

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**October 6, 2021**



**PADRAIG HARRINGTON**

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**MAUREEN RADZAVICZ:** Mr. Harrington, here making your PGA TOUR Champions debut this week at the Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS. Just your thoughts on getting started out on Champions?

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Yeah, it's really nice to start out. Obviously I was 50 a month ago. It's probably the only birthday as you're getting older that you look forward to.

It's nice I can be here to help Jim out. I've known Jim a long time and as much as I have to pick a first event, this is a nice first event. As regards, not sure what to expect, kind of playing this week, next week to put some feelers out, see what it's like, see how I like it. I'm interested to see how my game stacks up. Probably spent the last 10 years trying to be competitive with the younger guys, maybe I wonder have I strengthened some of my game and weakened some of the important parts that would be important out here.

Certainly coming back to this, the Champions Tour, I'm going to be a little bit more comfortable in the environment. I know I've got to get back to working on my wedge play, working on my short game to be competitive.

**MAUREEN RADZAVICZ:** What's the reception been since you've been out here today, seeing some of your old friends?

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** It's been fun. Bernhard Langer tried to wind me up on the first tee. It is, it's really nice to meet some of the old guys. Maybe over the last 10 years I suppose this has changed, but the guys who are out here, I would have come out on Tour, they would have been the guys that I put up on a pedestal, they were the guys I competed against, they were the guys I was afraid to play against, they were the guys I had to mentally get my head around, how can I compete against a Retief Goosen and Ernie Els and Monty when I was a rookie.

Obviously they're the guys now I go to and ask what it's about, which is interesting. It's certainly -- when I was a rookie in 1996 I certainly didn't go to them and ask what it was all about. I suppose we had, as a rookie when went on Tour, I had the protection -- there was probably 14 Irish guys on Tour and as we used to say, Des Smith was like dad on Tour. If there was ever a problem, he was the one who sorted it out.

As a rookie on the Champions Tour, people seem to be a lot more, I suppose a lot more giving, a lot more understanding. People want to give you advice and help you out. It doesn't feel like being a rookie on the regular Tour where you really are out of your depth. This is a lot more comfortable. So, so far, so good.

**Q. You just touched on it, Bernhard. You say you feel like a rookie and everything. What's your particular explanation for his longevity and the fact that he's remained this competitive into his 60s the way he has?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Just his personality, his nature. Obviously he's physically very fit, always has been. I got to see him at the PNC Father-Son every year and if you stand behind him on the range, you know why he's that good. From like 140 yards, if you watch any of those short flags out there, his ball just comes down all over it. Like it's incredible how good he is at that range, which is obviously on the Champions Tour is very important. It's important everywhere, but he's particularly good and you can see why he is competitive out here.

You know, you look at a course like this, it doesn't stack up to you've got to bomb it out there, you've got to hit the right shots. One good wedge shot always equals a good drive anywhere, it's better than a good drive. You can see Bernhard from 7-iron down is really good and he's solid everywhere else.

**Q. Who's giving you advice about coming out here and what's been worth remembering?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** I think everybody's offered me advice. There hasn't been a player who hasn't who's out here. I've asked questions because, you know, you're always trying to see how the hell are you shooting 16 under par every week. That's a big number for three rounds. So you're asking questions what the golf course is like, what's the length of the course, what's the pace of the greens, what are the pin positions. Just generally just being inquisitive trying to find out.

But everybody, there wouldn't be a player on that Champions Tour that I haven't asked what their experience is like, what they think. You know, maybe even Phil more so just in the sense that he's gone out there, come back. That's probably -- I still want to be competitive with the regular guys. I probably spent the last 10 years trying to be competitive at that level and I wonder how coming out here, does it make me better, will it make me sharper, will it make me shoot lower scores, feel more confident and more comfortable on the course. That could be a good thing going back to the regular Tour, but obviously going back and playing against a substantially tougher golf course setup, that could be difficult once you've gone here. Maybe you can never go back, I'm just not sure. It's still something I'm exploring and I suppose ultimately, and this is what most of the players said, it's up to me to find my feet, whether I think I can go back and forth or whether I'm fully committed to being here.

**Q. What kind of or was there any type of a Ryder Cup hangover at Dunhill last week and do you expect it to linger if there was?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Yeah, I certainly, I hit a wall on the second day, not so much the first day. I three-putted three of my last four greens. I look back at that, just was too much. I

think to do well the week after a Ryder Cup, a few of the players, you have to get a good start and have that momentum. It was never a week you're going to fight against the tide sort of thing.

Look, it was a tough week on the golf course. I didn't actually play so bad. I would be happy if I played the same way this week and just scoring a little bit better.

**Q. I mentioned it to Jim, there's 10 Ryder Cup captains in the field this week, which is kind of unusual. I was curious if there was somewhat of a camaraderie or fraternity amongst --**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** I think the two most -- how would I put it? When we did the shaking of hands on the 18th green, I think the two most relevant ones to me was Jim Furyk and Davis Love because they were obviously -- they have had tough times as a Ryder Cup captain, so they would understand my position. That was probably the two most relevant. I was delighted for Steve Stricker. There was certainly more of a Jim and Davis have been through what I've been through now, so certainly something.

There is a bond between all the captains I'm sure, good and bad. Certainly when you've been on the losing side, you look to the other guys who have also been in that position.

**Q. Jim actually mentioned he was on the tee when it ended --**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Yeah.

**Q. -- with you and Steve and there was just that moment of "I know how you feel."**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Yeah, that's what I'm saying. I got that distinctly there, but especially at that closing ceremony, a little bit of a walk-through. I understood them more and, you know, I could see that they understood where I'm at. It's a tough -- that's always the battle of being the Ryder Cup captain, is a one and done. You win, you're a hero. You lose, you're a zero. That's the way it is. You know that going into it, so you have to take responsibility, but certainly, yeah, talking briefly to gym and even without words, Jim and Davis (inaudible).

**Q. One last thing on that, I don't know if "consolation" is the right word, but I think as people look at that week, it's rare to see a team that good play to its form that well.**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** The biggest problem we have in Europe is we've really innovated over the last 20 years. The U.S. have just copied us. They do everything we do. Until somebody finds the next unknown, at the moment we don't know what that is, but it's hard to get an edge. The U.S. team was very strong on home ground, but they had everything. They had everything that Europe has done over the years, they've learned from it, and Europe should be proud of the fact that, as I said, we pushed the U.S. team to really work hard and explore every avenue to make themselves the best team. No longer can they

just throw the balls up in the air and go out and play.

So Europe should be very proud of that fact that we forced the U.S. into this position, but it's tough when you've got such a good team and they didn't let up, they had everything well and truly worked out. The extra bit of practice did really help in the sense that they got the wind. We practiced in a completely different wind to the tournament wind and I believe one of their practice days was that tournament wind. Little things like that, but clearly they pushed themselves into a corner. Now they all have to go the week before Italy in two years.

**Q. How do they copy you? What do you mean by that?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Everything that we've done, everything that we've tried to do over the years, they're doing right down to, you know, like even with the stats, they're aware. They always try to play their weakest team against our best team so they're trying to get their 1, 2, and 3 against our 2, 3 and 4, which is the smart way of getting the most results out of the format. I could see everything, there was nothing -- yeah, they were well prepared. There's nothing that we're doing in Europe, there's no secrets. We did everything we could in Europe. The team really pulled together. I think all the way through the team I couldn't have asked more from everybody on the team, and that's not just players; the caddies were brilliant, the wives, the immediate family, everybody under some tough circumstances, everybody was pulling in the same direction.

Can't second guess our performance, just U.S. did a great job all the way through and they got their stats right, they got everything like that in terms of their picking, you know. Everything they did was spot on what they learned from us.

**Q. Have you thought about the three rounds versus four rounds at all?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** I've thought about no-cut Friday. Like on the regular Tour I'm literally strangling myself on a Thursday eight holes into the round, I'm putting -- I was at one of my last tournaments, I was probably, I think I was 3 under par, I was putting to go 4 under par, which was ninth on Friday morning, like it was probably eight holes into my round on Friday morning and 4 under par was in the top-10 and I missed that. Then I missed on the next hole for par, so now I'm 2 under par and I know the cut's 1. So one minute I'm top-10, the next minute I'm looking at the cut line.

When I'm at the level on the main Tour where I believe I have to do everything right to be competitive, that is a tough place to be. When you think you've got to be perfect in order to win or be competitive, that makes it really hard. And I could see the tension in my game when I'm looking at that cut line and, you know, whereas when you're within yourself earlier in my career, you know, especially when I was in the top form, I knew I was going to have a chance on Sunday so it didn't matter whether I holed the eight-footer on the seventh hole on Thursday. Hey, I have another one. I think when you're comfortable in an environment, you know it's all about the last nine holes and how you played them, and when you're uncomfortable, you're trying so hard to get to that position.

**Q. You had a couple good weeks at Oakland Hills, Ryder Cup and the PGA. I know this course is not nearly as long and tough as Oakland Hills, but have you had success at other Ross courses and how do you like them?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Look, what's not to like? You've got to love it. The golf course is fantastic, in beautiful condition, layout. I'm a person who whatever golf course I turn up on I try to make it the best course for me that week. So I'm not somebody who automatically -- I really try not to pick courses and think that suits me and that doesn't. I'm sure some do, but you've got to play the golf course you get every week. This is just a beautiful layout, great conditions. This is a joy to play, no doubt about it. I love the whole idea of it, the run-offs, everything about it. Ross does a great job, has done a great job like that. His courses are ones that I would enjoy playing. I don't know that I'm that competitive on them, but as you just brought up, maybe I am, but they're certainly courses you would like to play day in and day out.

**Q. What did you think of Bernhard on hole 1 today?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** When he started hammering, okay, fine. Then when he wouldn't stop hammering and I'm thinking he's getting a bit of a beat to this hammering, should I try and go with the rhythm of it? I did think, I said if this was Europe I definitely thought it was a prank, but I didn't think you guys had it in you, yeah. (Laughs.)

You know, I didn't know what he was up to. When he moved the tee markers, I knew it was definitely a prank. I didn't know it was Bernhard until he came up to me. Clearly when I looked in his eyes, he was wearing glasses, but when I could see that, you could tell it was him.

Going back to the Ryder Cup, he was my captain in 2004 and probably the most surprising thing about his captaincy is his sense of humor because he comes across as being very straight, but he had a great sense of humor that week. It was the one thing that jumped out that week that you didn't know about.

**Q. On the Sunday night after you finish doing the media stuff and everything at the Ryder Cup, what did you do?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Well, there was two parties basically, yeah. I made sure to get into the swing of it. I went to -- there was a family party where we had dueling pianos, which was a very mature party and very nice, people singing and dancing. And then I came back to -- that finished at midnight, people had to get back to the family hotel. Then I came back to the player party, which was definitely young people with more mayhem. You could distinctly see the difference between the two age groups.

**Q. Did it make you feel old?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** No, I got into. Made me feel young.

**Q. Did you have any regrets from the Ryder Cup?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** (Inaudible) what I needed to be to each player. That was the big doubt for me going into this, could I do that, could I give enough of myself, because as pros we don't do that, and I was happy that I did do that. I was comfortable with all that stuff that -- all the stuff that I doubted myself about, I was happy that I did it and I believe I did it well.

Certainly have no -- nothing else do I have any regrets. I think, you know, no. Like we pulled together. My team going out there Friday morning, my team believed they could win. You know, if any logical person in their right mind sitting there in the bookies would not have believed that, but we were going out on Friday morning and every player believed that they could win. Even on Sunday morning they were convinced they could go and do it. What more can you ask for? Everybody was going into the right direction. You know, I'm sure, yeah, nothing I would go back on at all.

**Q. As you look back, if you're honest with yourself and talk about how the game was easy to get to the back nine Sunday, then it's a little more uncomfortable, as you look back, at what age did it become a struggle?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** I definitely think Rory, Rory really 2011, all of a sudden there's somebody on the golf course and you're going -- and this shouldn't have been the case because as I said before, when I came out, Monty, Retief, Ernie were those guys. How could I compete against them? I watched them on TV.

Obviously Tiger, I played through all Tiger's years and I think I have been told that when I've actually played with Tiger in rounds, somebody would have to do the thing, but during those years I outscored him in the rounds that I actually played with him, which I don't think anybody else did that in a tournament. So I managed to deal with it.

But certainly when Rory came out, you stand there and just, how can you beat this guy? That puts you then on under stress. And, you know, the greatest place you can be is going on the golf course thinking that your stuff is good enough and you're not worried about everybody else. When you go on the golf course and you're thinking, well, if I play well and somebody else doesn't do something, it's like going into a tournament and I see, I talk to guys and if somebody tells me, you know what, if I have a good week on the greens, I might win this week, that's not the place you want to be. You want to be walking on the golf course saying, yeah, if I do my thing this week, I'm going to be right there at this end of the week. That's when you feel comfortable.

And to explain it as I would explain, if you teed me off in a PGA TOUR event and gave me the same tee times, same conditions as PGA TOUR pros and then you brought in, say -- not to dis, you brought in the Irish pros, the Irish club pros, so a different standard. So play the

exact same conditions for the four days, one against PGA TOUR pros, one against club pros, I guarantee it, I shoot much better against the club pros. Same conditions, but the relative fact is against the better players you don't feel like you can make any errors, any mistakes, and that means you make more mistakes against a weaker set of players. I know I'm going to be there. I don't know I'm going to win, but I know I'm going to be in position to win with nine holes to go and that's all -- that's where I need to be.

So it's about being a big fish in a small pond. As I said, I definitely think Rory was a big change in that sense, like how could you beat him at Congressional? How could you compete against that? It was such a leap from what we had been seeing. And I know Tiger was there, but maybe I was at my peak with Tiger and maybe I had a strategy with Tiger that was very much about doing my own thing, but certainly the game jumped a lot with Rory and it was hard to follow.

**Q. And the other one I was curious about, knowing the game as you do and what it's become worldwide, Phil having played in 12 consecutive Ryder Cups, do you think that's a record that can ever be topped, and how would you stack that up against, say, Tiger's 142 cuts in a row? They're different, but I just wondered how out there they are.**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Hey, this may answer your question. I thought Lee Westwood had the most Ryder Cups at 11, so I didn't know Phil has played 12?

**Q. Twelve in a row, yeah.**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** I knew Tiger had the cuts record. So kind of answers the question, doesn't it?

What Tiger did, people will never understand how good Tiger was. He had so much in the bag. What people don't realize is Tiger played to a level that was so good, but it was really impressive when somebody pushed him because all of a sudden he lifted. Like I said, when I played against him, you always got the feeling he kind of wanted you to push him, he wanted to have that match, he wanted to get into it.

**Q. Firestone that one year.**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Yeah. I know I beat him in a couple of playoffs and down the stretch and it was always a question, you never thought you were better than Tiger, but I always felt that, you know what, what is it, don't poke the bear? I used to just try and hang in there and leave him be. Then if you timed it right, you could beat him over the last couple of holes, but you didn't want to take the lead with five holes to go with Tiger, that was too much time. You wanted to take the lead with two holes to go and maybe he didn't have enough time to catch you back. It was definitely don't poke the bear with Tiger, just us hang in there and just hopefully you'll just get an opportunity right at the end and there will be no chance for him, no time to catch up.

**Q. Where did you get him in a playoff? Was that Dunhill?**

**PADRAIG HARRINGTON:** Dunhill Links, yeah.