putted well and that's what I need to do.

Q. Is that a course record, Broadmoor?

FRED COUPLES: Paul Casey shot 60 in the PAC 12s several years ago. That was from the championship tees. I took a picture and they're going to post it, so I believe it's a 59. It's a course record from the blue tees.

Q. The last 59 you shot was?

FRED COUPLES: I shot 59 at my home course in Santa Barbara when I lived there at the Valley Club.

Q. How long ago was that?

FRED COUPLES: Twelve years ago maybe. But to be honest, I finished -- I eagled 18, birdied 17, birdied 16, birdied 15 and birdied 13, so I was 4 or 5 under obviously. But I didn't -- when I played the 18th hole, I had no idea I was 9 under but it was a really good day. I hit the ball really well and, you know, you don't shoot 59 very often from any tees. I just was -- I was excited because I've had a lot of time off. I've played, I think, the last three times was Chicago, Senior British Open and Calgary. Before that, I hadn't played since Augusta. I've picked it up and I feel like I'm hitting the ball really solid and I'm on the right track. I've been talking to my coach. I've been seeing him.

But at Augusta, believe it or not, we worked on a couple things and I just said, The heck with it, I'm going to start doing this when I come back. Even though I didn't feel good, I kind of mimicked taking the club back and a little more inside than picking it up. Instead of missing the ball to the right, I have a tendency to miss it to the left but not as much, and that's basically what I'm doing. I really need to see him, so I'll probably see him here in the off season and work on my game, but I feel like I get through this year and the next year come out, like I say every year, I want to play 15 or 18 events. I think I'm going to play nine or 10 this year, and that's not very much and that's really not what I want to do, but it's the way it went this year.

Q. Who's your coach?

FRED COUPLES: Paul Marchand.

Q. You've been with him --

FRED COUPLES: I was with him forever, then I left to go with Butch for a few years, and then with Paul. So probably out of the -- '86 I started, and then for five years I left. He got very busy and I gave him a break. Then I went back to him maybe five or six years ago. But he's a college teammate. He's a few years older, but he's with Dick Harmon -- he worked with Dick and learned under Dick, and so I have that Harmon kind of clash with Paul and same kind of stuff.

Q. Fred, do you wonder like how many more chances you'll have to win this thing, on a good chance you have?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. Well, I don't -- I can't say I don't think about that. I think about like the British Senior where I played pretty well and those last three guys were incredible. Never even got close to them. Then they talk about St. Andrews in 2018. I mean, 2018, I may not even be on any tour at that time. I mean, I have to be ready to play.

Like next year I would like to be in this position. I feel pretty good about my game. I've taken a lot of time off, but I've played enough to come in here -- I took last week off, I didn't feel very well so I didn't play any golf, but I worked pretty hard Sunday, Monday and Tuesday before I flew up here. My goal is to be ready for this tournament maybe more than some others because I want to win here.

But it's really not much fun to play when you don't play well. I know that's, you know, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, but I'm at an age where if I can't really go compete, then I don't really want to do it. And that's why I took all that time off, because I played at Tucson, finished like 55th place. Then I went to Mississippi and I putted crazy to hang in there and do okay. Then I went to Augusta and missed the cut and played terrible. Then my back started to stiffen up and I just said -- I was practicing every day but I felt horrible. So when I got on the course, I could barely swing and all this practice was doing me no good. Then I just said, you know, screw it, I'm going to quit for a while, rest my back, and I've come back and I've felt pretty good.

Q. Was that during the time you would have gone to the U.S. Open sectional qualifying?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, when I start -- I mean, yeah. I didn't want to withdraw from that, but I really didn't want to go -- I didn't even know who the alternate was and I still don't, but I thought even if it's some young kid, he's going to have a better shot than me. And I live on the course and I wouldn't hurt myself, but all I had to do was go there at Newport.

But what would I have done after two and a half months off if I would have qualified to come to Chambers Bay? I mean, it would have been fun, but I would have had to practice for a couple weeks really hard and I just was pacing myself. I actually didn't start playing until maybe the end of June, but I picked it up pretty quickly. Yeah, I wanted to play St. Andrews. I was going to try to qualify for that, and I certainly wanted to play in Seattle for the U.S. Open, but just can't do it. But I watched it and enjoyed it. To me, it looked really, really nice. I know you guys were out there, but I thought the course -- I've never played it, but I thought the course looked really fun to play. I don't know how the greens were. I don't really care how the greens were because I can tell you next year at Oakmont, I don't know what they're going to say Sunday night after that when they're chipping balls across greens and they're playing out of rough like that. But I thought this course was hard and you could make bogeys and you could three-putt, but you weren't blasting balls out of rough around the greens. I mean, I didn't see many people miss many greens. They were always in sand or having long putts. But someday I would like to go play it just to see how good -- it may never be in those conditions. I'm sure if you went there right now, it's not baked out and rock hard. I enjoyed watching that.

And right after that was over, I actually started hitting balls, and I enjoyed watching the same thing with the PGA. These guys play so good, it's not mind boggling, it's just they hit it so far. I don't even know if it's -- you know, Jason Day hitting it 380, it doesn't even really roll off the tongue. I mean, at the World Series we watch those guys, but the ball was really

rolling. So if they carry it 300 and they've got 30 or 40 or 50 yards of roll, I get it, that's 340 or 50 yards. But this guy hit it -- in a major, he was hitting every drive over 320? Is that why he won? Is that why he won? No, he won because he was the best player and he hit great shots and he putted well. But I don't even understand it. I mean, I hit the ball a long way. I don't even understand it. I played the World Series for 20 years. They're hitting sand wedges to 18th hole. I've played there before, it's been rock hard. It's not wet every year I played there and they're just busting it down there.

Q. What did you think of John Bracken winning the Washington Senior Amateur?

FRED COUPLES: You know what, I was so excited for him. I'm staying with him this week and he's been playing a little bit and his back's been bothering him. He just tried to play at Fairwood and he withdrew. I said, 'You know, John, no matter who, it's just hard to play.' He was hitting it out of bounds and snap hooking it. So now he's going to rest and he's starting to play a little more. He was very excited about it. It was kind of fun to see.

And who won? They're playing the same course, this -- the Northwest, some kid shot 65-63, right? Is it over today or yesterday?

Q. It was over yesterday.

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. But he was telling me that's where they played. He says the same thing, 65-63, everyone's playing good.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Good luck tomorrow.