

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
December 6, 2017



BRANDT SNEDEKER
BUBBA WATSON

DOUG MILNE: Brandt Snedeker and Bubba Watson, thanks for joining us, guys, for a few minutes prior to the start of the QBE Shootout. Brandt, making your fifth start, part of the 2015 winning team here, and Bubba, you're making your third start in the event.

Just a couple comments on being here and being together this week and what you guys are looking forward to. Bubba, you're closest to me, so you can start, and then we'll turn it over to Bubba.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: We're both not called Bubba.

DOUG MILNE: Brandt and then Bubba.

BUBBA WATSON: He's been off for a while.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: No, it's been obviously coming back from injury, I've been looking kind of forward to this week. Bubba and I kind of mentioned it earlier this year doing thinking about doing this together, so we're excited about it. My game's in good shape and looking forward to the week. Bubba and I kind of grew -- got to be pretty good friends at the Ryder Cup last year and had talked about doing a team event. He turned me down for Zurich, said he already had a better partner. But thought we'd try to do something like this and see if I couldn't win him over. It should be a fun week, one of my favorite weeks of the year. They do a great job with taking care of the players and staying here on site, love playing the golf course, so looking forward to it.

DOUG MILNE: Okay, the real Bubba.

BUBBA WATSON: It's the same thing. At Ryder Cup last year, being on the opposite side fixing him sandwiches and getting water for him, you know, our friendship and obviously our kids are close to the same age, our wives hang out together so much, we just started talking about it. Our friendship grew and everything and I said let's go have some fun and play in the Shootout.

Coming back here, this is a tournament that at the pro-am today, they asked me nonstop about this and I said we sign up for this, this is what we love to do, this is just a fun atmosphere. You're shooting the breeze with your competitors, but they're also your friends. Now on Sunday on the back nine, if you're close to last you start grinding a little bit more, if you're close to first you grind a little bit more. So there's always something you're grinding for. So on Sunday afternoon we'll definitely be -- we won't be giggling as much like the first

two days.

DOUG MILNE: Is the strategy, is the talk of who's going to be doing what, has that already started?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Yeah, it's not too complicated. Bubba's going to hit first so I can go ahead and let loose and hit the big drives out there.

BUBBA WATSON: And then I'm putting last because my putting stats are so good compared to his.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: That was the deal. Listen, I'll get the ball in the fairway, you can do what you do, and then get on the greens, I'll let you go first and I'll take over from there. So we'll find out who holds up their end of the bargain.

BUBBA WATSON: The best part is today my pro-am partners were in on it as well. So he teed off the back, I teed off the front, so I shot video on every hole and group texted him and his caddie and my caddie and we were just shooting videos.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Oh, my gosh, this is awful.

BUBBA WATSON: This is my strategy on this hole and this is my strategy on this hole.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I almost left of the conversation. I'd literally go to my cart for two holes, wouldn't check my phone for two holes and I'd have 10 text messages with Bubba. Is this what it's going to be like all week, is this what I have to get ready for?

No, it was fun. We finally sent him one back after I had outdriven him on a hole, one of the volunteers told me to let him know I'm bringing the long ball this week.

Q. Bubba, is this the event where you warmed up in a Santa suit one year, and what's it like to try and swing in a Santa suit?

BUBBA WATSON: Yes. Rickie Fowler, me and Rickie Fowler were out at dinner and I said, Let's do something fun. So we went and got -- we stopped at a local store and got a couple Santa suits, passed out candy canes, but then we warmed up in it. We were going to try to play in it because we were close to that last position so we were going to try to play in it, but then we're like, you know what, it's going to be too hot, let's don't. So afterwards we put them on and gave out candy canes to all the people and kids. No, it was fun. Love being, I guess if you call us givers giving out candy canes. No, it was fun. It was very tough to swing in. But after you do it you figure out ways. You know, we're all athletes so you figure out ways you can kind of manage, but obviously we were already close to the last so it didn't really hurt us or help us.

Q. On a more serious note, you've won every year since 2010 with the exception of

two years, last season and I think it was 2013 maybe, and then you came back the next year in 2014, won twice, including the Masters. Is that something you're kind of thinking about going into 2018 like, hey man, I've bounced back before, I can do it?

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, for sure, and the reason why I played Vegas and I played Sea Island -- isn't it Sea Island? St. Simons, Sea Island, one of those places. The reason why I played it, even though we knew that my wife was having knee surgery and my son was starting kindergarten, my whole plan, which doesn't work to my way but my whole plan was to take four months off and just to relax and get focused on playing again. But I just missed the game so much, and putting all the energy into figuring out the surgery for my wife and my kids going to school and all that, I just got away from the game thinking the way I needed to think to prepare.

So hopefully with this and my knowing that I truly love the game and I miss it, there's no -- there's no disliking the game, I love challenge of showing up every day trying to beat these guys. So no, I'm looking forward to it and I know I've done it before and I know how good I can be when I'm focused on the right things. So hopefully I'll be prepared and prepare the right way going into the new season. I guess it is this season still, but the new year.

Q. Brandt, your bounce-back season begins with a trip to Indonesia next week for the Indonesia Masters?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Yes.

Q. Are you looking forward to that flight?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I am, probably not the flight so much but I look forward to being there. I love traveling the world, I love seeing different places. Indonesia's a place I've never been so should be interesting.

BUBBA WATSON: I might have some miles, I could help bump you up to first class.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I think it's a 15-hour flight from JFK to Hong Kong, and I'm not even close to being there once I get to Hong Kong so it's going to be a long trip.

I had so much time off as Bubba -- I'll mention Bubba said here. You don't realize how much you love the game until you don't play it for a while and how much you miss it. I had 14 weeks pretty much away from the game of golf, eight weeks not even swinging a golf club. You realize how much you love what you do, how much -- how lucky we are to do what we do and how passionate we are about it.

I came back after Sea Island, felt really good, body felt amazing, so I started looking for tournaments to play in. I need to get out playing. I've had too much time off. I'm excited about the way I'm playing, hitting the ball really good, so I want to try to find places to play.

That kind of popped up on my radar. Kind of the last real big event of the year for us or in the world really. So I'm going to go try it out, see how it goes.

Hopefully we can kind of use this week -- when Duf and I won a few years ago, we both kind of used that to catapult to a big season in 2016, getting the confidence of knowing we can hit good shots under the gun and playing well on Sunday. Hopefully Bubba and I can do the same thing this week, kind of feed off each other. We're probably two of the most freshest guys in the field. We're both really excited about being here and playing. A lot of times this is kind of the last event of the year for the guys and they're kind of worn out a little bit. So hopefully we can be the guys here ready to go and be there late on Sunday.

Q. When was the last time you played an Asian Tour event?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I played one a few years ago I want to say. Good question, I don't know. I played some on the Japan Tour seems like a couple times. Maybe I've never played an Asian -- I guess I played in Fiji, which is the Australasian Tour last year.

BUBBA WATSON: How did you do in that tournament?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I won by a few if I remember correctly, so maybe I can kind of look back on that.

BUBBA WATSON: That was the week after the Ryder Cup, right, after I gave you all that confidence?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Sandwiches weren't quite the same. I had a few left over in the bag which got me through, I think.

Q. Were you perplexed this summer when you made all the trips to the different doctors about what in the world was going on?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Yeah, no, it's no fun when you have an injury and you have a bunch of different doctors saying we doesn't know, we don't know how it's going to heal, we don't know what the process is of going about fixing this. I had about a two-week period where doctors just didn't know. They couldn't give me a -- that was the hardest part was just not knowing will it heal, what do we need to do to help it to heal, or are we going to have to go down the route of surgery. With the surgery, they've never done it on a professional golfer before so they don't know if it would cause more pain or limit my mobility or it would be an issue. So that was the toughest part, those couple weeks of just indecision of not knowing what was going on. Once we had a plan and saying this is what we think will work and this is what we think we can do to fix it, it got a lot better, but yeah, two weeks there was pretty tough.

Q. You had somewhat of a lifestyle change now with your new diet --

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Yes, no fun.

Q. -- and working out?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Yeah, it's no fun at all. Having to really kind of focus in on what I eat, how I take care of my body, how I warm up in the morning, how I cool down at night. Spend a lot more time in the gym trying to stay flexible and putting some muscle mass on to get my bones a little stronger. Probably the first guy who does not want to put on muscle and is forced to because just I guess the way the body works, the bigger your muscles are, the bigger your bones get and the stronger they get. So they're telling me that would help solidify my chest and solidify my ribs and the sternum issue I have. So I spend a lot more time in the gym trying to get some more muscle on my bones so they'll strengthen up. So that's been a different change for me than years past, just having to kind of really reevaluate, change the way I do a lot of stuff in my life. At 36, turning 37 this week, if I'm going to be successful in my mid 40s, that's what I've got to do. There's very few guys on Tour that play great golf in their mid 40s, and unless you're really committed to it and you've got to put in the time and energy and effort to do that.

Q. What's the no-fun diet?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: It's an anti-inflammation diet, so I've really got to stay away from carbs and sugars, refined carbs I should say and sugars. A lot of stuff I like to eat, sandwiches and that kind of stuff, are kind of off the radar now. It's been tough to try to find stuff I like to eat so I can get through the day, especially on the golf course when you're out there playing you need snacks and you can't have -- I used to have a turkey sandwich on the golf course and I can't have that anymore. Trying to find stuff like that to keep your energy level up. Dinners have been fine, breakfast is fine, it's the lunch and snacking throughout the course of the day.

DOUG MILNE: Is it a permanent thing?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: It's permanent. I mean, it's full on. If I'm going to be out here for another 15 years. Maybe when I stop playing golf I can go back to eating burgers and french fries.

BUBBA WATSON: You've got the Champions Tour, you're here for 30.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: That's right.

Q. If you knew your doctors or your wife wouldn't read this, would you cheat on a french fry?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Oh, yeah, I will cheat every once in a while, but it's more I used to cheat for weeks at a time, now I'm cheating for maybe a meal at a time so it's a little bit different cheating.

Q. But since you've come back and been playing, mentally are you somewhat worry free?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: Yeah, you know, I feel -- this is probably as excited I've been about my golf game in quite a few years, excited about playing golf. I really don't have any issues with my body right now. All the little aches and pains I've had since I made this change have kind of gone away. Body feels great, mind feels great. I'm able to practice a lot longer than I have been in years past because my body's not hurting. Putting the time I need to put in to be successful.

I think Bubba will echo it, the thing that most people don't see out here is for you to be successful on Sundays it's the practice away from the golf course that you never see that we have to put in. If you could tell every golfer they could play until they're 50 years old and not have to practice and be successful on Sundays, it would be the best case scenario in the world. But we know we have to put the time in away to be there on Sunday, so that's been the hardest thing is when you're not feeling great and you know you can't put the time in, trying to find a way to put yourself in that position.

Q. You guys are both right on the cusp of having 10 victories. I think you've got nine, I think you've got eight. Is that a number that means anything to you, having double digit victories?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I've thought about that. I think, yeah, it would be something cool to kind of check off a list of your career with double digit wins. Not a lot of guys have done that out here so it'd be something pretty cool to do.

I saw Zach's got 12, I think, and then you start talking about a guy like Bubba who's won two majors, what number does he get to when they mention Hall of Fame? So I think any guy out here wants to have their name mentioned in that breath. You've got to win, you've got to play in tournaments and you've got to win, so I think it's something that we all think about.

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, I've always -- when I was coming up this day and age with the world playing, what Tiger Woods has been able to do and create the world to play the game, I think in our day and age for me personally, I think 10 wins, if you can get double digit wins, that's an amazing career, especially with everybody playing, youngsters now. I mean Jordan Spieth's still 20, now, whoever old he is. You've got Rickie Fowler, you've got Justin Thomas, Brooks Koepka, Patrick Reed. You've got all these youngsters coming up.

So to get 10 wins with all the competition now, you've got Tiger coming back, Phil Mickelson's still fighting around, so it's hard to get 10 wins.

Just between me and you, if I count Tiger's Hero Challenge I've got 10. I'm going with if I don't ever win again I'm going to say I've got 10, but if I do win again, then that one won't count.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: It's a PGA TOUR sanctioned event so it will count.

BUBBA WATSON: And it will count, too.

Q. You mentioned Tiger. Rickie said after he won, he said playing with Tiger sharpened me up a little bit. You've played a lot with Tiger. I assume, Brandt, you probably have, too. Guys have said that, Phil has said the same thing before, other guys have said similar things, that playing with him kind of makes you better. Mark O'Meara won two majors in his 40s after playing a lot with Tiger. What's been your experience about maybe seeing your own game elevated by playing with the best?

BUBBA WATSON: For me personally, it's the atmosphere. When you're playing -- I didn't get to play with Jack Nicklaus in his prime or his heyday or whatever you want to call it. So playing with Tiger Woods, I mean it doesn't matter if people are around or not, you could be in the most private setting which is y'all too, and it's a different atmosphere, just everything because you're playing with the great No. 2, whatever, it doesn't matter what you want to call him. In this era, he's No. 1.

So to be able to play with him and then play with him in an atmosphere of a tournament with the crowd pulling for him and pushing for him, your adrenaline goes up, your focus goes up. He just makes you better. Doesn't mean you're going to play well, just everything.

And then watching him. What I used to do in practice rounds, I used to watch him. I don't ask a lot of questions. I used to watch and try to figure out why he's doing that, why he's practicing that, why is he practicing this, why would he like to hit that shot on this hole, why not a draw, why not a cut, things like that. So I was learning that way without asking questions. But obviously, yeah, when you get to play with a great champion like that, you can't do anything but learn, or go home and find a new job, one of the two, yeah.

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I think he definitely -- I played with him quite a little bit in 2012, '13, kind of the last two years before he got really hurt. You see what -- a lot of times you don't know what you're capable of as a golfer. Any golfer in general, when you see somebody push the bar as far as he did, you know, okay, it is doable, you can do that, I've got to get back to work and push myself to be that.

It happens a lot in golf. You'll have young guys come along and push the bar of what's possible and what you can do, so when you do that, it kind of elevates everybody else's game.

The other thing you learn from him just being around him, probably the best thing about Tiger's comeback now is how much more open he is with us as friends and playing competitors about how he thinks and how he practiced all those years and how he thought, how he went about it.

You can't help but learn, pick up nuggets here and there that this is what he really thought about in this situation. I don't think anybody would doubt he probably has the best mind of anybody in the world that I've ever seen play the game of golf. So when you're picking his brain a little bit and he's being open with you and talking with you about it, it's a pretty special thing to be able to pick up something like that and hopefully put it into practice and know the next time out there that hopefully you'll be more prepared for that situation and be able to overcome whatever doubts you have in your mind to step into the shot you need to.

Q. Did you flip into fan mode a little bit at the Hero as he did so well?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I got so excited on Friday when he got near the lead. It was so cool to see. I had a feeling, I was texting with some guys that had been playing with him and even texted him a little bit. I knew he was excited. I knew his game was pretty good, better than people thought it was going to be, so kind of had an idea he was going to be just fine. You still don't ever know until you -- you still have all that doubt. I don't care what he says, I'm sure he had a lot of doubt on Thursday morning. Great to see him in that first round kind of get back in the swing of things.

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, for sure, same thing. When you get Tiger around the lead or playing or shooting under par, yeah, how could you not? I'm a fan of golf. That's why we play the game, because we love it so much. So you want to see -- just like we got excited when we saw Rickie, I think it was seven in a row on the -- and to start out seven in a row. Different like if you play a few holes and get loosened up and then you start birdieing, but he started right out of the gate.

So yeah, you get excited. Obviously Tiger Woods is the biggest draw in golf. Even when he's not playing he's the biggest draw, so it's pretty good to see. And you're excited. Now you're excited because you might get to play with him again this year and talk to him and spend some time with him in the locker room kind of like what we did at Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup when he was vice captain or whatever.

DOUG MILNE: Well, Brandt, Bubba, thank you guys for your time. I hope to see a lot of you this week.