

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
August 21, 2025

DAN ROONEY



Q. Dan Rooney here at The Ally Challenge, making your PGA TOUR Champions debut this week. I guess take us through what the start of this week's been like and how you've been preparing.

DAN ROONEY: Yeah, just being inside the ropes is a boyhood dream come true. I love this concept in life called the divine echo. Our lives manifest based on what you put out into the world, and we've helped 74,000 families achieve their dreams at Folds of Honor and I look at this as a divine echo this week as God's given me a dream, a boyhood dream to be able to compete alongside my golf heroes, watching them and getting out there to tee it up.

As a fighter pilot, very comfortable in combat, comfortable in the cockpit, but something you learn there is when you go to uncomfortable places is where you grow.

So from the playing perspective, yeah, uncomfortable, nervous like all the regular golfers out there, but just it's awesome to be here. The embrace, Folds of Honor Friday, which I'm sure we'll talk about.

Q. And how would you describe your game? What are your strengths?

DAN ROONEY: Oh, boy. Strengths in the game? I grew up as a competitive player and I'm in good shape, so hitting it far, chipping pretty well. Just got a putting lesson from Rod Pamplung on the putting green, saw me struggling. All the guys out here are rooting for me, which is nice.

Just like dropping bombs in combat, aim small, miss small. So hopefully we'll hit a few targets out there this week.

Q. What are your expectations for this week?

DAN ROONEY: The thing I'm most excited about is Folds of Honor Friday, an initiative that we started a year and a half ago with the PGA TOUR.

Golf was the only major sport that didn't observe the national anthem, and to be able to bring the anthem now, it's about 50 percent of the events across all three tours playing the national anthem.

We're asking fans to wear red, white and blue. Players will be wearing red, white and blue on Fridays to honor all those who serve. By far that's the thing I'm most excited about. That's why I got invited to play, not my golfing prowess.



Just getting people together in a world that always seems to make people pick red or blue. The great thing about Folds of Honor Friday is it's red, white and blue, and encouraging all the fans to come out and honor service, watch some incredible golf and celebrate this great nation that we live in.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about just how you fell in love with the sport and some of your golf heroes growing up?

DAN ROONEY: Yeah. So easy question, my dad was my inspiration. Lost him in April, so I'm playing for my dad out here.

So many of my golf heroes out here are playing. Ernie Els, I'm getting to tee it up with Tom Pernice and Olin Browne, great Folds supporters. Stewart Cink, obviously defending champion, great guy. They've all been friends, never peers. This week I get to be their peer for a few days and go out there.

The game of golf, when I pull the lens back on my life, like everything good in my life is connected to this game. I met my wife, went to the University of Kansas, played golf and that's where I met her.

We're obviously using the game for an incredible amount of good through Folds of Honor and the 12,000 scholarships we just awarded for the fall, about \$58 million in life-changing education going out to spouses and children who have had somebody killed or disabled as military and first responders. So there's so many layers this week and the game has been such an engine for good.

I will tell you kind of a funny story. I was leaving the locker room last night, talking to a couple players. It hit me that I'm the only fighter pilot in history to play in a PGA TOUR event. So nice factoid. Hopefully we'll make a few birdies out there.

Q. What would be a good result for you this week score-wise?

DAN ROONEY: You know, I'm not going to put a number on it. A good result is to play to my abilities and not let the moment get bigger than me. That's my big nerves, right, just not ever doing this before and for me being proud enough to go out and play the way I know I can play and then scores will be what they are.

But I think that's the challenge for myself looking 26 hours from now, we'll be on that first tee and having my name called at 1:05 and managing that moment emotionally. I think that's my big goal for the week because if I can do that, I can hit some good golf shots out there.

Q. You talk about emotions. What was it like when they gave you the announcement that you would be playing in this tournament? What was your reaction, what was your wife's reaction?

DAN ROONEY: Yeah, No. 1, gratitude and then quickly followed by lots of nerves. Yeah, like the moment, golf's unlike any other sport. Like you're not passing the ball to anybody. So I'm going to be out there and immediately started preparing, but we have day jobs. I'm not out here seven days a week like these guys playing golf all the time. So trying to meet the moment with the best preparation. Just gratitude because without Folds of Honor I would never be invited to play in a PGA Champions Tour event. I know my role. We're just going to try to walk those fairways, soak in the moment.

Another great mentor of mine, Brian Whitcomb, former president of the PGA of America, he's stricken with MS, rooting from Bend, Oregon, and I'm playing for him. He would give anything to play another round of golf.

So playing for stuff that's way bigger than myself and this week I'm going to hold onto why I am here. Hopefully hit a few golf shots. Good ones, too.

Q. Can you just talk about some of the lessons that the sport's taught you in life?

DAN ROONEY: Yeah. I think the big lesson from golf for all of us is in life you're going to write your legacy based on what you do when it doesn't go your way. That's the ubiquitous bond for the tour players out here to the 20 handicapper, the ups and downs of the game of golf and how you react to those moments.

I think that's the biggest lesson for me is just like life, golf isn't necessarily what you achieve, it's what you overcome out there to be able to meet those moments that are going to be challenging no doubt this week with the next good shot.

Q. Dan, can you talk a little bit about you wrote the book Fly Into the Wind, which I read? Very inspirational.

DAN ROONEY: Thank you.

Q. A little bit how CAVU plays into our lives and the inspiration it gave you to write the book.

DAN ROONEY: Yeah. So CAVU is a crazy little fighter pilot weather acronym, stands for ceiling and visibility unlimited. So it was perfect blue skies we're hoping for this week, but for me it just became so much more. Every day's an unlimited gift and what do we do with the gift of that day.

Ultimately, I know the purpose of life is to live a life of purpose and that's really what the book Fly Into the Wind is about. It's about using your time and talents to have an impact.

As it ties into this week, one of my favorite sayings is you can never be more than you are but you must be all that you are.

So we all have different gifts and these guys have a golf gift that's way bigger than me. I'm not trying to play at their level, I'm trying to play at the level that I can. I think that's the big message for all of us. Fly Into the Wind, we're going to meet resistance to ascend and how do we use every day we're given? Unfortunately we forget a lot of days in our lives and I promise you regardless of the outcome this week, I will not forget these three days of my life.

Such a huge blessing. A big thank you to Ally here for letting me compete this week.

Q. Have you played Warwick before?

DAN ROONEY: I played in the pro-am last year, played with Ernie Els. Ernie saw me in the locker room and I'm not previewing but I made eight birdies in the pro-am.

He told me last year when we finished, he said you should be playing and that was the seed that kind of started the discussion of like, wow, that would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

So hopefully we're going to make some birdies this week and, as I said, dial the nerves down and just have a great time out there.(kft.ec)