

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW:
April 20, 2016

ANDY NORTH
TOM WATSON



DAVE SENKO: Let's start by talking about what makes this event so special for you guys.

TOM WATSON: Well, it makes it special to me because I remember watching it on TV the very first time in 1978 and watching a five-hole playoff. That's what made it special, seeing the old guys birdie every hole. Remind me, was it Bolt, was it Dickinson, Snead and Thompson or Di Vincenzo?

DAVE SENKO: Yeah, De Vincenzo.

TOM WATSON: And I think they had a five-hole playoff and they had birdie, birdie, birdie, birdie, and finally they won with a fifth birdie in a row and that was the first televised Legends event. It got a lot of talk. Here we are, these old guys can still play.

DAVE SENKO: Andy?

ANDY NORTH: Well, that was really the start of this tour. They hadn't really thought about it and it turned out so well. Within about three or four years, all of a sudden there's 15 or 20 tournaments. So it really changed the way golf was approached. It's helped an awful lot of guys in their 40s play better golf on the regular tour to get to this point. That was a really big start. My favorite memories are watching Watson make birdies every single hole. That's been some of my best times here.

TOM WATSON: We played in the Raphael division for three straight year and we won it three times. We were doing it out of kind of a protest because what they had done, at that time they made it an individual event, not a team event. They went to individuals. No, this is a team event. But they still had the team Raphael for the older guys or if you wanted to play in it.

ANDY NORTH: So Tom game up a lot of money to play in it.

TOM WATSON: No, we played and won it three straight years. Finally, during those three years we were trying to lobby --

ANDY NORTH: It was a protest.

TOM WATSON: We were trying to lobby to get it back to the original team format, which we did. Look at what it's evolved into, or three-team format with alternate shot. We never had alternate shot here before, or foursome play or twosome play; it was just straight four-ball play. Now it's evolved into a unique format. I think people enjoy watching a different format on TV. I certainly enjoy playing a different format under the gun in a real tournament, myself with my partner Andy. It's fun to rely on somebody when you're out of the hole and you go,

Whew boy, I'm glad I have a partner.

ANDY NORTH: I've said that a lot.

TOM WATSON: Me, too.

ANDY NORTH: But you start looking at the beauty of this tour, and this is really the event that this is what this tour should be about. A lot of people think that as this has progressed, the senior Champions Tour has lost some of what was special about it as we've gotten so many better younger players coming through that want to continue exactly what's been going on on the other tour. At some time this tour starts looking like an older version of the other tour versus having its own identity and flavor as it should. This is the one week that it really shows that, that there's still a ton of guys out here that can really play that are fun to watch, that are entertaining, that you recognize their names because they've been around forever. That's what this tour's all about. This is the one week that really shows that off and it's fantastic.

TOM WATSON: The PGA TOUR Champions, that's what we call it now. We keep on changing the name but the essence of it is to have people watch their players play, their favorites play. I have to give Hollis Cagner a great compliment because what he's done in having Arnie in the past and Jack and Gary and Lee Trevino and a lot of the older players come to places like Houston and up in Minnesota up at the 3M come and play their events in a special format on TV still allows the viewing public to still grab a hold of those guys one more time.

It does the same thing here. Look at Jack and Gary playing here. That's the premier pairing of the whole week, promise you, and people are going to be tuned in to watch Jack and Gary play against the older guys. I'm an old guy, but they're playing against the older guys. People will want to see that. It's not so much the golf, they just want to see them in competition again. They don't want to let it die and that's the beauty of this event.

ANDY NORTH: One of the really neat things walking around, having played some out here, having done some television out here, the number of dads and kids where the dad's showing off to his son or daughter that this was my guy, this was my favorite guy. You know, it's generational and it's beautiful when we can put a week like this together. We as players, there's a ton of guys here that we don't get to see on a regular basis because they aren't eligible or they don't feel like they can compete anymore or whatever. It's fun to see Chi Chi and Jack and Gary and the guys that aren't out here every week. To me, that's as much fun as anything.

TOM WATSON: You sign a lot of autographs out there. Every now and then you get a really attractive 24-, 25-year-old girl come up to you and ask you for your autograph and she says, You know, my grandmother loves you.

ANDY NORTH: That wasn't exactly what he had in mind, but it is the truth.

TOM WATSON: Not my mom, my grandmother loves you.

ANDY NORTH: Reality hurts sometimes.

Q. Got a question. You guys do a lot of these type of events and things like this. How important is it to have the volunteer aspect, even though you're golfers, to make everything kind of come together? Do you see the importance in that?

ANDY NORTH: Well, if it wasn't for the organizations that are put together at these events and so much is volunteers, it's thousands of people it takes to run events like this, if you didn't have that, you couldn't afford to pay the people to do the event, you couldn't have the event. They are as important as some of the major sponsors.

TOM WATSON: The way they do it in other countries, especially Japan, they pay people to work the events. They have fewer and it does take away from the purses without a doubt. I was surprised when I played in Japan for so many years, they don't have the volunteers that we have here. We have 1,000, 1,500 volunteers sometimes here. Up there they pay them all, out there they pay them all.

Q. So then would you say that that's one of the benefits of having a place like College of the Ozarks be able to send students out here to volunteer?

TOM WATSON: I just want them to cook for me. They are really good. They can flat put the vittles on, yes, they can.

ANDY NORTH: But we play for bigger purses, more money goes to the charities and communities, so it's a win-win for everybody. And we're so happy that so many of the places, you'll see the same volunteers year after year after year. Same guys have been driving cars or they've been whatever. That is really cool that they enjoy doing it so much, they take a vacation week to come and put the time in for this week, which is pretty neat.

Q. You guys talked earlier about the specialness of the team events and how it's different. Do you think there's room for more of that on the Champions or do you think that would take away --

TOM WATSON: I would love to see it. I would love to see more events like this where you play as a team. I think honestly, we have 26 tournaments, I think we should have at least one more team event out here and maybe a different format. How about a scramble format, a pure scramble format. People play scramble all the time. In fact, it was bandied about that we might use a scramble format in this format but they gravitated toward just the alternate shot and the four-ball. But I would love to see a scramble event out here for real. Two tournaments a year, team format, it would be wonderful.

ANDY NORTH: Anything that's a little bit different. We've been doing this for 40 years, or

longer.

TOM WATSON: 45 years.

ANDY NORTH: And it's the same thing week after week after week. Anytime you go someplace, you get a little bit excited about being there and it's going to be a little bit more fun, why not? That's great. And it's great TV. What's the most important or watched event in the golf season that people talk about? It's the Ryder Cup, which is different. Why not have some more of that?

Q. You spent a number of years playing with Tom obviously and then as a broadcaster. He just played his last Masters (inaudible) while you were broadcasting. What's that dynamic like and maybe just kind of walk me through what he's like as a partner.

ANDY NORTH: Well, first of all, our friendship goes back to amateur golf a hundred years ago where he drilled me in the Western Amateur, and things have gone that same way for about 45 years. But it's fun to play in this event with a friend, someone that we've played an awful lot of golf with. We understand how each other reacts to things. He knows if I'm freaking out, he had better maybe be a little bit more conservative. Or if things are going well for me, he knows that he can just shoot every pin, I'll be there, I'll make a par or something. So that kind of relationship is really important where he can lean on each other a little bit and, you know, that -- what was the line, you never have to say you're sorry? Trust me, we do a lot, but it's a little bit easier when you're playing with somebody you really know well.

From watching Tom play as a broadcaster, what he's accomplished the last 15 years after turning 50 has been absolutely amazing. There's probably never been a better ball striker in his 50s than Tom has been. What he did at the British Open, The Open Championship at Turnberry, was ridiculous. It might be the greatest accomplishment in our sport. Win or lose, it doesn't make any difference.

But to be able to watch the way he's conducted himself on the golf course, the way he's changed his game over time, it may look the same but he figured out some things that have really worked and it's really propelled him into an unbelievable career length-wise. Everybody talks about Sam Snead and what he did. Tom has done pretty much everything that Sam has done from winning late, competing, making cuts in major championships. What, two years ago the cut at the Masters at 64? I mean, that's ridiculous. That's absolutely ridiculous.

TOM WATSON: I can't remember. I made two cuts in the last 10 years at Augusta.

ANDY NORTH: Yeah, but one of them you were really old when you did it. It was tough to watch him play Augusta the last 10 years because the golf course is really hard to play. To go at the Open Championship is a total different deal. Tom could play there for another 10

years and still be competitive because of the way you play golf over there. The ground helps you, you're not having to carry over great big hills and all that kind of stuff. So it's been fun to watch.

I'll tell you probably the two most difficult days I've ever done TV were the Saturday, Sunday at Turnberry being in the group with him and trying to do your job and not get too emotional. He knows I'm an emotional midget when it comes to this kind of stuff, so it was really fun to be there and do it. It would have been really cool if the ball would have bounced about a foot shorter than it did because who knows what might have happened. But it's an amazing, amazing career.

Q. Each year I try to follow a group one day and I actually walked with you and you guys over at Buffalo Ridge when you were playing with Jerry Pate and Ben Crenshaw last year. I know there was a lot of fun things that happened and it just seems like in this format you're obviously competing and want to play well, but at the same time you have a chance to relax and have a little bit more fun, and it seems like even fan accessibility is a little bit more.

Do you kind of feel that where it's an event you can kind of relate a little bit more just because of the nature of the tournament?

TOM WATSON: We're relating to each other, we're playing with our friends and it's kind of like going out Saturday afternoon playing a little Nassau bet, but we've got some real money thanks to Johnny Morris on the line here. Thank you, Johnny. It's fun to be able to go out and play this type of golf. It's different golf because you're not just yourself, you've got your partner. It makes it more relaxed I think in a way unless your partner hits it out of bounds --

ANDY NORTH: Sometimes he can make it more difficult.

TOM WATSON: Now you're on the line, you know? But that's part of the deal. And I think in this format the way this whole tournament's set up, Bass Pro has it, it's an outdoor event. Golf is an outdoor event and you basically are out there to have fun. You're playing a game. Fishing or hunting or playing golf, you're having fun. I think just kind of the attitude we have in this area, we're out there kind of having fun out there. We're not being selfish playing for ourselves.

Q. Tom, Andy was talking about Turnberry a couple years ago. Do you carry that with you at all?

TOM WATSON: No.

Q. Do you ever sit back and think "what if"?

TOM WATSON: No, I learned a long time ago that those what ifs never turn out to be any type of success. I look back on it when people ask me, like you, and I say one thing. I said,

I scared those kids. They're looking up at that board and they see Watson on that board and they say, Is that Bubba? There's a T in front of it, who's that? I scared those kids for 72 holes.

Q. Tom, you mentioned it being an outdoor event. It's got to look a little familiar, seems like the rain's been part of it every year it's been down here. It's supposed to taper off. Does it seem like, A, that's just part of the deal when you come down here at this point, and B, how do you think the course has held up in the wet weather?

TOM WATSON: Well, obviously I haven't been out on the courses yet so I don't know. But I do know one thing, the weather forecasters in this day and age are very accurate and they're calling for really good weather the next four days. It will be the first time since we've played down here we'll play without rain. That's going to be fun to do that. I think it's supposed to be 80 on Sunday and it's going to be just a wonderful final day out here.

This is a beautiful spot. Table Rock Lake, the new hole over here, took part of my putting green over there, the Himalayas. Part of the clubhouse, too, I understand. That's typical Johnny though, to be able to make, lemonade out of lemons. I can just imagine him getting that phone call. Mr. Morris, we have a slight problem out there at Top of the Rock. Seems as if there's a hole about 140 feet deep and 100 feet wide that's taken part of the clubhouse and part of the putting green, and we don't know about the lake. Johnny said, Well, let me come on out there and see it. He sees it and he said, Wow, we can make something out of this thing.

ANDY NORTH: Potential tourist attraction.

TOM WATSON: That's the beauty of Johnny. That's part of the whole aura of what Johnny does for this community. I've worked with him. I worked with him on the putting green. I saw him work on the golf course for so many years getting it ready to play and he just has a vision. He has things going on in his head that most people can't see. Once he explains it, he says this is the way it should be, this is the way I think it should be, things come out really well. It's a great experience for the people that come here.

DAVE SENKO: Thanks, Andy, Tom