

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: JIM FURYK
May 4, 2016



DOUG MILNE: Jim Furyk, like to welcome him back to the Wells Fargo Championship where you won in 2006, making your 12th start here, I believe. A couple of runner-up finishes on top of the victory in 2006. Obviously a big topic of conversation is welcoming you back and just open it up with a couple comments on how you're feeling.

JIM FURYK: I feel pretty good actually. I played nine holes yesterday and the pro-am this morning. For the last couple of weeks I've been playing a little more golf and trying to see how many balls I could hit, how much I could play, test it out a little bit. It's only been really a couple of weeks, the last two weeks before arriving here really I started hitting drivers for the first time. So it kind of took a while to progress, but once it did it seemed to come around pretty fast. I feel pretty good. I'm still on maybe a limited practice schedule and not able to go to the range and bang a bunch of balls, but it feels good. I'm playing, I'm chipping, putting. A little rusty obviously but excited about being out. I enjoyed my time at home and I enjoyed my time off immensely and being home with Tab and the kids, but also missed being out here and competing and it's good to be back out.

Q. I'm sure it was a moving target throughout the entire process when you would come back. My guess is THE PLAYERS is kind of the target. Since you're here, does that mean it came along a little bit quicker than you would have hoped?

JIM FURYK: No, I don't think I really had -- I would have loved to have played the Masters, I would have loved to have defended at Hilton Head. If I could have slipped Valero in, I would have. Basically the week of Valero I was just starting to hit driver and able to do so without any discomfort. So really the week of Valero and New Orleans it was more of a test it, feel it.

The first time I really played 18 holes was Wednesday, Thursday, Friday of Valero. And then last week played early in the week, I played Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and played a round on Friday. So I got seven rounds in in quite a short period of time, about 10 days or so, 10, 11 days. Felt pretty good. I just had to be careful with trying to hit too many balls or it's really just I played a lot and chipped and putted some, that's about what I can handle right now. So I felt like it was time to come out, test it out here on Tour, and really the only way to get to the next step is to play in Tour conditions. It won't be firm and fast but this golf course is going to be a lot longer than what I've been playing. I've been hitting 7-, 8-irons into every hole or less, so scoring's been a little easier. This one will stress me out a little bit from a length perspective. Greens are quick so I'll learn more this week about my game than I really did the last few weeks practicing at home, just putting it under the gun and stress in Tour conditions. So I felt like the only way to progress past where I was was to come out and play and see where I'm at.

Q. How much frustration was there as you're rehabbing the injury because as a

competitor you want to be out there playing and doing what you do but when the doctors say you can't do it, there's got to be a little trepidation?

JIM FURYK: Well, I feel like I was probably frustrated not to be able to finish up the year last year. I was playing very well at a golf course in Chicago that I liked and I was just in a lot of pain there. To not be able to finish out the FedEx Cup, to not be able to play the Presidents Cup, I think not finishing the year last year was disappointing. Then it was kind of a wait-and-see type of game and I took a couple of breaks, went out and tried to hit balls again and it would feel good for about three days and then start to get painful again. That's when we realized mid to late January that I was going to have to have surgery and schedule it as early as I could on February 1.

So from that point on it really hasn't been frustrating at all. Every day I feel like I've gotten better, I've seen improvement, I kept myself busy trying to first get the inflammation down, trying to get range of motion back. You know, it's tedious work but it was painful in the rehab to get things feeling better so I tried to work it as much as I could.

All the while I really had the ability to spend a lot of time with my family and watch the kids play a lot of sports at home through the fall and the winter and then the spring. You really can't -- we miss that a lot being out here on the road, so I kind of really cherished the time at home and enjoyed it more than they probably know, if that makes sense. I did miss playing and competing, but I knew once I had surgery February 1 it was going to be a while. It was really more just being patient and it really hasn't been -- missing the Masters is a bummer but I pretty much in the back of my head knew that was going to happen and I had kind of gotten over that a while back. I really had no target other than really come back as soon as I could. And this is, honestly, I wanted to really come back in an event where I knew the golf course well. I've only played New Orleans once in my career, so to try would have been difficult but I wasn't ready to go last week. I feel happy that it fell on Charlotte or THE PLAYERS or somewhere where I was comfortable and knew the golf course well.

Q. Jim, the nature of this sport is that you guys keep going year round and don't really get a lot of breaks. You mentioned family time, but that big a break away from the Tour, does that do a lot for you freshness-wise on this side of the fence, too?

JIM FURYK: Yeah, it does. I think if you look at my schedule for the last five years, I've taken three, three and a half months off every winter and I really think that's helped prolong my career. It's made me hungry for a lot longer. I think it's helped me play a lot better for longer, and this being a seven-month or longer break is a little awkward. It's going to be interesting teeing up tomorrow and seeing how I feel. So far practice has gone real well and I felt good in the practice round and during the pro-am, but the gun going off is a little different so it will be interesting to come back. I'm maybe not as sharp physically as I would like to be, but mentally, as you said, I'm refreshed and excited. There may be a silver lining and I'll want to play a little longer and a little more because of this. Longer's maybe not the right word, but I want to play more often. I was really trying to cut my schedule back. My

goal for this year was about 18 events. I'll really struggle to get to that but now that I won't get to that, I may come back and play 20 next year because of it.

Q. Jim, you obviously are known to be a grinder, hard worker. Being out as long as this has been and being around as long as you have, how much appreciation do you have just simply for being able to play the game again?

JIM FURYK: I don't think I ever got to the point where -- I mean I guess I wondered if I wasn't going to play again, what would I do and how would I handle it, but I never really got to the point where I never believed golf wouldn't be in my future and I wouldn't be able to play.

I know that I was in enough pain in the fall and in enough pain in January when I was hitting balls that if I didn't have to play golf for a living, I probably wouldn't have had the surgery. But I also knew that I wouldn't play golf in that -- I just told my family that if I had to play golf with this amount of pain and this discomfort that I wouldn't play at all, it just wasn't any fun. So it made it real easy to have the surgery and I never really considered that I would have another job say this year or next year.

Q. Do you feel like it's a fresh start then?

JIM FURYK: Yeah, it is. What I'm hoping, and I'm hoping for my own sake that I'm patient with myself. We're all so competitive and expect so much from ourselves. I have a little experience. I had surgery back in '04 and I had five months off from golf, a couple months of waiting and three months of surgery and the rehab. It took a while to really get back in the flow of things but when I did come back in '05 I had a great year and then I had one of my best years ever in '06. So really what I'm hoping is that I can at least be patient with myself and stay in that good frame of mind and attitude for weeks and months ahead to let things kind of progress naturally.

Q. You mentioned the schedule. What does it look like moving forward? Have you set it all out?

JIM FURYK: For a couple of reasons, I'm going to try to play as much as I possibly can physically. Right now my plan is to play here, THE PLAYERS. I'll probably take the Nelson off. Play Colonial, Memorial and then reevaluate. If all healthy I would take a week off, play Memorial, AT&T -- I'm sorry. I said Colonial, Memorial, take a week off, play U.S. Open, AT&T and then I think Bridgestone Akron's after that. So if you put that together, that's I think seven to nine weeks. That's a lot of golf coming up. So pacing myself and not practicing that much anyways is probably going to be a key for me physically as well. My goal is to play as much as possible, and if I could get to 15 events that would be great, but when you look at the schedule it's probably not realistic.

Q. Is your short game as good as it's ever been possibly? I'm assuming you worked more on that than anything in the downtime?

JIM FURYK: No. You know, I did work on it some, but it's hard to really -- I've just always been one, if there's nothing to play for, it's hard to really get motivated to work that hard on things. I kept a club in my hand and I chipped and putted when I had the chance, but to sit there and grind over four-footers when I know I'm not going to play another golf tournament for eight weeks is pretty damn hard to be honest with you. Whatever I did eight weeks ago is really not going to translate to today very well. So I did work on it but I didn't grind it out. My short game is okay but it's not as crisp as it could be. I think basically I've practiced and I've worked on it, but you still need to emulate the conditions we see out here and I can't emulate the length of rough and firmness and quickness of the greens very often. Although our greens are pretty quick and firm at home right now, but I can't emulate the grasses and the long rough. You can't emulate stress and sitting over -- you know, in tournament conditions and having a five-footer to save par and being in the hunt or trying to make a cut or whatever it may be in a golf tournament. It's hard to simulate that.

I still think the best way to get ready is out here. It's one of the reasons I don't think I've come out early but I definitely couldn't come out any sooner. One of the reasons I came out as quick as possible is really because, like I said before, it's going to be the best way to improve my game.

Q. I think Davis mentioned something about Ryder Cup stuff. Did he involve you much with that?

JIM FURYK: Yeah, you know, I'm pretty quiet, I'm not one of those guys that wants to offer a lot of advice or a lot of opinions. But when spoken to, when Davis has sent emails, when I've gotten stuff from Julius, kind of keeps us informed with some of the stuff y'all have written about the Ryder Cup or other events that have gone on around it, Davis' press conferences, I've read through all them. And then when Davis has reached out to us for our opinions on things for how we want to set up the team, I've always been quick to give my opinion and my insight.

But I think when we played yesterday my main point was whatever you need whenever you need it, don't hesitate. He's not one of those guys that really, you know, is going to -- he's going to feel like he's bothering you before other things. So I just wanted to reiterate that I was here for him and whatever he needed, I wanted to support him as much as I could. We talked for, of the two hours, I bet you an hour and a half of it was on Ryder Cup yesterday, which was kind of fun.

Q. Looking ahead to this week, is Rory the guy to beat out here this week? Why do you feel like he's so tough to beat at this course?

JIM FURYK: Has he won twice now? I can see the golf course suiting him, but I guess one of the reasons is he's one of the three best players in the world if he's on his game. I guess whoever's playing the best at the time is the best player in the world. But I can see the golf course suiting his style very well. There's a lot of guys that don't play this course because

they hit a left-to-right ball and they're uncomfortable on a lot of tees here where you have to hit the ball right-to-left. Rory has the ability to -- you look surprised by that.

Q. I'm just going through the holes, I'm sorry.

JIM FURYK: Okay. Well, I can go through them real quick for you. No. 3, I think 4 looks like a draw now, 5's a hook. No. 7's not a cut anymore, to be honest with you, the way the fairway is and they've tucked that tee back in there, so 7 could even be a draw. No. 9's a hard draw, 10's a hard draw, 11's a hook. 12 doesn't matter. 14 looks better to a draw but doesn't really matter. You get a lot more distance off the 15th tee that way. 16 doesn't matter and 18 looks like a draw. The golf course plays very right-to-left and that's his game. He hits it hard, long. This is a big golf course so I could see him being very, very comfortable here. But I think that's -- the horses for courses thing works until you are one of the best players in the world and then you pretty much play wherever you want and play well. It's just because he's good.

Q. A little add-on, you played with Davis yesterday, you're going to be part of that mix at Hazeltine one way or another. How big is it to you to be playing?

JIM FURYK: Well, I've played the last nine. Ten sounds good, it's a good whole number. You know, it's something that it's always going to be in the back of my mind, but what's most important right now for me, I talked to Davis a lot yesterday, I never really -- a lot of players I don't think have the -- I talked to Davis yesterday as if I was an assistant captain. That's just one, that's my personality. Most players will preface things by saying, Well, if I don't make it, and then they go into being an assistant captain role. Davis stopped me about by 3:00 yesterday and finally said, You know I want you to play well and make the team. I said, I get it, it's just not my personality.

So I would love to be there as a player, but the event means so much to me and I'm disappointed in the way we've played as a team and the way I've played as an individual on the last nine, I have a 2-7 record. But I'm excited about the future and I'm excited about looking at the next 10 teams and trying to come out of those with a winning record. You know, I know I'm going to be part of these for a while just as an assistant or whatever role it may be.

I look ahead, I look to all the guys that came back as veterans and helped us out and made sandwiches and ran crap around and brought us umbrellas. They were players that I looked up to and that I wanted to be, and they were out there serving kind of for the good of the team and to help us out. Eventually it's going to be my turn to do that and I'm going to love the responsibility and to be a part of it. You can't play forever. So I really do hope that I got, you know, at least another one in me, we'll see. But if not, I'm going to be there in full support of the guys on the team and in full support of Davis. I think he was the absolute 100 percent right pick and he's the right guy for the job and kind of want to follow his lead.