

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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ERNIE ELS



Q. We're joined by Ernie Els here at The Ally Challenge.

You're making your fifth appearance at this event highlighted by a T-6 in 2022. Just to start, how was the pro-am out there? How good is it to be back?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, no, thank you. Nice, always great to be back.

I just played with Randy Wise. You know, he does the cars for us, he's got a couple of dealerships and he used to run this tournament. He used to be the tournament director. That's how long ago we started playing here, it was like almost 30 years ago.

It's great to be back at Warwick Hills. Know the course very well, nothing's changed. The golf course is in great shape. I know they've had a very warm summer and a very wet summer. Just a couple of patches in the fairways, but things are looking great.

Great to be back on this historic golf course.

Q. You come into this week on back-to-back top-5 finishes, safe to say you feel good about your game coming into this week?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah. We went down to Florida last week, so I had the week off. A lot of the golf courses are closed at this time of the year so I just hit a couple of balls. Played this morning, feels OK, everything feels good.

Yeah, we've got seven, eight, nine events left for the season. So if we want to make a push to try and catch Jimenez, you've got to start playing better, so that's what I'm trying to do.

Q. This is a tournament that gets a lot of fan support every year. Just what can you say about the community of people around here showing up to support you guys?

ERNIE ELS: In many ways it's like going back in time. As I said, the golf course is the same. A lot of the people that I've met and seen here are people that I've known for 30 years. So it's just wonderful to come back to this venue and see people that I've known for a long time and play the golf course that you know.

Q. And we just got done talking to Dan Rooney over on the driving range. He was talking about playing the pro-am with you last year and how he shot 8 under and he was talking about his interactions with you in the locker room. Can you just talk a little bit about interacting with him throughout the last couple years?

ERNIE ELS: He's just been a wonderful human being to know and get to know. It's well documented what he's done for the veterans and his career in the military as a fighter pilot and his faith, he's a man of faith.

We played last year in the pro-am and I just had the most wonderful morning with him. I told him last year, I said, you have to play in one of these events because he shot the heck out of it, he shot 8 under par. And here he is, he's playing in the tournament. I hope he does well and hopefully he has a great week.

Q. And through the last couple rounds getting a feel for the course, what do you feel like you need to do right this week in order to be successful?

ERNIE ELS: Well, we had that rain earlier in the week so it softened conditions again, and when you have softer conditions, these guys are so good they're going to be firing at the flags, so you're going to see a lot of birdies out there. I see the weather's going to be perfect over the weekend. You're going to see a lot of firepower out there this weekend. I think it's going to be quite a low score. The golf course, the greens are running beautifully, so looking for a good week.

Q. Ernie, understand you have some vineyards that produce some really good cab, so can you tell us a little bit about that? And I understand you have workers there so they can send their kids back to school and such; is that right?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, yeah, we have a whole program, we like to help families that are less fortunate. Obviously our workers in our -- I wouldn't say they're less fortunate, they're getting paid very well, but we like to help the community where we can. We incorporate that plan into our business plan. It's a great way of giving back, but it's a natural way because our workers have been so wonderful to us.

We've got 72 hectares, so there's a lot of grape that's being grown. And yeah, we've got four different grapes growing on our land. Cabernet's our biggest block of grapes, but we do cabernet, blanc, we do syrah, malbec. So yeah, we've got a lot of grapes that we grow.

Q. You didn't bring any back with you, did you?

ERNIE ELS: You've got to come down, you're going to love it, believe me. And the price is right. Our exchange rate to the dollar, you're going to love it.