

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW
September 23, 2017

PAUL CASEY (-12)



EMILY TILLO: Like to welcome third-round leader at the TOUR Championship, Paul Casey, into the interview room.

Paul, really solid round today, two-stroke lead heading into tomorrow. So talk about, assess your round today and then what the game plan is going into tomorrow's final round.

PAUL CASEY: Well, start with the game plan: More of the same. Hit a lot of fairways, which is what I've been doing so far this week which gave me a lot of opportunities certainly on the front side to capitalize and make birdies and the eagle. Today was that really solid stuff, felt really comfortable on the golf course.

There was a couple of blemishes on 8 and 9. Kind of unforced error on 8, didn't quite catch it the way I wanted to and buried it in the bunker. And 9, awkward spot. Both bunker shots were just very, very difficult, the buried lie on 8 and then it seemed like there was no sand or very little sand certainly from what I thought there was going to be on 9.

So kind of the same as what I did yesterday, a couple of blemishes on the card but bounced back nicely and found the fairways, found the greens, put myself in there with chances which is what I made and really excited to be at the top of the leaderboard.

EMILY TILLO: You're playing with Kevin Kisner tomorrow in the final group.

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, dad's in the final group.

Q. Paul, after yesterday's round you said that you would rather win the TOUR Championship than the FedExCup. Can you elaborate on those thoughts?

PAUL CASEY: Because I need to win the TOUR Championship in order to win the FedExCup. It's kind of where I was going. The reason I said that was because there's a lot of talk about the FedExCup, and for me the most important thing is trying to focus on trying to win the TOUR Championship and the FedEx is an amazing by-product of hopefully doing that.

I was even just told the scenarios that could possibly happen and I said it's all irrelevant if I don't get the job done. So for me, focus on one thing. I can't control what everybody else does. I expect JT or Jordan to have an amazing day tomorrow. JT struggled today for what he's capable of, so there's no reason why he can't throw out an amazing round of golf tomorrow and maybe he just takes everything out of my control. So focusing on the TOUR Championship is a big thing.

Q. Does a lot of that the process have to do with going after your first win in eight years?

PAUL CASEY: Yes, without question.

Q. Elaborate?

PAUL CASEY: That's enough.

Q. Paul, we spoke just before the Open I think and you said that you were ready to win, if you got an opportunity you wouldn't be scared of it maybe as you would have been earlier in your career. Although you haven't had that win, is it fair to say this the best chance to prove that mindset tomorrow?

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, best chance if I look back through it, I think actually Oberholser said it on Golf Channel actually earlier today. If you look through it, I haven't given myself enough opportunities. I had a great opportunity and no excuses at Dell Technologies last year and didn't take it, really struggled on Sunday. Rory played some great golf. And played wonderful golf the week after but run into Dustin Johnson, but I couldn't complain about the round of golf and week that I had. Other than that, for me not enough chances.

So talking with John McLaren and Peter Kostis just a few weeks ago really, just said we've got to do more to get myself into a position going into Sunday because being two or three back is not good enough because it seems like everybody you're going up against, Hideki, Dustin, Jordan, JT, they're two ahead and they crack on and shoot 65, 64, 63. Unbeatable. So finally putting myself -- this is what I want, so we're getting somewhere.

Q. Paul, in a season where I believe 17 of the Tour wins have come from players under 27, what would it say or mean to you to win tomorrow in the year you turn 40?

PAUL CASEY: I'm 40?

Q. Life begins at 40, Paul.

PAUL CASEY: There you go then. I don't look at -- I don't look at my age, I don't think about it. I think I look at more my abilities knocking a drive down past JT on the last, things like that. That's kind of how I measure myself. Obviously then score and results, that's how I measure myself out here. Can I still play the golf I used to play and the answer is it's pretty close. I still have great physical talent and so the age thing doesn't bother me.

I don't see it as a handicap in any way. It would be cool to, yeah, maybe I'll brag about it to the young guys, but I don't think about it too much. For me the clock is ticking, though, for sure. Five, six, seven good years is what I think I've probably got left so I need to make hay.

Q. Forget the age thing, pretend you're 25 or something, just picture a victory. What would it mean to you? This will be a huge career win for you. What would it mean to Paul Casey and family?

PAUL CASEY: I haven't thought about it too much because I'm just trying to get the job done.

It would be very -- certainly it would be very satisfying knowing that I've had ups and downs in my career and able to play -- this would be the biggest victory of my career at the oldest point in my -- the latest point in my career would be very, very satisfying. I would like to answer that for you in full tomorrow.

Q. Paul, any thoughts about Ryder Cup next year?

PAUL CASEY: Currently in this position, no. Sitting here, no. So far out of my current thinking. TOUR Championship, getting home to my wife and my two kids, that's occupying most of my capacity right now. It's something we will look at. I know there's some rule changes next year. Derek Lawrenson nicely wrote that I was seriously considering it, so thank you, Derek. Apparently I'm considering it according to Derek. Currently I'm not thinking about it.

Derek's not here, is he?

Q. Six top-5 in your last eight Playoffs, 23 top-10s the last three seasons on Tour. At what point of nevvilles like me asking you this a million times did it become frustrating, if at all, and how have you managed all that sort of talk?

PAUL CASEY: I take it as motivation. I think up until, like I said, a few weeks ago looking at it going why haven't I won this year, why didn't I win last year. I said to you, it's like I truly haven't put myself in quite good enough position. So too much pressure on a Sunday to try to do something special, you know, even thinking you've got an -- I thought I had an outside chance at Bridgestone this year and you're looking at what Hideki was doing to the golf course, it's like kind of throw my hands up.

So at that point need to be in a different position. So no, I don't get frustrated when you ask. It's more of a -- I take it as a compliment and then take a serious look at it as to okay, how can I make it happen. Because if you didn't think I was capable, you wouldn't ask me. So thank you for asking.

Q. And of course I know you're focused on just this tournament and that FedExCup is sort of trying to be out of your mind, but given the context of all of that, if you're going to have a drought breaker so to speak, wouldn't it be pretty awesome to get the double?

PAUL CASEY: It would be amazing, yeah, it would be. Yes, I have given that thought and

then I try to not think about it.

Q. You spoke to this early in the week about your Sunday scoring average and you said that you and Johnny had talked about it and you didn't really have a reason. I think you just answered your reason in your previous question that you're putting too much pressure --

PAUL CASEY: Pressure, yeah.

Q. Is that the conclusion you came to?

PAUL CASEY: Yes.

Q. And when did you come to that conclusion?

PAUL CASEY: Very observant. I would say probably two, three months ago really because I'm first in scoring on Thursday and about 70th on Tour for Sunday scoring.

Q. 76.

PAUL CASEY: 76, thanks. But I have reminded people that I shot 64 here on Sunday last year. Maybe that score wasn't counted. Yeah, too much pressure. It's better to be in this position. But the scoring average is still the scoring average, but yeah, why is it wrong, I don't know.

Q. It is a good position to be in and one you haven't had in some of these chances, but knowing what can go on around this golf course, what do you consider going to the first tee tomorrow? Do you feel like you're starting at scratch? How do you go about it?

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, yeah, I'm not concerned, Doug, about scores and where I currently sit and where everybody else is. I have to hit fairways, I have to continue to hit quality tee shots. Same attitude. Maybe I'll be a bit more nervous, but good communication with Johnny. Yeah, it's all those things. It's just sort of maintaining the process. If I do that, then fingers crossed, everything takes care of itself.

Q. Paul, last year in Boston you were asked about the lack of wins and you explained how many of the tournaments --

PAUL CASEY: What was my excuse back then?

Q. You were playing against guys like Tiger and Phil throughout much of your career. Do you see a similarity between now you've come close in events where Rory's won, Dustin's won, Hideki's won, have you seen a similarity between those two eras? Have you kind of been caught between the two of them?

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, the guys you've named have an unbelievable ability to close out events. It's very cool to have played -- I mean, there's a lot of guys talking even in the lunchroom this week talking about Tiger and Leish was talking actually Tiger stories and guys were listening in.

And it's cool to have played against him, seen that amazing golf. Yeah, JT, Jordan, they have no idea what it was like. You guys all saw it, it was craziness. These guys are unbelievable as well. I've seen Jordan do some stuff which is truly remarkable and the raw talent of Dustin and JT is phenomenal. And it has been slim pickings or is now slim pickings or has been this year. How many wins for the four of them?

Q. (No microphone.)

PAUL CASEY: It's like a Tiger season, isn't it?

Q. Speaking of big names, Xander Schauffele, in terms of the length of his name, have you played with him before?

PAUL CASEY: I have not, no.

Q. Have you met him?

PAUL CASEY: Yes. I actually know very little about him.

Q. Paul, you've always done pretty well consistently here, I don't think you've finished worse than sixth. What about the course here that makes you thrive at East Lake?

PAUL CASEY: I like this golf course because it highlights quality ball striking. I'm a great driver of the golf ball, fantastic iron player and a very good touch putter. It's no surprise I play around here because I also play rounds very well at Augusta National, which I think is a very similar test. Cool Georgia crowd. There's a lot of similarities with Augusta. Plus I like the golf course. It helps when you like a golf course. It's not always the case. Sometimes there's a lot of golf courses I like and I don't play very well on them, but this is one where the two blend beautifully. I'll probably not stand around very much enjoying the view, to be honest.

Q. If you're putting too much pressure on yourself that requires you to be in a little more of a relaxed state. Your attitude is so much better probably over the last two or three years. Does that play into it?

PAUL CASEY: Yes.

Q. Can you elaborate?

PAUL CASEY: Are you talking about Sunday scoring as well? We talk about Sunday scoring, too much pressure on myself, I'm probably trying too hard and maybe taking risks that are probably unnecessary, therefore -- and I have to take those risks because otherwise I've got no chance of winning.

Remember the conversation that Charley Hoffman had standing on 16 at Bridgestone? That conversation's gone on a few times. My relaxed attitude is a combination of becoming a father, married to an amazing woman. On the golf course, great understanding of my golf game, still working with Peter Kostis, I trust Johnny on the bag, we've got great dialogue. Just in a good place in my life. I feel very, very comfortable. Whether I win or lose, I'm in a very, very good place. It doesn't take away my desire to win, though, and my frustration when I don't.

Q. How long does your frustration last, after Boston last year for example?

PAUL CASEY: Probably about one bottle of red wine.

Q. Used to be two?

PAUL CASEY: Used to be two or three.

EMILY TILLO: Paul, thank you so much, appreciate it. Play well tomorrow.