

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
September 14, 2022

PADRAIG HARRINGTON



Q. OK, Padraig, coming here after another win, kind of a nice run here, what do you attribute all the success to lately?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think being in contention really helps you work on the finer points of your game and you kind of, you sharpen up maybe your mental game, you sharpen up maybe your short game when you're in contention. I think just over the year I think I've just been getting myself in the right place and now I'm seeing the rewards of that. Probably just focusing on the elements that make the difference at the top of the leaderboard whereas if I was six or seven shots off the lead, I'd probably be trying to improve my golf swing or something technically. When you know you're going to have a chance most weeks, you're going to be one or two shots back with nine holes to play or you're going to be in the lead, you know it comes down to how mentally strong you are, how sharp you are, how good your short game is. You tend to focus on the bits that make the real difference.

Q. And what have you seen so far out here at this golf course?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I played nine holes yesterday, I really like it. I love when we come to the old country club style golf courses. I believe it gets very firm, I've heard that. That would be interesting how much the course changes. I'd like if it was played exactly how it played yesterday, I'd be thrilled for the week. Remains to be seen as the guys were telling me different holes, different shots last year, obviously it gets quite windy. The wind I would be happy with. The firmness, that makes it a little tougher maybe for me. Hopefully the goal is every week to get yourself in position with nine holes to go. If you have a good last nine holes, you win the tournament.

Q. When you come to a new course, how do you kind of scout it?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I've been doing it a long time, so I don't get too stressed about it. I do like to play the course. I'm not somebody who just walks it, I like to play. So I played nine holes yesterday, I'll play a full 18 tomorrow. Usually just playing, getting a feel for it. You don't have to hit every shot, but you have to get a feel for the pace of the greens, you get a feel for the bunkers, you get a feel for putting through the fringe. That's something an amateur doesn't do, which is really crazy because they putt a lot from off the green, so I'll practice putting from off the green. I'll get a feel for the rough. Once I've done that, the strategy on the holes, as I mentioned earlier, it's going to firm up this week, so I will use experience of my golfing career rather than experience of the golf course to figure out what strategy to play on each individual hole.

Q. You can hit it further than most people out here. Is that an advantage on this golf

course as much as it would be at others?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Most? That's what I heard, most? Can you find me somebody who hits it further?

Look, it is an advantage, but it's a nice advantage. It brings confidence. It certainly helps you puff out your chest, but the reality is the winner is the guy who's the strongest mentally and all the way through the game putting-wise. Yeah, it sets me up, but I've got to do the other things well in order to win.

Q. Coming into this tournament, (inaudible) your last starts. Not focusing on the Ryder Cup or anything else, does that allow you to focus on you?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think my golf has -- you know, four, five years ago I probably was burnt out. The Champions Tour has definitely given me a new lease on life. But coming into that, I realized I needed to do things differently. I enjoy my life out on tour more than I would have 20 years ago. I would have been working hard 20 years ago; now I make sure I enjoy everything that goes with it, life on tour.

Yeah, that helps. Obviously being a big fish in a small pond helps. Knowing that my game is pretty strong, that I have a chance most weeks of winning, that takes a little bit of stress out of it. If I'm back on the PGA Tour, like every shot feels like it's the difference between -- like I don't feel like I can take any punches when I'm playing the PGA Tour, I don't feel like I can make any mistakes whereas when I'm out here, if I miss a putt from -- on one hole, I'm like, well, I'll have a chance on another hole. So when you feel like that, it actually happens less. So I'm definitely a lot more in my comfort zone here and that's showing up in some good golf.

Q. Had you talked to some of the players before you joined the Champions Tour about kind of the experience?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Oh, 100 percent, yeah. I've been trying to play with the young guys and in some ways the best way to get to the Champions Tour is to compete late run in your Tour career. If you can be competitive with the young guys at 49 as Steve Alker has been, he was doing well before he came here, if you can be competitive out there somewhat, you're bringing a strong game. It's very hard for the guys who finish on the Tour even at 45 and have a five-year break. You've got to keep competing before you get out here.

I will say the guys told me that, they told me about the different events. What I couldn't have expected is the Champions Tour comes to markets that, like here, Sioux Falls, that are not necessarily serviced by other golf tournaments and it's a big deal. The crowds come out to tournaments. There's an atmosphere, the community gets involved, the local charities get involved and the Champions Tour is a much bigger deal than I thought it was. It really has -- it really has its marketplace for people. The venues that we've gone to this summer,

the crowds have been great, The atmosphere's been great.

If we come to places that maybe the PGA Tour can't get to everywhere, we really benefit from that, the tournament and the Champions Tour players. So I'm very impressed. It's a much bigger deal than I thought it would be. I played a couple early on maybe in markets that had golf tournaments and they weren't as well supported. Now I come to these events and I see the crowds coming out and it's a big deal. You only have to look at the infrastructure here, this is a big event.

Q. You mentioned competing with younger guys as you get closer to 50. Has that only made the Champions Tour more competitive?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I think what you're seeing is I'll be the first -- I started my career in '96 on Tour and that's when the money changed on the Tour. That's Tiger era came in, all the money uplifted.

So I've had a full-time trainer and physio all my career, so that's why I'm fitter and stronger at 50. Back in the day it just wasn't like that, so guys would have retired earlier or broken down earlier. Now guys can go on that the science and education about how to keep yourself healthy is much stronger. Yeah, you're going to see fitter and stronger 50-year-olds coming out and better players coming for sure coming forward. It will be interesting to see.

And then it will be interesting to see in 10 years' time whether you have any flow-through at all because the money has gone up again, so those guys are going to be completely retired by the time they get to 50.

Yeah, I didn't realize, but I probably lived through the golden age of golf in terms of there was a lot of money and there was a lot of access to play where you wanted. It probably kept me in the right place. And we could afford obviously the best of therapies, physios and psychologists and all that you need to be a top-class athlete.

Q. Are you going to be playing for 10 more years?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I'm going to be -- if they wheel me out when I'm 80 years of age to wave to the crowds, I will turn up. The one thing I know is what I've done in my career, I'm going to enjoy it. As I said, if you see these exhibition matches on Saturdays and Sundays when I'm 80 years of age, 70 years of age, whatever year of age where I'm not able to compete for real, I'll still come out and wave at the crowds and enjoy what I've done in my career because I did it. There's no way I ain't going to take my time to enjoy that.