

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

Fred Funk

Press Conference

JOHN DEVER: Good afternoon, everybody, welcome back to the 78th KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship. Pleased to be joined by local legend Fred Funk. Fred, welcome to the championship.

FRED FUNK: Not quite used to that word following my name.

JOHN DEVER: Thanks for having us in your neck of the woods this week and maybe you could talk a little bit about your career in golf and how this area, DC, Maryland and Virginia kind of had a part in that and where it's kind of --

FRED FUNK: Well it had a big part. I grew up in College Park on the Maryland side and I was a PG County boy and every now and then Montgomery County would allow me to cross the border and then every now and then I was allowed to cross the Potomac and come over to Virginia. But it was great time in my life when I look back on it and think of how I grew up at the University of Maryland Golf Course and then I went to school at Maryland and ended up being a golf coach at Maryland and then finally getting out on TOUR. But to think of where I've, not that I feel like I've done a lot, but what I've experienced and done and had the opportunity to meet some of the greats in the game and play alongside them, to this day -- just a quick story to highlight my golf career, I was playing with Arnie and Jack at Augusta in 1998 in a practice round. It just doesn't get any better than that. That kind of surpassed any individual thing I've ever done. But really neat and whenever I come back home -- I remember I moved to Florida in, to Ponte Vedra, in '91, very end of '91, and all those years playing the old Kemper and coming back to any events back here, it still feels like coming home. It's great to see a lot of the old friends I've had over the years and eat blue crabs. I do that every time. I came here two weeks ago to see the golf course and immediately went to get hard shell crabs at Bethesda Crab House. And do that every year. And I was going to go this week, but they had crab cakes on the 16th tee here that were cooked, I guess, by the chefs here and it was the best crab cake I ever had in my life and I said, I don't need to go eat any more crabs. Although I went and ate crabs last night, crab cakes. So twice I had crab cakes this week. So I got that fill. I'm done with that. But it was really



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good.

JOHN DEVER: A little bit about the golf course maybe. Had you played here before in your youth before it changed over and what did you think of it here today.

FRED FUNK: Well, I played it when it first opened, when it was Lowes Island and I don't remember anything. I don't even remember what year that was. When did it open? Any idea?

Q. '91 I think?

FRED FUNK: Was it that long ago? So it was soon after that opened and the only thing I really remember about it was that you couldn't see the river back then. It was all trees. And you couldn't see the water. Like, it's on the Potomac, where's the Potomac? Should be right there. And now when Donald bought it, the President, bought it, and I don't even know how long that's been and when he knocked those trees down, but the view of that river is spectacular. Actually lasered it when I was here. I was sitting on the 10th tee and I had -- course was closed, I was only guy on it two weeks ago on Tuesday, and I had a half of my Subway sandwich I got out here before I came in the gate. And I sat on the 10th tee and just sitting there looking at the river and taking in the sights and eating my Subway sandwich and I said, I wonder how far that is. And I lasered it and it was 706 yards across and it doesn't look that far across but that's a long way across. So big river. Just absolutely beautiful, spectacular backdrop and setting. I think when you're -- up here on the hill you look down it looks great, but actually when you're down there playing, which I would consider the flood plain of this area, that whole golf course is mainly on a flood plain down there and it's really pretty. It's just a really good golf course, it's a big golf course and it's playing bigger than the big golf course that it is. We usually average about 7,100 yards when we play, last week we were over 7,200, 7,290 last week. Almost 73. And we played all of it. So we play it a lot longer than people think we play Champions Tour courses, but this one's playing, it's listing at just over 71 and it's playing longer than that 71, because all the moisture. The fairways are big, it's in great shape, I think it's a big hitter's golf course, favors a lot of length. Not that I can't play it because I got a whole bag full of head covers. But -- it seems like every birthday I get a new head cover. Feel like should

be on the ladies tour right now. But -- I didn't mean that in a derogatory sense, not at all. Just because Annika outdrove me, I'm a little bitter, but, no, it's, it's a really good golf course. I think it's a second shot golf course. The greens have a lot of slope to them, and they have quadrants or areas specific areas where the pin is going to be and if you're in that area, a lot like what Augusta is like, where you can be aggressive with your putting if you're in that right area, but then you're on defense if you're not. So it's really important to have control of your iron game and that's where I see the big advantage, if you're long on these generous fairways you can hit a lot of fairways being aggressive and long, and have a shorter club in and it's just the way golf is nowadays. I've always been one of the shorter hitters, so this course definitely doesn't favor me the way it's playing right at the moment, but we'll see what happens.

JOHN DEVER: Questions?

Q. You've worn that Trump name on your shirt for awhile now. Is that right?

FRED FUNK: I got it this year. I'm moving to Jupiter next year and into a condo that's being built and I'm going to be playing out of Trump Jupiter area, I was moving right down the street and the Bear's Club is right there. And I was working on things and I actually, that first weekend that Donald was playing at the Trump International after he got elected and I was just casually talking to him and telling him that. And he just says, you know, I'll do whatever I can to help you. I said -- we have certain amount of guys, I think Rocco and Frosty and Mike Goodes and Gene Sauers and then he says, you wear the Trump logo, no problem. And I went, no problem. So it, really it represents Trump Golf, but it doesn't say Trump Golf. It just says, I think that um, Geno has Trump Palm Beach on it and meaning the Palm Beach club, but.

Q. What's been the reaction from fans or anything?

FRED FUNK: I haven't had any. I had more positive than negative. A lot more positive than negative, thank goodness. There's a lot of negative out there. But it is what it is. People can say their opinion. But don't catch me on a bad note on it.

(Laughter.)

At a bad time. Because I'll get in their face about it. So, it just, there's a time and a place and out on a golf course will not be the place.

Q. You mentioned this course favoring longer hitters. We had a change to talk to a long hitter, John Daly earlier. And Rocco said, when he wins on the TOUR, it's good for everybody. Is that kind

of the sentiment and how much of a difference does it make is it beneficial when John's doing well for the TOUR in general?

FRED FUNK: Really if you look at both tours and how the tours, you can go even way back in time and go back to the era, the different eras and go all the way back to Palmer. Palmer was the guy. He was, he was the needle mover. He was the guy that put golf on the map. And then Jack came along. So you had those two guys. And with those two guys you had guys like Raymond and Lanny and on and on. Chi Chi and I would say more Trevino whether were needle movers as well. But those other guys were kind of the supporting cast and didn't get as much of attention. And then you go forward and you had Greg Norman. Greg Norman's the guy. And then you had the supporting cast of the Ernie Els and the Nick Faldo and the guys like that -- and Nick Price. Not even Ernie at that point. So Nick Price and those guys. But Greg was the needle mover. And then Tiger comes along and then Tiger was the guy. And Phil is a notch underneath of him -- well a couple notches underneath him. But those two guys, wherever they showed up was the guy. And everybody else was kind of, okay, you know it's great he's in the field but these are the two guys that move the needle. And on our TOUR, Freddie Couples is our rock star. John Daly, for whatever, everything that comes with John Daly, he is loved, beloved, and draws a lot of attention and he brings as lots of attention to himself. And that's good for the TOUR. So he's one of our needle movers. But he's not the rock star that Freddie is. And then you throw the supporting cast in, on our TOUR, and you got as great a player as Bernhard is, and he's unbelievable what he's doing, and Colin Montgomerie and Miguel Jimenez they're all great guys, great players, great guys of the but they're not Freddie, they don't move that needle. So, not as much. I mean, they move the needle, they bump it. They -- everybody else pegs it. So you had Norman peg it. Tiger. So there's always, it just seems to be just those couple guys. On the Regular Tour, I don't know, you guys could tell me, being you're covering it a lot more on a Regular Tour, with Rory and Jason Day and all those guys are still almost a supporting cast waiting for Tiger to, is Tiger done or not. You know, there's always that story. And when Phil plays, he's still a rock star. I think Rory's become pretty much a rock star. And Rickie Fowler in his own way. But now it's more of a group that's kind of tied for first. Unless Tiger comes back. If Tiger comes back, to any level at all, it's, they got their rock star back, so -- for awhile. But golf's in a good place, I think, as far as the Regular Tour and all the great players and how young they are and how they carry themselves.

Q. You were talking a little bit ago about Trump and how like you want to defend him and if someone

mentions something. Is it easy always to defend him or are there some things that you find that are hard to defend?

FRED FUNK: I don't want to get into politics, really. Because I know where you go with things.

Q. Well, I know where you go with things. You're wearing his name over your heart.

FRED FUNK: Yeah.

Q. You don't want to talk about it?

FRED FUNK: No, I believe in almost every policy he believes in. That he's, I mean, less regulation, smaller government, protect our border, bigger military, less taxes. I don't have a problem with anything.

Q. Was it easy last summer when you had all the controversial stuff, the Access Hollywood tape in the fall and all that kind of stuff, was that easy to defend too?

FRED FUNK: I wasn't trying to defend it.

Q. I'm sorry?

FRED FUNK: I wasn't trying to defend it. I wasn't asked to. I wasn't trying to, so.

Q. Do you have something to say about it now?

FRED FUNK: Not really. No.

Q. Thanks.

FRED FUNK: He's in a tough spot.

Q. Your son's about to venture into this world in terms of trying to get turning pro and everything like that. How is it from your standpoint with your career continuing? Are you distracted by it, you can wait for it to happen, how is it with?

FRED FUNK: With Taylor? Yeah, Taylor's just among the many, many thousands of kids, young kids that are incredible talent, got a lot of tools they can work with. How and if he breaks through, who knows. But I'm really excited for him. He hits, he's got every capability of getting to a level and it's fun to watch him progress. He's passionate about the game, he loves everything he's doing and trying to do it and I just want him to do what really I tried to do is just see if you're good enough and give it a chance and if he doesn't make it, at least know you gave it a shot. And that's the most important thing. It's a numbers game, obviously. Not only what you shoot, but how many spots there are. Just like in any field, the top of any field, it's very competitive. So, we'll see where he gets. He's got to find that edge, that separation somehow and it will be fun to watch him.

Q. Is he aware of your, how long it took you to get out here and does he?

FRED FUNK: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Q. Does he have that patience and that?

FRED FUNK: That's yet to be seen. When I was coaching all those years and my game kept getting a little better, I truly believe if I didn't make it, I would have been fine with it. I would have known I gave it all I got and I was giving it all I got early and all the way through my career. But it was okay. I think I would have been fine with it. I just wanted to see if I was just one of those guys that could make a living swinging a golf club and trying to get it in the hole. It's very, very fine line between success and failure out of any at any level, really, for that matter. So, yeah, I think he'll be fine with that. I don't know how long he'll go. He's got a good degree, finance degree that he can fall back on. So I know he says he don't want it fall back on it, but we'll see.

Q. Hi, Mr. Couples. Go Terps, by the way.

FRED FUNK: That's the other Fred.

Q. Oh, sorry.

FRED FUNK: I'm not the rock star, he's the rock star.

Q. My brain's not in the right place right now.

FRED FUNK: We were talking about the rock star.

Q. Go Terps, by the way. What's the best piece of advice you were ever given when you were just starting golf?

FRED FUNK: Wow. First starting golf? Geez. My dad said, don't throw the club.

(Laughter.)

I'm not sure.

Q. Good rule of thumb.

FRED FUNK: Yeah, it was just persevere through the, try to be patient, but it's one of the hardest things to do. And that's part of the learning thing. I don't know whether you ever really learn it. Because when you're playing poorly, you are really struggling to figure out why you are and whether you're ever going to get out of it and when you're playing good you're trying so hard not to fall out of that. It's a game of anxiety, it really is. It's pretty tough when you're trying to make a living at it. When you get to that level. But as a young kid it was so much fun for me. It's just what I did. I played all the other sports growing up, but I fell in love with the part of golf that was you progress on your own rate and you practice and how good can you get on your own. And there's so many different ways of scoring, thank God, thank goodness there's, you know, you don't have to be a long hitter, you don't have to do everything, you just got to be good enough. Long enough, good

enough. And hopefully you're a really good putter. That's key. I tell you my dad gave me advice when -- he was a tax guy and he saw the retirement plan on the Regular Tour, which is based on performance, which is based on cuts made. And he told me before he says, son, just make all the cuts you can as quick as you can. I said, what are you talking about? He says, this is your retirement right here. If you stay out here long enough and you make 150 cuts, you're fully vested and from then on it's just, it's great. Okay, great, whatever. And when you're first out on TOUR you're just trying to even make a cut, you're not even thinking of a retirement point, you're trying to stay alive. So it took awhile, but he was right. It's all based on being consistent enough to make a lot of cuts.

JOHN DEVER: What do you think of the shorts practice right now?

FRED FUNK: I love the shorts. I wish we had the hot -- I wish we had them last week in Birmingham, where it's hot, and what's supposed to be DC temperatures here this time of year are not here this week. I wish they were. But I like it. It's comfortable and relaxing and maybe it will start a trend. I don't know. I don't know what all the general public think about it. But I know as a player we all practice in shorts any time we got a chance not to wear long pants we have shorts on. So it's nice. Very comfortable.

Q. In terms of winning on the TOUR, winning on this tour, when you go through a stretch, a drought or whatever, do you go back to what you went through as a TOUR pro, on the Regular Tour and know, you know, this is part of the game and, you know, I've been there before or because where you are at this stage of life and career is it different?

FRED FUNK: You would think you would be a little more patient with it as you go, but I'm probably even less patient with when I'm in the playing well. But I've gone through a lot of injuries, a lot of surgeries since I've turned 50 and now I'm almost 61 now and just ready to or not ready, I'm seeing the end of the career is coming and my body just doesn't feel good day-in and day-out. And I can't swing -- I have to realize that I'm not able to perform the way I used to as consistently as I used to as well, because I don't feel the same. I can't swing -- my swing has slowed down, it was already slow to start with, so I really couldn't afford to lose much and I can't afford to lose much more speed. I would have hit the ball a little bit shorter than I do and the biggest thing is just my body won't work, especially in this kind of temperature. It seems like age 60 and temperature of 60 don't go together.

(Laughter.)

That's for sure.

JOHN DEVER: Okay. Fred Funk. He is a local legend and thank you for your time.

FRED FUNK: All right. Thanks.