

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**ERNIE ELS**



**MODERATOR:** Now joined by Ernie Els here at the Charles Schwab Cup Championship.

Your fifth appearance. Just to start, how is it to be back here at Phoenix Country Club?

**ERNIE ELS:** It's great. The weather, I know it's going to change but right now it's just beautiful. The golf course is in great shape. It's playing a little longer than in past years, a little softer.

But great to be back. Whenever you make this field you've done something good during the year, so it's nice to be back, absolutely.

**MODERATOR:** Last time we saw you was two weeks ago at Simmons Bank Championship in Little Rock. How have you spent those two weeks and how do you feel coming into this week?

**ERNIE ELS:** My two weeks, it was quite busy but it was good busy. We had some charity work to do, we went to the Bahamas for three days for the charity people. I did golf days, I did some design stuff. I was quite busy. I had a couple of days off here and there. So I'm actually happy to be on the golf course, actually just play golf.

**Q. From a competition side, would you rather have just dived right into this or did you like the extra week off?**

**ERNIE ELS:** I needed a week off. We had quite a bit of a run there. What was it, Cary, we had four in a row there so I think the guys needed a week off. I don't think we've ever had two weeks off before this event, not in my time maybe. I might be corrected, but we needed a break.

And we're here now in beautiful Phoenix. You know, it's kind of weird to have two weeks off, but it is what it is. We're all here now.

**Q. And this being 72 holes, how does that change your approach to the weekend considering where you are in the points and all that?**

**ERNIE ELS:** Yeah, it was interesting, I had this question earlier. Last year I came in here in the No. 1 position and I left No. 2. This year I'm No. 4. So I really need to win obviously and I need a lot of help from Steven and other people. We have to try and play as good as we can. I've never won here before. I love the golf course.



So obviously the guys not leading have to win and the guy that is leading is hoping for people not to win and he needs to have a good week. But Steven's played great this season and the win he had at Arkansas, that really came at the right time for him.

**Q. Do you feel that coming in here not No. 1 like you were last year is a little easier?**

**ERNIE ELS:** No, no. When I look back, I was kind of losing form in the Playoffs last year. I wasn't playing my best golf. To be up there in the No. 1 position is where you want to be because there's a lot of pressure on the guys chasing.

But I get your point, when the heat's on, guys can kind of just freewheel it a little bit more than the guy that's leading, kind of hanging onto the wheel a bit.

Let's see how the week plays out. There's so much golf to be played, there's a lot of weather distractions that's going to happen. It's going to be an interesting week.

**Q. You said there's a different pressure, maybe not more but a different pressure coming in not being No. 1. How does that change your mindset, this approach?**

**ERNIE ELS:** Yeah, thinking more of what Al was saying, you want to be in the No. 1 position, but I felt a little bit tight last year because I didn't have my game with me a little bit. I was kind of hanging on there.

Let's see what Steven does, let's see what he feels like. But the pack has to come out firing. The guys like myself who want to try to get to No. 1 position, I have to shoot low and I have to shoot low every round.

I'll be having a mindset of being aggressive and trying to get things going early.

**Q. Your first impressions of the course? You talked about the conditions, but any changes, anything out there on that 18 that has changed the course from last year for you?**

**ERNIE ELS:** I don't think since last year. Last year we came, there was a couple of trees that were lost which made quite a difference. This year it seems like it's still the course we saw last year, just the conditioning is a little bit different. I know you had that big rain a couple of weeks ago and the overseed is taken a little bit late so they have to put a lot of water on the fairways to keep the overseed going. It means the course is playing longer. There's almost mud balls in the fairways, it's so wet. This will be a longer course, but when it's softer guys like that too because you can be more aggressive. So let's see.

