

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
October 24, 2024

ERNIE ELS



Q. Ernie, what's your experience been play in Arkansas and how does this course look to you?

ERNIE ELS: Going to go see my buddies in Fayetteville way back when they were in college and I played on the Hogan Tour back in 1990, '91 I think it was, played in Texarkana. That's where I met David Toms, played with him there. Made the cut I remember.

So not too much golf here in Arkansas, but it's a great facility, Pleasant Valley. A lot of good holes, big clubhouse, a great membership. We've got a great sponsor. So we're very excited to come here as the Champions Tour to this venue.

Q. You enter this week, second week of the Playoffs, No. 1 in the Schwab Cup, tight race. What's your mindset going into this weekend?

ERNIE ELS: Well, I've got to play good golf. I think it's going to heat up quite a bit in the next seven rounds. We've got three rounds here at Pleasant Valley. A lot of guys in it with a chance. I've had a good season, but I haven't played that great the last couple of weeks. I felt like I've put some good work in and I feel good about it.

I think if you want to win something, it doesn't come easy, so you've got to work at it. Through my career we've played in a lot of very high-strung tournaments, so I'm just going to kind of go back in the history of my experience and try and get the best golf out of my game.

Q. Ernie, what would it mean for you to be holding that trophy on Sunday?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah. Well, you know, I've (indiscernible) not see the trophy, you know, Charles Schwab Cup. Most of the tournaments, the Cup is there. I've had a glimpse and a look at it. On that list of names on that trophy is just about everybody that's done anything in the game of golf. Just to think about it, you've played with your peers for most of your career and a lot of those guys are on that trophy. At our age, to win something that big would be quite something nice.

But I'm not thinking about that too much, I'm just thinking about getting a good round of golf going, putting one foot in front of the other and see where we go.

Q. Ernie, welcome. We're missing a couple guys like Langer and Stricker this week. It's a long stretch, four weeks in a row. Any thoughts maybe of skipping this one and hoping that the points hold up going into the championship?

ERNIE ELS: Well, no. I was always -- I always had this one penciled in, the whole playoff series. The thing that threw me out a little bit was going to the Presidents Cup and helping out as an assistant captain. I might have should have maybe skipped one of those events after the Presidents Cup, but that's in the past now. I feel fresh again. As I say, I've worked on my game.

Guys like Stricker, you know, this time of the year seems like he wants to go hunting or something, or fishing. Bernhard's coming off an injury, so Bernhard, I don't know how many times he's put his name on that trophy, maybe six times. I think he's won it enough.

We'll miss those guys, but we've got a really strong field and we've got a tight race, so there's going to be a lot of interest.

Q. Arkansas has its handful of great golfers. Any fun John Daly stories that you can share with us?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, many. I've known John for a very long time. We've known each other since 1990. Down in South Africa he was huge, he won a lot of tournaments down there just after he left college. Met him down there and saw the talent of John. As I say, I went to Fayetteville, went to go visit my buddies at the university there, spent a good two weeks there partying and playing a lot of social golf with the Pappas brothers. You know, the Pappas, guys, they were on the team. Just had a wonderful time.

Yeah, John and myself, we go back a long time. We can tell a lot of stories. Not to you, but we can tell a lot of stories.

Q. I was just wondering, new course, new event, what's the difference preparing for something like this compared to bigger events you've played?

ERNIE ELS: I came in Tuesday, I played a full practice round Tuesday. I play one pro-am, which is today. So I get my two practice rounds in.

I got to see the lay of the land on Tuesday, speed of the greens, lines off some of the tees. There's a lot of doglegs. I feel like I've put in a lot of work even before today. Just a matter of going out there and executing the shots. I kind of had a good feel, I'll get a better feel even today.

Then it depends on what kind of weather we have. If we have good weather, you can probably go after the golf course. Tuesday the wind blew at about 20 miles an hour so it's a little bit different taste of golf, but at least I know where the ball's going, how the ball's reacting on the greens. That's kind of the thing, just kind of normal stuff.

Q. Any other places you plan to visit in Arkansas?

ERNIE ELS: Man, I'd love to, but we've kind of got some training on a big event this week.

I've got a lot of friends here, I mean, but we've got to just concentrate on playing golf. Maybe on some other time we'll come back and have some fun again, maybe go to a football game or something.