

**ERNIE ELS**

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**Q. Thanks for joining us today. Can you talk a little bit about the course now that you've been out there?**

**ERNIE ELS:** It's a hell of a golf course. I mean, I can see where the history comes from, I can see why so many great tournaments were played here. It's an old-style golf course that's just what you see is what you get. You've got to hit it good to score well, and I think the guys are really going to love it this week. It's in great shape and I think the weather's going to be good, so looking forward to a good week.

**Q. Being back in St. Louis, can you talk a little bit about your memories playing here?**

**ERNIE ELS:** Well, especially this week, I'm staying in the same hotel as in 2001 and yeah, it's a weird one. 2001 on a Tuesday when it happened. I came in yesterday, went to the same hotel 20 years later, so it's very eerie.

But it's good to be back in St. Louis. I played the BMW tournament at Bellerive a couple years ago. I did not play the PGA, so it's good to be back here. It's a good golfing town, good sporting town.

**Q. (Inaudible) going to someplace for an event that's new to you?**

**ERNIE ELS:** Well, this year's been a lot of weeks, but still kind of coming through my rookie year with COVID last year, so this is a new event, new event for everybody. Yeah, every week, almost every week this year's been kind of a new week. I'm just kind of adjusting as I go along. It's nice to see another new one and really nice to see a really good one. This is really one of the classic golf courses. The guys are really going to enjoy this.

**Q. When you played on the regular tour, you would build your schedule around the majors, you would find success on tour, winning a major or world rankings. Now that you're playing on this tour, how did you build your schedule and what's your measure of success here?**

**ERNIE ELS:** Yeah, that's exactly what I did for the bulk of my career, I was in the category where I could really build my schedule around the majors and that's what I did. You know, out here on the Champions Tour it's a little different. We just are so glad to be playing golf in the era that we're in at the moment. A lot of guys just play every single week because it's so great to be out playing golf. So I kind of have done that, and I wanted to play as many tournaments as I could to see which ones I like and which ones I don't like so much and then I'll start building a schedule around that say from next year on. I don't think I'll play every

single week like I have been for the past year, but it's been fun.

**Q. They're expecting record-breaking crowds to come out here this weekend. What is that experience like for you guys out there on the course?**

**ERNIE ELS:** Well, on our tour, to see the fans is just spectacular, it's wonderful. They bring a great atmosphere to the event. It's serious but it's not quite like on the regular tour, so the guys will interact a little bit with the crowd and the crowd can interact with us a little bit. It's kind of a fun atmosphere. The crowds can come out here, drink their beer and cheer us on, and then the guys will really enjoy that. It's a good atmosphere to play golf in.

**Q. Guys have talked about it's not as much life and death as it was maybe 20 years ago. Do you really get a sense of that out here and can that be good for your game, bad for your game?**

**ERNIE ELS:** There's a lot of pressure, the guys are feeling it now. The guys that are in the running for the Charles Schwab Cup at the end of the year, we're kind of coming down the final seven, eight events, so there's a lot to play for.

We grew up -- in many ways we've grown up since we were junior golfers in many cases with some of the players here, so we've competed for a very, very long time against each other. So it's nothing new, nothing's going to change. We're a lot more friendly, but the competitive edge is there when you come down the stretch and you know you want to try and win the tournament, but it's in a good nature. The guys help each other on the range, we play practice rounds together and we know each other's game, so we're rooting for each other, but at the end of the day somebody has to win.

**Q. The origins of this tour (inaudible) to the careers of Jack and Arnie and Gary and players like that who created sort of a different kind of vibe about it, more nostalgic golf as it is necessarily competitive golf. You would have been quite young at that time. How much did you follow senior golf when they were out here?**

**ERNIE ELS:** It was big. I mean, 30 years ago it was huge. They had Jack, Lee Trevino, Gary Player, Tom Watson, all the greats of the game played the Champions Tour. And I know it's a bit more loose, but I can promise you, you can ask Jack and Arnold and Lee Trevino, all those guys, when it came down to it, would you give up an event for your buddy, and I promise you 110 percent of the guys would say no, no way.

We play in a good spirit out here, but there's no way it's not competitive and the guys don't want to win. It's just it's in a friendlier environment and it's basically more old-school style golf, you know, where you're kind of rooting for the guy, but you want to win the tournament.

**Q. Did you follow it quite a bit?**

**ERNIE ELS:** I did. I watched a lot of it. Chi Chi played, I remember. Jim Colbert, who's out

there. I mean, there was so many great players. I'm missing out on a lot of them, but I watched a lot of them. A good friend of mine, Simon Hobday, he played. He came out here and he felt he had a second go at things and he actually won the U.S. Senior, I think, at Pinehurst if I'm not mistaken. It added a new career for him again. John Bland played out here, Mark McNulty played out here, Dennis Watson. Nick Price, one of my mentors, played out here. so I watched it closely, so it's nice to be part of it.