

JIM FURYK

Q. Recollect a little bit for me, five years ago, 68 at Travelers. What kind of comes to mind most?

JIM FURYK: I can't remember a damn thing, just, I mean, obviously an exciting day. I was on like a 29-day trip away from home and I was heading home that night. I hadn't been playing very well. I had been making some cuts, but finishing kind of deep in the field. I was struggling with my ball-striking some, hitting too many golf balls on the range. The wind all week in Hartford was left to right, it was an awful wind to practice in. Just frustrated.

I played -- I finished off my Thursday round with a double at 17, put myself in a hole. I had to go out and fire a low number on Friday to make the cut and I got it going quick, but I almost butchered the 9th hole. I almost made bogey on 9 to miss the cut. Made a nice like 8-foot par save, breaking into the cup left to right, it made a nice cut, so that got me in.

So I'm playing the weekend and then I go out and shoot 1 over on Saturday. Now I'm T-70, trying to figure out what's the earliest flight I can get on and how quick can I get home. Maybe I can get home in time to actually light the barbecue and watch the end of the tournament on TV, that's how bad I'm playing at the moment.

Went out Sunday morning, was kind of in a good mood. I stayed in player dining I remember a little longer. I was having a cup of coffee, I was talking to someone, having a good time, too. Went out to the range, I hit some balls, I was BS'ing with the guy next to me. Time got away and Mike said we've only got like eight minutes until our tee time, so I didn't have time to hit a putt. So I just walked up on the first tee. There was about four people on the first tee, maybe 10 at most, and it's funny how many people since have walked up to me and said, "I was there for every shot when you shot 58." I was like, there was only like four to 10 people on the first tee, so you had to be one of them. That's all I can say, there was no one there that early on Sunday.

That round kind of, it mirrored the 59 that I shot at Conway Farms. I shot 8 under on the front nine. I holed an iron shot for eagle, made the turn, got off to a really fast start on the back nine and then it was kind of a mental battle. So mental battle the last four or five holes, you're trying to break those barriers and trying to enjoy it. I hit a lot of very good shots down the stretch, which was fun.

Q. That last putt when you realized, holy cow, I shot a 58.

JIM FURYK: I was more impressed that I got the birdie putt to the hole, I've got to be honest with you. You know, two-putt to break the all-time record, I actually got it to the hole.

If you watch my reaction, I hit the putt and I watched it and it looked like it had a chance, it didn't break, and I went, like wow, I got it to the hole. I thought you'd just lag it up there, tap it in, get out of Dodge. At that point you're nervous. It's like trying to win a golf tournament. I knew where I stood and it was a lot of fun.

Q. I was just curious, I mean, I know this is -- I mean, now that the fans are back, do you -- did it take you a while to realize how much you missed them or like, I mean, was it -- or was it just a horrible void, you know, last season?

JIM FURYK: It was strange, then it became the norm, which was kind of a bummer. It was so awkward for the first two or three weeks when you'd hit a shot to an elevated green or the pin was tucked behind a bunker and you had no idea whether it was a foot or 30 feet. Usually you listen to the crowds roar. Late in the day on Sunday say you're out on 17, you hear this giant roar on 12, you're like, wow, I wonder who just -- you know, was that Jon Rahm or was it Jordan Spieth? You're looking at the board. You just didn't have that, everything was just so tame.

I think the guys missed the buzz and just the excitement of it all. Like watching the U.S. Open last week and it looked -- you know, I didn't expect California to honestly be that crowded. It looked pretty crowded and it was fun. I think the emotion of the players even gets ramped up because of the sound and the emotion of the fans, if that makes sense. It makes for a -- it just makes for a bigger stage and more fun for everyone.

Q. I mean, I know you wouldn't get more ramped up to win a major with the crowd, but do you need that adrenaline more in a normal week maybe?

JIM FURYK: I heard a lot about that. There's guys that are playing well because there's not fans, there's not excitement. I heard all these theories. I don't know. I still got nervous, I still -- it's still my job and my living and I still have a competitive fire where I want to play well. I'm not sure it really affected my performance one way positive or negative. I struggle with the theory that it helped guys in a positive way. I struggle with that. Maybe someone that just said it just didn't feel like a big event and it hurt them in a negative way, I could see it, I could see that.

You know, we missed having fans out, and we're still not really to full capacity in a lot of areas, but it is nice to kind of turn the corner a little bit and see everything going in the right direction.

Q. Do you -- one more thing. I know you're fully committed to the Champions, but when Phil won, did you wonder if guys who were 48 or 49 would say let's not make the switch to the other tour because Phil, you know --

JIM FURYK: Phil's a little bit of an anomaly as you know. He's won 40 -- whatever it is, 45 times, so other than say Tiger and maybe Vijay in their 40s, no one else is really at that level in our era.

He's always been special and different. I mean, in a positive and negative way. I'm just kidding. You've got to -- don't get me wrong, he's a buddy, he's the whole thing.

Q. I'm just thinking like there's --

JIM FURYK: He's always been special and always been the anomaly and always been the guy at our age level that we had to beat. When he was a junior golfer, he was good enough to win in college. When he was in college, he was good enough and did win at the PGA TOUR level. Then he went on to win all those events. I really take what he does with a bit of a grain of salt. Like if we were always comparing ourselves to him, we basically always got our butts kicked along the way.

Each and every one has to kind of pick the time when they want to stop playing the Tour full time and play the Champions Tour full time. Some guys will try to go 50/50. It may last -- for Hale Irwin, he said it lasted less than a year. He was like, he just flipped the page and said I want to go play the Champions Tour. Strick's done it for a lot longer than most, but I think a lot of that has to do with the Ryder Cup. He wants to stay connected to that younger generation that's going to play for him.

The guys that come to mind like Davis Love and Vijay, I think they built their games around the PGA TOUR. They hit it hard, they hit it far. They weren't wedge- and putter-type guys, they were guys that were built on power, so they felt like -- Davis always said, hey, if I putt well enough to win on the Champions Tour, I feel I putt well enough to win on the PGA TOUR. He did at Greensboro.

So you have to kind of pick and choose the right time. For me, I just felt like I dabbled. I picked out like Flint because I love the golf course; Pebble Beach, love the golf course. Went back to the PGA TOUR, finished out my season and said, well, I'm going to run out and play these last four events on the Champions Tour, see what they're like and I can make my decision.

I just enjoyed it. I enjoy the carts in the practice rounds, I enjoy -- I didn't know how I would feel about the three-round tournaments, but it's just a little bit more of a track meet. We're in the 100-meter dash out here. We're not running the 800 anymore, we're running the 100-meter.

Q. People might think that might be less pressure, but it probably isn't?

JIM FURYK: It's more of a fast start. You get out there and shoot even par the first day, you can recover in three rounds a lot better than two. You need to go, you need to make some birdies.

But not being a long player and really giving up a lot of distance now on the PGA TOUR, I started looking at stats and one of the stats that really was key to me is I compared myself to

the 100th ranked driving distance guy on the PGA TOUR. One of my better years, either 2010 or 2015, I forget which year it was, but I averaged -- it was like the longest I ever averaged in my career was 282 off the tee. No. 100 was 289, so I was giving up seven yards to No. 100, which is not a big deal.

Cut to 1920 [sic], my last full year -- so at 50 I averaged 281, I was one yard off my all-time distance, but No. 100 was 298. Now, instead of giving up seven yards, I was giving up 17. That's a big hole, that's a big hole. I'm giving up two or three irons a hole for an entire week. That season I led the Tour in greens saves, but it's a lot harder to be close in proximity when you're giving up that much distance.

So it kind of was apparent to me maybe I could compete out there at Hartford and maybe RBC and there's courses I really feel I can compete, but to do it for an entire season was harder. And I really enjoy being out here. I really enjoy being on the Champions Tour. My wife and I now have a Champions Tour event, so it made it even that much easier to support this tour 100 percent.

Q. How does it feel to be here? Let's start with the basics.

JIM FURYK: It's good. I missed coming to Akron, I missed the fans here and really missed the golf course. This was one of my favorites that we played every year. And you kind of had to earn your way into this event as a World Golf Championship or even before that, winning a PGA TOUR event. But always look forward to getting the opportunity to come and play, and had a lot of success here and really that was due to the fact that I enjoyed Akron, but I really enjoyed Firestone.

Q. This has been a favorite of a lot of players for years and years.

JIM FURYK: Well, some guys complain a lot, which I enjoy, I enjoy. Thought it was too hard, rough was too deep, fairways are too narrow. I heard a lot of bitching and moaning over the years, but it really wasn't because it wasn't a good course, it was because it was a hard golf course.

Q. But it brings out the best in everybody?

JIM FURYK: I love it, no complaint here. If I -- if guys complain, then I'm even happier.

Q. That's what they wanted me to find out.

JIM FURYK: I've been dealing with media for about 40 minutes and I'm really feisty.

Q. That's perfect. That's all we need.

JIM FURYK: It's Golf Channel's fault, they ran over.