

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 21, 2020



TIGER WOODS

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome seven-time winner of the Farmers Insurance Open, Tiger Woods. Tiger, thanks for joining us for a few minutes.

Obviously, a place that is very special to you to come back to given your history here. With that said, just some thoughts on being back here for your 19th start in Farmers at the Farmers Insurance Open.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, looking forward to it. I always have enjoyed coming down here to Torrey Pines and played here in junior golf and obviously played well here as a professional. My dad brought me down here when it was the old Andy Williams, so it's been near and dear to my heart for a number of years, and looking forward to getting out there and playing this year.

DOUG MILNE: Had a little bit of time since the end of the Presidents Cup up until now. If you can just kind of bring us up to speed on how you're feeling coming into the week and what you've been doing.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I didn't touch a club until after -- I take that back. I did play on my birthday. That was the only day I touched a club since the Presidents Cup. Just wanted to get away from it, I was a little bit fried physically, mentally, emotionally and just wanted to have it all end. Played on my birthday with my son and we had a great time. Very similar to what I used to do with my dad on each and every one of my birthdays when my dad was still alive.

DOUG MILNE: One last question and we'll open it up. It's an Olympic year. Just your thoughts, with your incredible resume you already have, how much is the Olympics and Olympic medal on your mind? Is that something you have on your radar?

TIGER WOODS: I think, for the U.S. guys, we're going to have to play well. There's a lot of us that are in the top 15, and I think I just may have just fallen back into it, in the fourth slot. There's so much golf to be played, so many big events, major championships, PLAYERS, World Golf Championships. There's a lot of golf to be played. There will be some pretty good fluctuating over the next six months.

Q. You're playing with Collin. First time, you've been paired with someone who was born after you turned pro. What is your reaction to that?

TIGER WOODS: Say that question again?

Q. It's the first time being paired with someone who was born after you turned professional.

TIGER WOODS: It means I've been out here a while. That's one of the neat things about this sport, it not just encompasses a few years. In order to be a good player or be considered a good player in football, maybe you can get to a decade of playing in the league. Here, we're measured by decades played, which is very different. Some guys have played, like Arnold and Jack and Gary have been pro for over 50 years. It's a different sport, but it's neat to see the young kids come out. I've only seen Collin hit balls, never got a chance to play with him until this week.

Q. Have you noticed a change in the way guys react to playing with you the first time since let's say the early 2000s versus now; level of nerves, that kind of thing?

TIGER WOODS: Well, it will be different. I mean, I don't have the ability to hit the ball as far as I used to compared to the field. That was probably the biggest difference. I was one of two guys to hit the ball over 300 yards consistently when I first came out here. Now we've got 50-plus guys doing the same thing. It's just a different ballgame, but at the end of the day it's how many birdies and how many mistakes can you eliminate throughout a round, throughout a tournament that will lead you to a win. Hopefully, that will be the case for me this week.

Q. Tiger, when you take time away and you come back, what is the thing that's slowest to come around if you feel rusty? Is there a certain part of your game that takes a little while to kind of get back, and has that been the same throughout your career or with experience has that changed a little bit?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I think for me, managing adrenaline takes a little bit of time. I'm so amped up to play that I really have to dumb myself down, to calm myself down to play, because it's one of the things I've always struggled with because I just want to get out there and compete. So sometimes I need to take a step back and calm down before I'm ready.

Finding the rhythm of the round, I always say that to you guys, sometimes I find it on the first hole, sometimes it takes as long as three, four, five holes, and by then hopefully I haven't made too many mistakes on those holes where I can turn a good score in. Sometimes it's gotten me behind and sometimes I've missed cuts because I haven't been able to find the rhythm of the round fast enough.

Q. The last time we saw you obviously you were playing extremely well in Australia. I was wondering, when did you pick up the practice again after the new year and how has it been preparing for the conditions out west, which are about as different as it could be from Royal Melbourne?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, probably started about the 4th -- yeah, 3rd or 4th. Literally concentrating on not practicing. I may hit balls here or there with my son in the backyard,

nothing serious. Then I started to grind up the process of putting, chipping, pitching, wedging, working my way throughout the entire bag. Did a little bit of testing and trying to find some new clubs to hit the ball further and straighter and make me shoot lower scores, so all the good stuff.

Q. You mentioned the driver. I know you've been testing a driver and a new golf ball. What was the testing process like for you? Are you planning on putting any of it in the bag this week and have you seen any improvements?

TIGER WOODS: I have seen improvements in the new SIM. I'm a little bit faster, but still need to do a little more testing out here. I think we're going to add a little bit of weight to it, feels a little bit light to me right now.

Yeah, I have picked up a little bit of speed, which is nice. I know what my driver can do, I know my current driver's not maxed out, it's not supposed to be. It's a driver where I can hit a draw anytime I want, and then when I do hit a cut, it doesn't really go very far but I know I can turn it at any given time. That's what I want with the SIM driver, I want to be able to draw it and then hit my little slap cut up there kind of shortening the fairway. Trying to find both, meanwhile giving me more distance with both shots, would be ideal.

Q. This is Jack's 80th birthday, so when this happens, a lot of us and a lot of fans speculate on how many majors you might have had if not for the years that you lost.

Do you ever spend any time speculating on that or thinking about it?

TIGER WOODS: Not really, because to even get to the number I got to or I'm at right now, 15's a lot. You know, not too many guys who are around have seen that kind of number before. So it's just going to take time. It took Jack about 26 years to get to it, it's taken me 20-some-odd years to get to mine. It just takes time to cumulate the number of wins. Yes, there were a number of years where I didn't compete and didn't play so those were some missed opportunities. But granted, I'm playing again now so these are blessed opportunities, I didn't think I would have these.

Q. Tiger, it seems like the older you get the expectations are just as strong. You would think it would be the other way around, when a guy gets older the expectations come down a little bit. You can't control what the public thinks, but what about you, what are your expectation levels like as time has gone on, as the years have gone on?

TIGER WOODS: Well, when I was younger it was -- I had more good days than bad feeling-wise. Now at 44 I feel more bad days than I do good days. I think all of you at my age or older can relate to that. I think that's the hardest part about being an older athlete. You see it all the time at the Masters. You see it every single year, either Fred, Langer or somebody's up there for about two to three days, then they fade. It's hard to put it together for all four days as you get older. It's just harder.

That's one of the things that I've noticed, it's just harder to do, it's hard to recover now. But I've been able to have won a few tournaments since I've made my comeback and hopefully I win some more.

Q. Tiger, with No. 83 looming, is there a building excitement within yourself, your camp? And secondly, is there a sporting milestone or two from your life watching other people achieve something that kind of stands out to you?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think that the number just trying to get to 83, I don't think that -- it really doesn't -- I really don't think about it because I have to think about all the things I need to do to win the golf tournament. There's so many different shots I have to play and strategy and thinking my way around the golf course that I'm more consumed in that.

Now, as far as streaks, I think probably one of the all-time best when I was growing up was Edwin Moses. What did he win, like 113 straight races or something stupid like that. You've got to lose one of them, right? Clip your foot on a hurdle or something, but nothing happened.

Q. Just as a follow, if you were to have a chance to win on a Sunday, you were right there, there's lot of people are going to in this world (inaudible) pull that we would probably recognize these people. Do you find that interesting, that the world may come to that green to kind of see you achieve that?

TIGER WOODS: Let's just get there first, okay?

Q. Tiger, you played so well at the end there last year, certainly the win and then the Bahamas you had a chance, played great at the Presidents Cup. Is there any carryover ever or momentum or are you kind of starting over again?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I feel like I ended the year on a good note and I felt like my game really didn't need a whole lot of kind of dusting. But I am, as I said, I am putting some new woods in play this week, so I'm going to have to do the testing, making sure they're ready to go. If not, I'll go back to my old faithful. As far as everything else, it's the same in the bag.

Q. Tiger, multiple part question. Have you had a chance to play the South Course with the new bunkering? And also from not just a player but as a golf architect that you are, just curious to see if you have any opinion on what makes a fair U.S. Open test down here in 2021?

TIGER WOODS: Have not seen the new bunkering in person. I've seen it in photos that somebody was kind enough to send me. No, I haven't seen it in person. I'll see it tomorrow during the pro-am. I'm playing the South Course tomorrow at 6:40, so I'll see it then.

What makes for a fair U.S. Open? I just think that narrow fairways, hard greens, high rough, it doesn't need to be complicated. That's what I grew up playing and that's what I grew up

watching. You missed a fairway, you were punished.

Rarely ever a person ever advanced the ball to the green. So back in the days that I used to watch, the main stars in U.S. Opens were, seemed like, Lee Janzen or Payne Stewart or Scott Simpson. Those guys seemed to be up there on the leaderboard -- tom Kite -- like every single U.S. Open, just because they played that kind of game.

I understand they want to have it exciting, but also I think it's exciting when it's just narrow and tough.

Q. Tiger, the 18 majors is the one that sort of gets all the press, but how do you compare 82 versus 18 in terms of a record, what it means and how important it is to you?

TIGER WOODS: Well, it's being able to win consistently and win a lot. I mean -- and to have to -- I think in the course of my career I've won about five times in a year like 10 times. So you've got to get it in bunches if you want to get to 82 total. Or if you want to go the 18 route and just do what Brooksy's doing, you can do it that way, too.

There's different ways to doing it. I think winning breeds winning. When I won other golf tournaments, I felt more confident going into major championships and I was able to take off some of the majors because of it.

Q. Tiger, coming back from all the surgeries, you know your body differently now. Is preparation radically different from when you were a superstar dominating the Tour, and what's it been like psychologically for you fighting all the way back and do what you did at the end of last season?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, it is, it is different. Let's say, for example, if you and I want to go hit balls right now or go play golf right now, I couldn't go to the first tee and hit a big tee shot. I could maybe chip a driver maybe 100 yards. I need to get worked on, I need to stretch, I need to get loosened up and then start the process on the range of moving. It's hard. I have a fixed point in my lower back, it's not moving, so I have to loosen everything else around it.

DOUG MILNE: Tiger, best of luck. Thanks for your time.

TIGER WOODS: You got it. Thank you.