

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE

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JERRY KELLY



MODERATOR: Jerry, thanks for joining us here at the Kaulig Companies Championship. Two-time winner here at Firestone, just what's it feel like to be back?

JERRY KELLY: It's great. This golf course is a challenge every single day you play it whether it's the pro-am, tournament rounds. I can't wait to have some adrenaline tomorrow and try to attack it a little bit.

MODERATOR: What is it about this course that suits your game so well?

JERRY KELLY: You've got to hit the fairways and you've got to hit the right sides of fairways in order to keep it in the fairway. It's more difficult when it's firm and fast like it is right now. Even though you're going to have shorter irons in, hitting the fairway is difficult, and then gauging your shots into the greens with them being firm is difficult.

So it's a different challenge because the rough is down, but the fairways are still very hard to hit. They're tougher to hit than when it's soft.

It's always a challenge. If we get rain, then it plays longer because it's soft, but we're able to hit fairways easier, but you still need to be in the fairway to attack this golf course.

MODERATOR: So winning this means that you get to play in THE PLAYERS Championship. You became the oldest player to make the cut this past season. Do you think about that coming into this week, having another opportunity to do that?

JERRY KELLY: Yeah, I always want to win our majors to get into the counterpart on the regular Tour. I love playing against the young kids. I don't want to make a habit of it, I'll definitely let them have the Tour where it is right now and I will be very happy where I am. Yeah, I'm at my station.

Q. Do you prefer the setup as it was last year or this year?

JERRY KELLY: I definitely prefer last year. I prefer difficult rough. There's going to be a lot of escape shots from underneath the trees. You can land in the fairway and have tree trouble. When there's rough, you've got no chance, it's pitching it out and then pitching it to the green.

I guess it's a different challenge. It's still a challenge. This golf course, it doesn't matter how it plays, it's difficult. Yeah, I like it a little bit more when there's heavy rough and it's a lot more penalizing.



Q. Jerry, obviously you've had success here at Firestone. How critical in your success here at Firestone would you say it is related to mental skills and just being able to stay calm, cool, relaxed and being able to visualize what you want to occur?

JERRY KELLY: You don't know me very well, do you? (Laughs.)

If I could have been that guy, I would have done very well in regular Tour majors. I am not that guy. I am going to -- you know, I put the ball in the fairway so then I can attack the greens. You know, I am not a laid back kind of cool -- I kind of go at it a little bit too much.

With it being a little bit more firm, I'm going to have to be the guy that you're talking about and play more towards the middles and the fronts of greens and not let them get away from you and roll just off the back, because then they're very difficult chips downhill from that kind of gnarly little first-cut type rough.

No, I think my experience of playing here in the past helped me once I got out here, no question about that. I knew it was going to be a difficult test, so I do play a little bit differently here because I know it's not a birdie-fest so I can be more patient. I know the more fairways I hit, the more the golf course comes to me. That's not something I do normally.

Q. Relative to what you feel is your potential, you played so well on this tour, do you feel like you're getting more out of yourself, out of your career now than you did, or I don't know how I weigh it, too, because you had a pretty good tour career, too.

JERRY KELLY: I mean, I've always been a shorter hitter. You know, when you've got 124 to 156 guys on the PGA TOUR, all of them hitting it by you on the regular Tour, their hot weeks are going to cancel out my hot weeks, and there's more of them that can do that in any given week.

Out here, I know if I play my game to its fullest, I can win when I do that. That wasn't necessarily the case. You know, I started playing probably my best golf from 40 on, so I was staying relevant, staying in the top 70 even when I was 49, you know, so I could come right out here with that game and actually do pretty well.

It's kind of like the Sports Illustrated poll, the very first one that came out, I was ranked top-3 underrated and top-3 overrated. I don't know what I am. Always been an anomaly, here I am.

Q. Does that, the fact that your hot week out here can pay off, does that actually motivate you to even work more on your game and keep it going?

JERRY KELLY: I think the fact that I -- I'm not working as hard as I did is paying more dividends than me always having that chip and always trying to, you know, I've got to win one more time, I've got to do better in the majors, I've got to do this, I've got to do this, I've



got to do that.

Out here it's like, OK, I can play my game, I don't have to -- I mean, every single week we're trying to get better, no question. I've done that the last couple months, always implementing some changes, trying to get better. Some of them have helped, some of them have hurt. It's just trying to dance with the date you brought as best you can, and that doesn't pay off on the regular Tour. Again, my station.

Q. Is it tough -- I mean, your career's right in the middle of Bernhard Langer winning being 97 times and now you're on the Steve Stricker hot streak for a couple of years, and a couple other guys. Although you have fewer guys maybe you have to beat but the guys you have to beat are all pretty strong, can you talk about that?

JERRY KELLY: No question. It's Tiger all over again, there's no question about it. The problem is you start focusing on one guy and another guy pops up there. So the guy to focus on is yourself and not try and chase, not try and do anything but keep getting better.

For me, it's just getting cleaner. As we get older, there are some swings, some chips and some putts that are like, what was that, you know? It's going to happen because we just don't have the twitch that we used to. The timing, when the timing's off, it's a lot more difficult to save shots than it used to be.

So I understand I'm even getting up there for this tour right now. I am very focused on still playing a lot, still playing hard and seeing what I can get out of this second half of the career.

Q. I'm just curious, what did you find that made you a better scorer? I guess you don't have to be making better swings, but is there something to be learned about how to score that really helped you maybe when you turned 40?

JERRY KELLY: When I turned 40 I couldn't just swing and the clubhead would spit out the way I wanted to, and I kept on trying to do that more and more to where I do have to focus on the clubhead and making sure that clubhead releases. I've got a very fast body, whether it be up this way, in front or my hips going, it leaves the club behind. So I started really focusing on the clubhead a whole lot more. I was able to do that with the hands very well. Everybody knows that's not the way to hit it long, but you can be very consistent and very pinpoint with a lot of your shots as well.

So I gave up distance. And even coming out here I'm falling behind so far, trying to find that distance, whether it's trying to turn more on the way back but then I lose the club even more. It's a never-ending battle, but it really was when I focused on that clubhead on the correct path that that consistency really started to show up through the 40s.

And it was a couple injuries that happened to where I couldn't move my back and I just had to flip the club at the ball. I was like, OK, I can't move, I feel really bad, I'm limping down the fairways and I'm hitting it further than I was when I was giving it my all. So it showed me a



little something and that was -- I think that was right around 40, 42 when the back went out the first time.

Q. That same process, obviously you're talking about the long game and driving, we always hear so much about the shot from 100 yards and in or 150 and in. How much of a focus was that, and is it now in comparison to hitting it long or your long game?

JERRY KELLY: It's still long game. You know, when you get Paddy -- I mean, Strick's longer than he's ever been, I feel, Paddy's longer than he's ever been. You've got Retief, you've got Ernie, Yang and Choi, all these guys, Alker, they're all hitting it a really long ways with that nice flowing swing with body and clubhead that I try to do all the time, but it's not me.

I've always had that short game and the intermediate shots to where I can push it up farther than those guys when you can't reach the par 5s or in a tight area and they lay it back to a number, I push it up there as far as I can. I feel like my percentages are better the closer I get, even to tight pins. I enjoy hitting those shots and I always have.

Yes, my short game has to be on because my long game is short, but that's the long and short of it (Laughs.)

Q. On a lighter note, Stricker's got some facial hair thing going on.

JERRY KELLY: He's been trying to copy me in a lot of different things. Just another one of those things where, you know, he's got to invade my territory somehow.

Q. While you were in Stevens Point for the Senior Open, did you happen to have a chance to taste Strick9 beer, and if so, can you give us a review?

JERRY KELLY: I did not.

Q. Do you have any in your refrigerator at home?

JERRY KELLY: I do not.

Q. Do you like beer?

JERRY KELLY: I do like beer. It gets my allergies, so I don't drink a whole lot of beer anymore. I've got about 10 cases of Spotted Cow that I will go through in a summer. But yeah, I'm a wino, I'm a total wino. I'm going to Florence next week and I'm going to partake in the Italians. It's going to be fun.

Q. You're not going to be calling the brewery in Stevens Point and see if they're going to make a Jerry Kelly beer for you?



JERRY KELLY: They tried to get me over there and they were talking about making their Kil'd Kenny, which was Kill --

Q. Kil'd Kelly?

JERRY KELLY: But it was like Kil'd Ken I think is what they called it. But I didn't get over there. Yeah, we talked, but that's as far as that one's going to go, yeah, I'm sure. I didn't win.

