

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
May 5, 2021



ERNIE ELS

Q. Here at the Regions Tradition, is it safe to say this is your first trip to Alabama?

ERNIE ELS: Not my first trip to Alabama, first trip to Birmingham. I've been to the Auburn University. My nephew went to college there, so I went to watch Alabama play Auburn of all things. So yeah, so that was my trip. But first time here, first time to the Regions. Really nice to be here. I had a really great morning.

Q. Just talk a little bit about that experience, playing with football royalty.

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, that is royalty right there. I'm from South Africa, so I've been coming to the U.S. many years and I kind of understand the culture here, especially in football culture. That is as high up the tree as you can go, Nick Saban. So it was a real treat to play with him and have a chat with him. Just to be around him was really special.

Q. What was it like just seeing the crowds and the fans around him?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I mean, he's something else. It's like some kind of a rock star, Elvis Presley walking around. People just want to be near him, they want to be close to him, they just want to touch and feel him. He's the man around here, and rightfully so. Arguably, probably -- not even arguably, he's the best coach in my lifetime. To have been paired with him and to rub shoulders with him was great. It was a good time.

Q. You got a chance to see the course today. Just talk a little bit about that.

ERNIE ELS: I think the course held up unbelievably. I mean, yesterday we had six inches of rain. I really didn't even think we would play this morning, but they've done well, the superintendents have done well. The greens are running beautifully. So I think we're in for a good week. It's still going to be very soft. We're probably going to have the ball in hand probably the first maybe two rounds and then see how it goes. Really happy to see the course being playable.

Q. Anything about like a PGA TOUR Champions major, like does that jack you up any more?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, this is a major, so to come to the first major of the year, I haven't played too many majors in my senior Champions career. I think I played Bridgestone was my last one, and this one. Yeah, there's definitely a different vibe even from the people, especially having spectators. Yeah, I just want to get to know the course better and hopefully get into the mix over the weekend.