

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
October 22, 2024

LEE TREVINO



LEE TREVINO: They're so gorgeous that I never got a chance to play. You know, I got started late in life, as you well know. I was 28 years old when I started playing professional golf. The only golf course that I knew before that was Tenison Park, which was a public course in Dallas. Then went on Tour and the only courses I ever played all over this country is tournaments they had tournaments on -- courses they had tournaments on.

I've missed a lot, I've missed a lot of great courses that I've not played, yeah.

Q. Do you remember anything about this course?

LEE TREVINO: I do not remember much. I don't remember what the hell I did yesterday, to tell you the truth. I'm going to be 85 in a month. I do not remember anything.

I do remember one shot. I remember the six of us were playing, and it was '69 I think it was. I remember hitting it in the trees and I had a little hole up there and we had a huge gallery. I was playing out like this was really a difficult shot, but I could see the shot, that it was a perfect 5-iron. If I hit this 5-iron, the elevation of it would be just about where the opening in that tree was. I hit the shot. If it was a bulls-eye, I would have hit it right in the middle. It went right through there on the green. It wasn't a very difficult shot.

Q. You got some applause out of that?

LEE TREVINO: Oh, they thought, yeah, where in the hell did this guy come from, you know?

But I do that now even though every day I go to the golf course seven days a week. I get there about 10:00. I'll chip a little bit, putt a little bit. I'll hit five balls with each club in my bag, then I'll go home. I usually get home about 11:30. So I've got the whole day to do nothing, that's the whole thing.

Q. You're a three-time Senior PGA -- they changed the name to PGA TOUR Champions since then. What's been the difference through the years from when you've won it until now?

LEE TREVINO: Well, I mean, they've got some -- these guys can really play. When we started, and I started playing in 1990 on Champions Tour -- I'll tell you a real quick story.

I was waiting to get out there and they were kind of waiting for me to get out there because Nicklaus and I were both turning 50 about the same time. Even though Jack, Jack never

played a lot of tournaments. I don't think he ever played more than six or eight tournaments in one year.

As a matter of fact, when I realized that I was turning 50 that December and that I was going to go on the Champions Tour, and Nicklaus was turning 50 on January 20th or 21st and he was coming out to play with me, I actually talked to Nicklaus' manager and the wife, Nicklaus' wife. You can ask Barbara. I told Barbara, I said listen, for every tournament that I enter, if you keep Jack at home, I will send you a dozen roses. That year I played 38 tournaments and I sent Barbara Nicklaus 30 dozen roses because she kept him home 30 of the tournaments. I was leading money winner that year.

As a matter of fact, that year -- you can look it up -- I won more money than Norman. Norman was the leading money winner on the regular tour and I was the leading money winner on the Champions Tour, but I played 38 tournaments that year, yeah.

Q. (indiscernible) get to hear you say you haven't been back to Arkansas and you just passed this way on the way to the Greenbrier. Where were you coming from?

LEE TREVINO: No, I'm not. A lot of friends from here. Jerry Jones is from here, yeah. He's got a little bit invested. If you see -- if you ever get a chance to come that way, just go north of Dallas up to Frisco and see what Mr. Jones has done with that city. It's the most amazing thing I've ever seen.

I could have done that too if I had \$14 billion. I mean, it's not that hard if you've got a lot of money. He has done really something with that. Football team right now, we're having a little trouble. Not a lot of Mexicans playing football so I don't watch much of it.

Q. When you were here playing that event, you got some kids to hide Dr. Peppers in the pond?

LEE TREVINO: My manager did that. Yeah, he was trying to get a contract with Dr. Pepper at the time, so he was promoting that. A guy by the name of Bucky Woy. If you're into football, Woy is -- his son is an agent for some of the football players.

But Bucky Woy put a stringer out there like it was a fish on it and Dr. Pepper out there and it was just a promotional thing. Yeah, had a contract with Dr. Pepper. That was my first contract as a professional golfer. It wasn't golf clubs, it wasn't golf balls, it wasn't shoes or gloves or nothing. My first contract was with the drink Dr. Pepper.

Q. If you had a contract these days, who would it be with?

LEE TREVINO: Well, you know, they're making some very, very good golf clubs now. They've gotten to the point to where these companies, they're competing with each other.

Back in my day, I played -- I chased the dollar naturally simply because we didn't have that

much as far as prize money was concerned. We were talking about that just a moment ago. If you look at the record, in 1971, I won seven tournaments and then I finished high in a lot of tournaments and I won a total of \$153,000. That was when you won a tournament back then, a regular tournament, you won 20 percent of the purse, which generally was \$100,000. Got a little bit.

It's tough now with the golf clubs because there's so much money now that you play for, so much prestige. The big tournaments mean so much, the rankings mean so much that I think I would have a lot of trouble playing an equipment company. I think I would try 'em all and just play whatever's best. So I might have a 3-wood that I can hit that somebody else makes, or a driver, irons.

I remember when I started the Tour, I had seven different makes in my bag. I didn't have a complete set of clubs, but I didn't have a contract with anybody. Not until 1971 when I got Top Flite, when I got Spalding, you understand?

They put a rule on you, they want you to use the driver, No. 1. If the driver's not good, you're taking the backseat. I took the backseat in Japan because I chased the money. I remember endorsing a golf ball called Flawless and it was -- the Flawless ball was a solid ball.

We had it here in the U.S. and then we had one in Japan. I was loyal and I think it cost me maybe some tournaments with it because it wouldn't go as far and I couldn't work it as well as I could the other golf ball.

Golf balls today are manufactured a little bit different. They're harder, they don't spin as much, they don't go as crooked as the balata did. That's why the amateur has a difficult time stopping the ball on the green. They don't have enough speed to spin it. The pro has enough speed to spin it, that's why you see the professionals still pulling the ball back. When they hit the green, even though the green is hard, they still -- well, it's because of their clubhead speed. They've got so much speed that even though the ball's hard, they're still able to put spin on it, where a regular player uses that golf ball, they won't be able to stop it on the green.

But where do you go? They're all making the same golf ball. And understand there's rules on golf balls; the diameter of it, 1.680, it can only weigh 1. what, 2 ounces, it can only have so many dimples. So you can't change the ball much, yeah, not much at all.

Q. What was your favorite U.S. Open course and --

LEE TREVINO: Are you with the media? Are you with the media? Who are you with? You're Rush Limbaugh?

Q. I just want to know that question, favorite course and best U.S. Open course.

LEE TREVINO: Well, that's a hard question because they've got a lot of good ones.

I think Oakmont in my opinion is probably about the best. It's not a monster, it's a short golf course, very tight. I went there when Justin Rose won the tournament and we did a press conference and I drove around the golf course. Very small oval greens, very small. They kind of do this with -- you know, with the fairways. You can drive 17.

You know Merion was the same way, small little thing. And Merion, when I went there also, Justin Rose was the guy that won at Merion and I went there. It was wet, they're using driving irons, they're using hybrids off the tee. It's a very short golf course. I figured they were going to just burn it up. I thought they'd shoot 10, 12 under par. I think 1 over won it or 1 under, something like that.

You know, there's golf courses -- Bethpage, I've never played at Long Island so I don't know how difficult that course is.

Oak Hill in Rochester, they changed it. It used to be a heck of a course. I thought they ruined it when they redid some of the holes.

When you really look at U.S. Open courses, I don't think you can get any better than Merion, you know. Oak Hill. I mean, they're just some beautiful -- most of these courses -- they never played The Open much south simply because it's just too hot in June, it's too hot. So they've always kept it that way. They'll go to Pebble or they'll go down to San Diego and play, it's a cooler climate.

This is what happened. The PGA, as you well know, changed their dates from the latter part of May. They wanted earlier so now they're in March. They wanted to come south, that's what they wanted to do. There's a lot of good real estate out there, yeah.

Q. When you were here before, you had a lot of great things to say about the architects and the way the golf course was built, there wasn't anything hidden.

LEE TREVINO: Yeah.

Q. Can you talk a little about that?

LEE TREVINO: Well, one of the reasons that the architects in my opinion are hiding things is simply because they're trying to make them -- we've fallen into a place of trying to make a golf course challengeable to the professional. That's not where the backbone of this game is at. The backbone of this game is in the high handicap, mid handicap, the lady player, the junior.

What they're doing is they're starting to make golf courses to where everything is carry. You can't roll the ball on the green anymore. There's no such thing as a green being open in the front, you know. They'll put that green to where it's a boomerang type and then they'll bunker all the front and the sides. Then if you go over it, you go down the hill and you can't get it

back. It's just too much, it's way too much.

I will say this, and we're doing it now: Down south, mostly southern golf courses, all the greens are extremely elevated and the bunkers now, the lips are too big and the bunkers are deep. The reason for it is because it's hotter down south. That means we have to have something up high to get some air circulation and get the water to drain.

Well, they've got this cooling system now, I don't know the name of it, and they're starting to put it under the greens to keep 'em cool. Now they're able to bring the greens down. They did it at Colonial. Fantastic job at Colonial in Ft. Worth. They brought the greens down.

Now you can get very creative with the bunker. We've got bunkers on some of our courses at home that not only the guy can't get out with a wedge, he can't get out of them physically, you understand, because the lips are so big and they can't step down to go get 'em.

It's not like PGA West. In other words, I told that story not too long ago with that one. I was doing the television for NBC. I know this is very difficult to understand, but the 16th hole is the par 5 at PGA West and the back of the bunker over that green, the bunker is so deep that I went down there with a wedge and a ball and I did a whole spiel on NBC about how difficult it would be to get up. It's 19 feet. It's 19 feet from the bottom of the sand bunker to the top lip. I swung at this ball in that bunker and damn if I didn't hit it four feet. I got it out.

That was the one that Arnold Palmer, I was playing with Mr. Palmer, we were playing the skins game and he got in on the left side and he couldn't get it out. He swung at it about four times, then he started climbing up the hill. I tried to help him and he wouldn't take my hand. He says, "No, I'll do it." I was afraid that he was going to fall backwards trying to hit it on that roof, you know, from the bunker.

Yeah, they're starting to make golf courses to the point that -- these guys are just better. You have to understand, they're physically bigger, they're in better shape, they know more about the game, there's more equipment out there to tell you about ball speed, spin, elevation, are you minus, are you plus.

Nobody even knows what the hell I'm talking about when I say are you minus or are you plus. I tell everybody -- my son told me one day, you know, Rory's about plus 5 when he hits it. I said plus 5 what? He said when Rory comes into the ball, watch him. His head goes back this way and he goes up. What happens is the club, as he's working up, he's adding 5 degrees to it so he can play with a golf club, a 7.

I mean, Bryson, what does he play with? Bryson plays with a 4. I think his driver has 4 degrees of loft on it, he hits it so hard.

But you've got to understand, you can't take it out -- because the athlete's better, because he's bigger, he's faster, he's got better equipment, he's got better knowledge of the game, he works harder. You can't punish the member for that. They're punishing everybody else

because these guys hit it so far. They can't believe these guys are shooting -- you watch, there will be a tournament next year somebody will shoot 30 under. Never been done before. I think 28's about the limit. And they'll do it. Furyk's already shot 58 if I'm not mistaken, yeah. There was a lady not too long ago that shot 59, yeah.

Q. So when you're home watching golf on TV, do you have a preference, younger guys, older guys, and who in particular is must-see-TV for you?

LEE TREVINO: Not really. I would like to see more players. Television has gotten to the point -- I can understand why they're probably saying, well, they don't want to watch anybody else, they just want to watch this guy or this guy. I'm not mentioning any names, they just said this guy, this guy. If this guy gets in the lead, he's going to be on for 18 holes, you know. I don't care if he's combing his hair or what he's doing, he's going to be on there for 18 holes.

I would like to see more variety, I'd like to see more people shown. They have families, too. They have fans, they have a club. The club would like to see him play whether he's playing good or not. Just show him one shot anyway.

So this is what happens. I look at the paper in the morning and I see who's leading and I say, OK, I'll turn it on the last four holes, see who's winning, because they're going to show those three or four individuals the whole time.

Which I understand. That's where they get their ratings from and I understand that. The ratings is the whole thing. But I'd like to see a little more -- you know, give the fans a little bit more of that.

I think golf is healthy, I think it's got some great sponsors, I think it's in a good place. What other sport can you play for a lifetime? None, none.

I was giving a lesson to a 6-year-old the other day, just yesterday on the practice tee. His granddaddy came out there, he had no clue what the hell he was doing. First of all, you don't let your grandson hit golf balls behind you, you know. He got on the tee and he's hitting and the 6-year-old's behind him hitting balls. Wait till he walks into you one time, and he had done it twice. I interrupted him twice, I said don't swing, don't swing. The grandson's going over to see his grandpa.

I said no, you put your grandson over there two slots over. That way you can hit and watch him, hit and watch him, yeah. I'm going to tell his grandmother -- if I knew his mom -- he lost that job. Maybe he was trying to lose the job, I don't know. That could be.

Q. You've been away from this game competitively for a while. Is there anything you still miss about it?

LEE TREVINO: I miss the guys, I miss all the guys. You know, there's so many new guys

that I've never met. I mean, this guy that just won, he's been out there for a while, played in Europe, O'Neal or something. I've never met him that I know of.

There's a lot of guys that I played with on the European Tour and I haven't seen in a long time.

Yeah, it's a bunch of guys that -- I mean, it's family. It was family. I miss 'em, I miss 'em a lot. I watch the Champions Tour every week. Yeah, I watch 'em. I love it.

Q. So you built this place. How does it feel seeing it after all this time, where it is today versus how it started?

LEE TREVINO: No, I didn't build it, I didn't build it. A guy by the name of Joe Finger built this golf course.

No. We came here in 1969 to do a fundraiser for the Girls and Boys Club. We came in to do a fundraiser and there was six of us. They had a three-man team. I remember Frank Boynton played, Weiskopf played, R.H. Sikes, which is from Arkansas, myself and for the life of me I can't remember the other two.

Q. Richard Crawford?

LEE TREVINO: Oh, Richard Crawford was a hell of a player, too.

But I've not seen it since, no, no. I'll tell you what, they've done a heck of a job with this clubhouse. It's a beautiful clubhouse. I was talking to him, Andrew, about it a while ago. I went on the inside and they did a great job. They did a great job with it, yeah.