

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
17 December 2019



GREG CHALMERS

MODERATOR: Thank you for coming, everyone. First press conference of the 2019 PGA. Greg Chalmers, it's been a remarkable recovery for you particularly at the Oz Open. How are you finding your form heading into a big week?

GREG CHALMERS: I'm actually really excited. I've had 18 months off, had arthritis in my spine and every joint in my lumbar spine, tore a ligament in my spine. So right around -- took a while to get diagnosed correctly, but I hadn't played seriously for 18 months.

I did play last year down here, but that was more just to see after six months if I could play, and I couldn't. So got it fixed this year and I think I was 4 over after nine at the Australian Open. Pretty much what I expected, a lot of rubbish and a lot of rust, but wiped it off quickly. Four under on the back nine and went on to finish tied fifth. I got a lot of energy about me, about my golf right now, and I'm really looking forward. It's been a great break. Been around my family and now I'm very keen to be playing and excited.

MODERATOR: It's a pretty significant tale of resilience. A lot of golfers have a lot of back problems, yours is quite significant. Has it transformed the way you've had to play your game to ensure that you get back intact?

GREG CHALMERS: No, not really. Transformed the way I kind of have to prepare now. What I do now prior to playing is vastly different than what I used to do, and how I practice now is vastly different. I go a lot more for quality than I do for quantity.

In the past when I was a kid and younger I would have tried to wear you out just by outworking you. Now I have to try and be smarter about it and get my confidence from shorter, sharper sessions and a bit of quality and so far that's been -- all the writing that I've seen on the wall has been good. I'm looking forward to getting after it on Thursday.

MODERATOR: And you clearly love playing here. You're a two-time winner, one time here at Royal Pines. What do you enjoy so much about the Oz PGA?

GREG CHALMERS: I think I like that you can hit it -- both courses where I've won, Coolumb and here, you can hit it any length, you don't have to be super powerful. Power's always going to be an advantage, but any length can be successful. This golf course can put a lot of pressure on your iron play. That's not necessarily a strength of mine, but it does also, if you miss the green, it puts a lot of pressure on your short game and that is a strength of mine.

So I've always seemed to have putted nicely on these greens, had an idea of what I need to

do to be successful, and I just have a nice feeling about coming home and playing all the time. It's always a nice little end to a long season. Usually in this case it's a nice start to hopefully a new little leg of my career, so I'm very keen.

MODERATOR: We'll take time for questions from the floor.

Q. We talked a little before about this, but I wonder if you can allude to the relationship with Brad Hughes. Can you talk a little bit about that arrangement?

GREG CHALMERS: So I went to Brad about two and a half years ago and I was still -- two or three years ago and I was struggling with my back, but I was struggling with my game more than anything else. Still trying to play even though my back wasn't great.

I said, look, I don't have time to rebuild the ark, I have a shorter window here, can you help me with my ball-striking without me taking years to get that done? He said absolutely, I've taken a look at what you're doing. He said I think I can help you.

Ball-striking's improved. Been at it for a while now with him. Pretty simple stuff but very effective, a lot of getting better use out of my feet and my groundwork, and then better position with my hands and path with the club through the ball. So it's led to better ball-striking and that's important for me. If I can strike it even marginally better with my short game, it's going to see some good results, so I'm excited about the future.

Q. Would you say that your ball-striking's as good as it's been for a long time?

GREG CHALMERS: All evidence -- yes. For me, there was always a lot of room for improvement there and he came to me in Dallas at my home club and I think shot two rounds, we played together. I shot 9 under with no bogeys and I was very pleased and excited. I said, Mate, that's the best I've ever hit it. Now, he's a great ball-striker and to him, he said it looks kind of normal to me, so but for me it was really exciting.

So taking that out, though, from a soft environment to a competitive environment under pressure and some old habits creep in. So there's still a lot of work to do, but my good shots are certainly vastly improved from what I used to hit. I still hit some squirrely ones every now and then, but I like what I'm seeing so far.

Q. Greg, can you put your finger on why other guys (inaudible) playing well at the moment. Can you put your finger on why (inaudible) played well, the other -- is it an allure of playing on the Senior Tour that keeps you guys at it?

GREG CHALMERS: Yeah, for me it's a break but it's also the lure of that. I'm also cognizant of I'm 46, I don't just want to tread water. I would actually like to see if I can play at a high level right now, so I'm trying to prepare myself to do that rather than wait and killing four years for no reason. Because bad golf is bad golf, you're not going to magically play well because you turn 50. So I need to play well, so I'm more focused on that and trying to

do it right now.

And look, I played with a lot of young kids like in the last little bit and I get a fire in me about playing with these young guys and sort of trying to beat them. Played some practice rounds there at the Australian Open with some young guys. Lovely guys, but in my head I'm thinking I really want to beat these guys. I still have a real competitive spirit and very keen to do well.

Q. And then obviously this week's the main focus right now, but then for next year, what does your year look like?

GREG CHALMERS: Yeah, I've got seven starts left on a medical and so I'm hoping to start that in late January. That's my expectation right now, play my seven. And depending on when I finish, though, and how I play, I could get four or five more starts, you know, in Reno, for example, or Barbasol or John Deere. There's some events that will pop up along the way so I could get 10 to 12 starts, which starting in January, you're looking at maybe two starts a month, which would wouldn't be too bad for me after having 18 months off. Depending on how I go, I'm exempt into the Playoffs to get your card back on the Korn Ferry, so I've got those three playoff events placed on previous performance. That's how my year frames out at the moment.

Q. Greg, a lot of golfers on tours have back problems, I guess Jason Day's one of them. Early 30s type problems. How recurring can that be for Jason as a problem and do you think he's been unfairly dealt with in maybe just perception that he -- there was a reason not to come to Australia?

GREG CHALMERS: Yeah. Look, from what I've heard, he was very keen to come, and knowing the flak that he's going to cop for not coming, I'm pretty sure it was legitimate back problems.

I would be nervous if I were him and about how young he is and having problems like that. I didn't have my until I was in my mid 40s or early 40s, so that's a bit of a worry. I used to work with Colin Swatton, his coach, and I know how professional he is about having the right people around you and the team of people who all know what they're doing, and he certainly has access to unlimited financial options in terms of seeing the best doctors in the world.

I'm pretty sure they'll be able to figure it out, get his back right. It's pretty important. But if you figure most guys who get to my age bracket, at some point there's a hip, back, shoulder, neck, knee, something that goes, it's just a lot of wear and tear on the body, so you've got to look after it if you can. Hence, the picture of health that I am sitting here right now.

Q. When Elvis Smylie won his Australian Boys title, you sent a nice Tweet saying "Good on you, Elvis." Was that particularly because you know Elvis or because it's great to see another lefty coming through?

GREG CHALMERS: Yeah, two reasons. I had dinner with them here last year. He works with Sean Lynch, who's a good friend of mine and Triggsey. I've known Triggsey for a long time. So we had dinner downstairs here. And he's a lefty, and then actually played nine holes with him at the Australian Open. He reached out through his caddie, Clayts, and Clayts sort of said, Do you want to play nine holes, and I said, yeah, sure.

He reminded me -- as much as it offended me that he was 30 years younger than me, he reminded me of me. He had a nice game and a lot of room, a lot of potential there. So see how that unfolds. I look forward to watching.