

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
June 27, 2018



TIGER WOODS

JACK RYAN: We'll go ahead and get started here with Tiger Woods at the 2018 Quicken Loans National. Tiger's a two-time winner of the event. We'll take an opening comment here from Tiger as he makes his first start here since 2015 and then we'll take some questions.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, it's been a few years since I played and looking forward to getting out there and playing. First time playing this event here for me at the TPC, excited to compete, and this is one heck of a golf course. It's certainly a lot more difficult than what I had envisioned. They've got the rough up, fairways in, it's like a mini Open here. So last year single digits won and we would be hard pressed to get to double digits again this year.

Q. Tiger, in 2007 when your people hustled to get this event together, what was your vision for it then, and as we kind of maybe come to the close here, how has it played out over time?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, what we tried to do, we tried to celebrate what our men and women were doing in the service, trying to do it on our nation's birthday. We had President Bush here, we had a Special Forces A Team here from Fort Bragg, Golden Knights were jumping in. We really tried to honor our servicemen and women because, if you remember, we were at war and at war pretty hard at that particular time. We really wanted to say thank you.

I was raised in a military background, playing military golf courses. So just really tried to do all we could not just for the D.C. area, but our nation's capital, our nation's birthday and trying to say thank you to all the people that are putting their lives on the line for us and our freedoms.

Q. Tiger, knowing the importance of this tournament with your foundation, what does it mean to you to be back here after missing the last couple years?

TIGER WOODS: It's been great to be back. It's been frustrating not to compete and play and be part of this event. I think that what we've created here over the years I think has been special. Our heroes tribute wall, we were the first ones to do it and now it's one of the standards throughout the Tour. Free admission to all military servicemen and women and their dependents, that's something -- retirees, that's something that became a standard on the PGA TOUR. We did a few things that I'm very proud of.

Q. Tiger, Rickie was just in here and he gave you an A, but he said he didn't want your head to get too big. I wonder if you can give yourself on your comeback a letter grade and why to this point?

TIGER WOODS: I'm not going to give you a letter grade on it, but I will say that I am blessed, thankful and it's basically a gift to be able to play again. At this particular time, as you know, I did not know. I was not allowed to putt yet, I was not allowed to swing a club yet, I did not know. My back was not fused and so there was no guarantee I would ever play golf, forget the PGA TOUR.

So to go from that to here and -- (laughs) -- I didn't foresee that happening, I really didn't. To be able to build a golf swing around something that's never been done before, no one's had clubhead speeds as what I've had on the Tour this year with a lower back fusion. These are things that I didn't know I could do and all of a sudden I'm doing it. I'm competing, I'm playing and I'm having just a great time doing it.

Q. At what time did your expectations raise specifically, if you will, from doing this to now I want to try to win again?

TIGER WOODS: I made the changes after L.A., missing the cut in L.A. after not playing well and I was able to make those swing changes right away and play the Honda. That to me, I stepped up another level and I put it together the very next week at Valspar, almost won the event. That's when I knew I had something, that I was able to make a change in my game significantly enough and have the confidence to do it. And to be able to -- to apply it and have it work out within two weeks, one week there at home and then all of a sudden over in Tampa, that's when I knew I had something.

Q. Tiger, with D.C.'s future as a Tour stop obviously a bit up in the air, does this area belong as a regular stop on the Tour and what are your thoughts on the support this event has gotten in the nation's capital?

TIGER WOODS: The support's been fantastic, we just haven't got the sponsorship dollars. This is a tough climate right now and to ask a company for \$7, \$8, \$9 million, it's tough. That's where we're at.

This event's always been supported by our servicemen and women, by the local charities. It's just trying to get a big title in here, that's the hard part. I believe that this is a great sports town. They really support their sports here and they've supported us, it's just now hard to get the corporate dollars.

Q. You were making a fair number of putts probably the first couple months of the season and then not so much lately. What changed in that respect? And secondly, what plans do you have for a putter this week?

TIGER WOODS: You know, what changes? I don't know. That's been the frustrating part. I've had to just log in time and putt for hours to try to figure it out. You know, I hadn't putted well for, what, about four tournaments now. I had a run at THE PLAYERS, but I made some putts that didn't just quite feel right but they were going in. But other than that, I've

struggled. The West Coast and early Florida I putted well, but just haven't done it the last four events.

And so yeah, you saw me experimenting with Ardmore. I'm trying to find something that I can feel again like the swing of the putter, getting my body in the right positions and seeing the lines again. You know, it's just one of those things, once I start to get that ball rolling on my lines, then I'll be back to putting like I was. I just have not been rolling it on my lines. And then on top of that, when they don't roll on lines, then I have a hard time seeing my line and it's a vicious cycle and just trying to get out of that cycle.

Q. Are you use the putter tomorrow?

TIGER WOODS: Yes.

Q. Which one?

TIGER WOODS: I'm going to figure that out later. Yeah, you saw me, I've been putting the time in with this Ardmore. It swings more than mine, has a slight more of a swing to it and that's something I've been looking for because I practice with, and I always have, with the heel-shafted putter at home and I like feeling that toe move and then I'll put my putter back in my hands and I'll putt.

Q. Like a training tool element?

TIGER WOODS: What I have done over time is I've always putted with a heel-shafted putter as a training tool so I can have the same feel in my hands with my putter. Well, this one is kind of a blend between the two, not quite a heel-shafted and not quite a plumber's neck, so I'm kind of right in between.

Q. You already talked about it, but how tough is this golf course and what do you have to do to survive it?

TIGER WOODS: This golf course, it's very simple: You have to drive it well. You cannot play out of this rough, you have to hit a lot of fairways. The greens are tough to get to if you don't hit fairways. With the rough being up, it's wet and we may get some weather in here later today to make it more wet, and then with the heat coming in here on the weekend, it's just going to keep making it grow thicker and thicker and thicker. So got to hit the fairways to have a chance. If you're not going to hit fairways here, you're not going to have a chance.

Q. With your latest comeback, you tempered expectations, you had a good Florida swing, good run at THE PLAYERS. Now that you have 10 events under your belt going into 11, do you have any gauge of what your game is capable of producing this latter half of the schedule?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I'm pretty excited the way I've hit the golf ball. I've done some

things that I haven't done in over a decade, and so to be able to hit the golf ball as well as I have hit it, if I have the same putting stroke I had earlier in the year with the ball-striking I've had, that would be where I want to get to. Just got to put both those things together at the same time.

Q. Tiger, you've mentioned a couple times Firestone being a goal to try to get in there one last time.

TIGER WOODS: Um-hmm.

Q. Short of a win obviously, you need to get the Top-50, you need some good results here.

TIGER WOODS: Yep.

Q. First of all, would you do anything to add if you were short of it?

TIGER WOODS: No.

Q. Can you discuss the whole idea of trying to get in there?

TIGER WOODS: No, Bobby, I'm only going to play two events between now and hopefully the Bridgestone, here and The Open. Yeah, it is one of my goals to get in there just because I've won it eight times. I love Firestone, it's one of the classic golf courses, it's right in front of you. There's no tricks, it's just right in front of you and it's tough. We don't get to play classic courses like that anymore and I've always enjoyed playing it, you can tell by the results I've had.

But I would like to get in there one more time. I know the Senior Tour's going there, or Champions Tour is going there, so eight more years from now I'll be able to get a start and I don't want to wait that long, just another month or so.

Q. Is that just more due to you sort of want to stick to your schedule and don't want to vary too much, bigger picture, you've got Playoff events?

TIGER WOODS: That's the thing is I have to really try and remind myself that what I'm coming back from with this, the injury that I've had and the procedure that I've had. I don't want to play too much, but I need to play enough. So I added one event this year, I added Valspar because I only played two rounds at L.A. So those are little things that I've done tweaking it. Made sure I played enough leading up to the Masters.

I've got a game now that can play, so it's a matter of pacing myself through here, The Open, maybe Bridgestone, and then you've got the PGA and the Playoffs are right there with the Ryder Cup on the back side, so that's a lot of golf coming up in the future. Hopefully I can pace myself, get into the events and make sure I stay strong enough and fresh enough to

play quite a few tournaments.

Q. Tiger, I talked to Adam, the gentleman who caddied with you today, after he was done and he told me it was an early retirement gift from the gods, from the golf gods. What was your interaction with him like today, and more generally, what has it meant to kind of interact with those service members, kind of give them a taste of walking the fairways?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, Adam's retiring here soon. I think the number was announced on the 16th tee there that the servicemen and women who were on that tee box put in a combined total of 338 years served. This is the least we can do to say thank you, let them be a part of this event, part of what we do out here. They've given us the opportunity to do this.

I had a great time walking down the fairways. He was asking a bunch of questions and we were giving Joey the stick a little bit because he had to hit the tee shot on the next hole. We had a good time and not a bad way to retire, yeah. He didn't get the full experience, though. I tried to explain that to him because I was being nice to Joey on the back nine, I took the umbrella out because it's a pretty hilly back nine and he carried on the front nine. He didn't have the full experience of having a Tour umbrella and the rain gear.

Q. With the putter you're trying out, was there like a moment where you thought that you might want to do it? I know you're always poking around in other people's bags out there.

TIGER WOODS: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q. Did you see something where you would like to try something similar, or was Shinnecock just kind of the last draw where you kind of said I think I want to give something else consideration?

TIGER WOODS: There's a lot I can talk about that, one being the fact that this putter has grooves in it so the ball rolls at a faster rate. My old Cameron didn't. But also I ended up trying my old Nike putter out, it had grooves, it rolled faster. You know, my old -- my old blade putter, my old 8802 that I have, that thing is -- the shaft is whippy. You saw how Crenshaw putted with it and that's kind of how you have to putt with it. You have to swing a lot and time it right.

Well, most of the guys out here are using mallets now. It's very interesting. They're using more technology in their putters. I went to more technology when I was with Nike. I went to faster, sharper grooves to get the ball rolling faster. So I'm trying a little bit more of that now with this Ardmore. It has grooves in it, it is rolling a little bit faster, but what I've tried to offset that is I've gone to a little bit more swing to it and so I have a little bit more feel so I don't get away from my basic feel of my fingers and how I putt.

Q. Tiger, to return to the question of golf in D.C. and the future of the tournament for a minute, I'm wondering kind of a two-part question. In the coming weeks and months, how involved will you personally be in determining where this will be held next year, and is it a matter of getting the sponsorship before determining along with that sponsor where the course is going to be?

TIGER WOODS: Well, we can have it here every year, that's not very difficult to do, but it's trying to get the sponsorship dollars and that kind of commitment going forward is the more difficult challenge. We're certainly going to give our best efforts, but the future's unknown. That's frustrating for all of us, not just here at the foundation, what we do, but it's also frustrating for the community here and the people who have supported us and supported this event. The D.C. area really wants to have a golf tournament each and every year. It's just trying to get a sponsor that's willing to come up with the dollars like that and a commitment.

Q. So will you be personally involved in --

TIGER WOODS: I have been personally involved with all of it, yeah. It's been tough, been frustrating and, as I said, it's unknown.

Q. Tiger, your foundation is doing very good with education system for the kids. Did you learn something at school which made you greatest?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think that growing up with my mother being so ardent about school being a priority, she really pushed me to have good grades, a good work ethic. To do everything right and to get those grades, you have to work at it, you have to earn it, you have to put your time in. I think without her drive and her push that I probably wouldn't have gotten into Stanford, and so that was something that I'm very thankful for.

The relationships I've been able to create because of our -- basically my Stanford connection has allowed me an opportunity to meet a bunch of various people and a bunch of influential people in the educational sector. It's helped us a lot with what we're trying to do and it's amazing how many Stanford grads are out there and what they're doing for education around the world. We're trying to be part of that.

Q. Tiger, when did you first put this new putter in your hands and start practicing with it? And over the years, who's been the person who's helped you the most when you've had trouble with putting?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I put it in early last week. Tried a bunch of different shapes and sizes and swings and line, no line, dot, no dot, all the different -- the different styles that TaylorMade makes. I tried and tried to come up with something that I felt I could swing and trust. That's why I've gone with the Ardmere so far this week. I tried it last week on bermuda, I'm trying it here on bent. It's a little bit different, it rolls a little bit differently, but I've got to put it through its paces to see if I can play with it.

Then there's been no better teacher that I've ever had than my dad. I've had coaches throughout my career, but my dad was the best teacher I've ever had with putting and probably ever will.

Q. I'm curious about something considering how long you were out of golf, what was it, like one tournament over two and a half years. When you showed up at Torrey and Tampa and even here, how much time did you find yourself looking at the front of someone's bag to figure out who in the world they were, and have you had any awkward moments this year of not knowing who somebody was when you maybe should have?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, there's been a big turnover of guys. I've been able to be a part of the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup teams, but that's very small, select guys but I got to know them. They're young guys on the teams. But the eye opening one was playing with Sam at Honda.

Q. Burns?

TIGER WOODS: Sam Burns, yes, because Sam's half my age. I've never heard that before when I've been on Tour. I've never heard someone half my age and that was Tomsey at LSU. I'm thinking of David Toms, I'm not thinking of his son. I'm like, oh, Jesus, that's when it kind of hit that there's been a big turnover and I've been away from the game for a while.

Q. What do you do when a young guy comes up and says, "Hi, Tiger," and you have no idea who it is?

TIGER WOODS: It's happened a few times, but that's what's happening out here. A lot of guys come out via the Web and I've been gone for a while. That turnover is happening. I can tell you every single guy on the Champion Tour I've played with, against, I've been on teams with, I've been there when they've been out here when their kids were newborns and now they're off in college. So that part's what I'm accustomed to. This other part's a little bit different for me.

JACK RYAN: Thank you as always for the time, Tiger. Best of luck this week.

TIGER WOODS: Yep. Thanks, guys.