

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 26, 2021



JIM FURYK

Q. Welcome back. What was it like being back out on the course here at Warwick Hills?

JIM FURYK: Nice to be back. I played nine on Tuesday, kind of had yesterday off and then 18 today in the pro-am. The golf course looks good, it's in good shape. You can tell it's a little wet, some rain on Tuesday night while I was here, but I think it rained also over the weekend. The golf course is still pretty damp and wet, and I think there's some rain in the forecast tomorrow, so hopefully that misses us and it can dry up. It still looks good, but it's soft out there.

Q. Do you prefer to have it dry so the ball rolls out or do you like being able to go pin seeking a little more?

JIM FURYK: I think everyone would like to see the golf course a little firmer, a little faster. Those conditions tend to separate the guys that are playing well versus the ones that aren't, right? When the golf course is wet, when it's soft, you can get away with a little bit more. It's easier to get the ball up and down, iron shots don't have to be quite as crisp, you can go directly at some of the flags. I think guys like that firm, fast condition if you can get it, but you can't change Mother Nature, right? As I said, the golf course is in good shape.

Q. In terms of playing in this heat, does it have any effect at all?

JIM FURYK: I don't think so. It's warm, it's hot, but it's not terrible. And guys out here, if they want to, they can ride in a cart. I'll walk. No, it's not that hot out here.

Q. Coming back to a course where you already won at, who's your competition? Is it the players or is it more so yourself because you already know what you have to do?

JIM FURYK: Well, the field's stacked, there's so many good players out here. I think we're always competing against the golf course, we're competing against ourselves and you kind of see how that stacks up with the field. You're really not playing against one individual until you get maybe like Brett and I down the stretch last year, became like a two-man race the last three or four holes and it becomes a little bit of a match play at times. But other than that, you're playing against yourself, you're playing against the golf course and you hope you get out there and fire a good round and it stacks up.

Q. Do you ever think about just what this last year's been like for you? Coming back to where it all started on PGA TOUR Champions to now, do you ever get a chance to sit back and reflect?

JIM FURYK: Yeah, I get asked the question a lot. It's been a good, solid year. I did go back and play some PGA TOUR events after this event last year in the late summer, early fall and then I went back out in the spring and played some. I think now I've kind of found a home on PGA TOUR Champions, I'll play 95 percent plus of my golf out here. I really enjoy being here and, as I said, this was a great place to start. I played a lot of PGA TOUR events on this golf course, I had had a lot of success, I had won here, so to kind of start I guess the next phase of my career on the Champions Tour, this was a perfect spot to start.

Q. Is there anywhere around Grand Blanc that you like to go when you come here? Any restaurants or anything that you frequent?

JIM FURYK: It's been a long time. Last year we really didn't have that opportunity because of COVID, because we were asked as players not to really go out to dinner and try to keep everything as positive as possible. I guess that's a negative, keep everything as positive as possible while we were out here. I really didn't get -- I remember there was a place that a lot of folks frequented and I'm not even sure it's still there, maybe like a Redwood Lodge or --

Q. That's still around.

JIM FURYK: Still there? Okay, I imagine. As things start to free up, I'll have to get back and check it out.

Q. Just one more question about playing, seeing the stands and everything coming back out, how does that affect depth perception and where you want to place the ball?

JIM FURYK: It helps, to be honest with you. I think it gives you much better framing of the hole, it gives you targets and stuff to aim at. We got used to playing with stands, with television towers, backdrops on holes and then you go to a golf course where you've seen that for -- on the PGA TOUR sometimes for 20, 25 years and you go and it's just dead empty, it has a totally different look.

And we just missed having fans out, having some excitement, some buzz. The most awkward thing about playing in front of no fans is when you can't see a green, like an elevated green or a pin behind a bunker, and you hit a shot in there and you think it's good and there's just dead silence because there's no one up there. You're like, I wonder if I hit it three feet or it's 30 feet, it's kind of that anticipation on the walk-up. We really judge kind of the quality of the shot on the reaction we hear from the crowd usually.

Q. For this year obviously defending the tournament title is important, but do you think about that more or the position on the Money List and trying to keep your spot?

JIM FURYK: I try not to worry about either of those. I mean, we have a lot of golf left to get to the Schwab Cup and try to win the season-long race. You know, trying to think about

winning a golf tournament, everyone shows up and the goal is to try to win the golf tournament, but it's kind of like putting the cart before the horse a little bit as well. You have to focus on what's it going to take, what do I need to work on in my game, what are my strengths and weaknesses right now, what's this golf course -- I feel like you need to drive the ball very well here and if you drive the ball well here and your wedge game, say 125 yards and in, is pretty solid, you're going to have a good opportunity here. So kind of focus on the things that I need to work on, things that this golf course requires to play well and work on those Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and try to get your game ready and just go play. And I'm smart enough now after 25 years, I've had some tournaments where I've had great prep and felt like I was playing well enough to win and I've missed cuts, I've had some tournaments where I didn't feel confident at all in my game, I ended up winning that golf tournament. You kind of take things as they come and go out and play the best you can.

Q. You saw 17 and how they've added even more stands around it. I won't say it's Phoenix yet, but it's starting to feel a little bit more like that. What memories do you have of 17 from back in the Buick days and then how nice is it --

JIM FURYK: My best memory I think was in '01, I remember that was a Ryder Cup year, ended up getting postponed to '02, but coming into this event I was on the outside looking in, I think I was maybe 11th in points, top-10, 11th, 12th, top-10 or maybe I was 9th, top-8 would qualify. No, it was top-10. I was probably 11th in points. Came in here, I was having a really good event and I hit a 5-iron kind of on the front of the green. The pin was maybe 40 feet short of the pin, pin was that back center and I trained a long snake up that hill breaking pretty hard right to left. It went in, the crowd went crazy.

And at the time whoever was leading, and it might have been Tiger but I can't remember, whoever was leading that year, they were pretty far out ahead and I think it was Chris DiMarco and I were kind of battling for the second spot. That kind of jumped me into the second spot and the crowd on the way over was kind of chanting "U-S-A!" They knew I was trying to make the Ryder Cup team. It was pretty cool, just a cool moment with the local crowd. And I ended up making I think par at 18, I think I tied for second and that jumped me into the top-10, like maybe seventh or eighth in a position where I made that team, so it was a pretty cool week for me.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM FURYK: A lot of that's setup and also course conditions, so right now with the course being soft, I expect to see the same scores. Last year the golf course got pretty firm and fast on Saturday. The ball was moving. Then we got all that rain Saturday night, Sunday morning and the golf course played a lot more damp.

So I think with soft conditions you'll see some good scoring again. I didn't see a ton of wind in the forecast, so that being said, I think the scores will be low as you've seen in the last few years.