

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
August 26, 2022

FRED FUNK (-7)



Q. Bogey-free 7-under 65 topped off with a nice birdie there at the last. Just a few thoughts about today.

FRED FUNK: It was kind of a magical day. Pretty amazing because I haven't had a round in the 60s I can't even remember when, it's been a long time. I've been playing a little better recently. Yesterday I had my buddy, Randy Burkhardt, who's a professional teacher, and he followed me around for two days and really helped me a lot. He got me into a little different position on the transition, a position from the transition and it really helped me a lot. It worked today and I had some really nice up-and-downs and my putter was really nice today to me, so everything was working.

I didn't give any shots away. I had a couple opportunities coming in, I left them dead and short on 6 and 8. Other than that, I can't think I could have done any better. It was a magical day.

It's the first time I shot my age or broke my age in competition, so that was really cool. I've done it a couple times for fun, but I always wanted to do one out here. It feels good to finally break that one.

Q. I'm your good luck charm.

FRED FUNK: I guess you are.

Q. Well, you had one start here before, good finish, top-15 finish I think in 2020. Not sure what your Buick Open history is here. A course like this, how's it set up for you?

FRED FUNK: I played well here a lot in the Buick Open years, I had I don't know how many top-10s. I never won, got in contention a couple times. But it's a golf course that rewards hitting fairways and the fairways are pretty generous, but if you miss them, you're in trouble with all these trees. There's just certain holes you've got to get by, like 15, No. 9, a couple of the long holes for me. It's playing long, it's soft out there. We had ball in hand today, which was really good for me because I could get myself a good lie and get the mud off the ball and when I'm hitting those 5- and 4-irons and 3-irons into these par 4s, I need a clean ball, so that made a big difference. I'm glad they did that.

Q. Is it days like today, is this sort of why you keep doing this? Like is this --

FRED FUNK: Yeah, I'm pretty stubborn. I still feel -- you know, I've had two back surgeries and one about five or six months ago and I rushed back way too fast like I always do and I

was pretty crippled until really about a month ago. Then I really until -- kind of ironic -- the last four weeks I felt no pain at all and then this week on Tuesday, my body just went into revolt and I couldn't move Tuesday, couldn't move Wednesday pro-am. Yesterday I felt a little bit better and today was a little bit better. I don't know what's going on, why all of a sudden it got fired back up.

The operation I had got rid of the nerve pain, so now that's fantastic. I'm able to walk again. I came back at Birmingham, tried to walk and I lasted eight holes. I couldn't even go, couldn't swing, couldn't walk. So now I'm able to walk the golf courses and that's a victory in itself.

I actually played really solid last week. I played extremely good last week ball-striking-wise and I just had a -- I should have shot 3 under at worst on the front nine on Sunday and I shot 2 over and even on the back and shoot 2 over and just kind of threw the tournament away where I could have had a good finish, could have had a top-20, top-30. But to come back with a 7 under here, that feels really good.

I don't have any expectations right now, I just want to play well. I still want to be a fierce competitor and I'm stubborn. Even though I haven't played well, I can't hit the ball like I used to, I just go out there.

And I love the guys, that's the biggest thing. I love the fraternity we have out here. I love all the guys that are playing, all the caddies, I love all you guys that are out here. We're just a big traveling circus and we go from town to town and we're a big family. I don't want to give this family up. That's the biggest reason I'm out here, I think.

I feel like when I'm playing good or feeling good, I feel like when I'm feeling good I can still compete. Today was kind of proof of that, at least I validated that thought at least one round. Hopefully I can get a couple good solid rounds in the last two days and who knows, see what happens.

Q. It's been 13 years since we had a Buick Open here and I don't think you went a lot lower then than you did today, so what's that say about your game and your perseverance?

FRED FUNK: Well, today was -- perseverance, yes. My game is nothing like it was. I shot a lot of 64s and 66s, 67s, 68s out here that I could do pretty easy, now I've got to really work at it. I'm 30 yards shorter than I was and I was short to start with, so where's that put me?

I just go out there and keep the ball in front of me. I got up and down when I needed to and made some putts when I needed to and turned into a magical 65, so we'll see what happens.