

INTERVIEW
June 23, 2018

LEE TREVINO



CHRIS RICHARDS: Good morning, everyone. I'm pleased to be joined by Mr. Lee Trevino here at the American Family Insurance Championship.

Mr. Trevino, you played in the Greater Milwaukee Open five times in your career. What do you remember about playing golf here in Wisconsin?

LEE TREVINO: Oh, I love that course, Tuckaway. I go way back with Wisconsin a little bit. I was in business and I ran around with Paul Horning and Jesse Whittenton and Max McGee and all those guys were my buddies. They used to come down to El Paso and we would go over to Juarez and party a little bit, play golf.

We actually started actually a cancer research center there and they used to come down and play with it. I had the chance of playing with Mr. Lombardi in a pro-am in Iowa when Amana had its tournament there. A lot of people that don't remember Jesse Whittenton, he was a defensive back for the Green Bay Packers. I think he retired in '65 if I'm not mistaken.

I loved Tuckaway. I remember having an eight-hole playoff there with Lee Elder. That was -- Lee Elder was the first black to play in the Masters. At that time, you qualified by winning a golf tournament. I was trying to get myself over to the British Open real quick and I almost missed the plane. Eight holes, I lost on the eighth playoff hole.

But it's good to be back, it's good to be back. I knew a little something about this particular tournament because I don't remember if it was Jack -- I think it was Jack. I was the pro emeritus at the Greenbrier, as you well know, and American Family was kind of a co-sponsor there. They bought a sponsorship there; I don't know what degree. I had lunch with him and -- in the tent there at the 18th and we were talking at that moment about a golf tournament here in Wisconsin. I didn't know whether he was talking about a big tournament or a senior tournament. We were trying to -- naturally we were throwing the line out there because we were looking for a major sponsor at the Greenbrier.

We actually talked about this a little bit. I mentioned it this morning to some people at breakfast that work for American Family. I told him that this would be a perfect venue here. You've got two great ambassadors here, you've got Andy North, that won two U.S. Opens and then he also won a tournament in New York, but then you've got Stricker, and they don't come any better than Stricker when it comes to, you know, getting things together. I mean, here's a guy that if you turn on your television and there's a golf tournament, he's always mentioned. They always mention Steve Stricker, about his putting and what a great guy he is, what a competitor, playing both tours and playing both of them very, very well. I think it's

a great venue. Not surprising that he shot 8-under par yesterday and took the lead, but I don't know how you get two better ambassadors.

I'm happy to be here. Andy North called me up I think last fall or whenever it was and asked me if I was interested and I told him yes. So I didn't have any clue who we were playing with, but I'm a Yankee fan and not because I'm playing with Jeter today but I'm a Yankee fan. I followed him forever.

My wife's from Connecticut, she's a Red Sox fan and we put on -- we would watch baseball every night in Connecticut when we lived up there and she would root for Boston, I would root for the Yankees. So I don't know whether they came back and won last night or not. They were down in the seventh I think 2-1 to Tampa. So I don't know, did they win? Hey, hey, that's 19 -- that's 17 -- that's 18 out of 22 games they've won in a row. Judge get a hit? Oh, no, not talking about the Yankees. Yeah, they were down, they were down in the seventh inning, I saw that.

But it's good to be back. I don't play much anymore. I'll turn 79 in December. I'm still as active as ever. A month ago I got flipped off my mower so I landed in the driveway and busted an arm and a wrist. I don't know what all I did. I didn't want to tell my wife because she would kill me, but I still do all that crazy stuff.

If I tell you what I did the day before yesterday, you'd never forget it. I have a wall in my property and it's about 200 yards along this creek and it's about 15 yards wide but it's all stone on both sides. And that stone, you know, the weeds and stuff starts growing through this and you have to keep it trimmed because if it ever pushes that stone out and the water gets behind it, it would blow a stone out.

So I'm trying to find something to get in, a boat to get in here where I can go down there and chop this stuff down, and the only thing I can find was a kayak. Now, you know how dangerous a kayak is and you've got to sit in it like this and I'm trying to hold onto the wall with a machete cutting this stuff down. My wife says, "You've got to be nuts," but that's what I do. I live life to the fullest every day. I don't ever change and I never will change.

CHRIS RICHARDS: We're very excited to have you here this week, Lee. I'll open it up to questions.

Q. Wouldn't be it safer, then, if you were inside the ropes playing more?

LEE TREVINO: Not at this age, no. These guys are playing these golf courses so long. I mean, my ball is so short you can hear it land. That's the thing. The great thing about golf is mentally I still think I can do this stuff. It's no different than anything else; you still think you can do it, but physically you can't.

The thing about golf is all about speed and if you don't have the speed, you're not going to play well because you're not going to get the ball in the air and you're not going to hit it far

enough.

If they were playing the golf courses 6,500 yards, I couldn't compete but I could at least play, but it just doesn't go anywhere because my speed is so slow. These guys now are swinging at 115 miles an hour, average 113. I'm not even in the 90s anymore. I don't know if I was in the 90s I guess in my heyday.

I'm sure Andy, Andy's a lot taller. His swing, he's got more of a longer swing so I'm sure he can still get some speed. I know Jeter can hit it a long way because of his core because of him being in baseball, and I'm pretty sure that Brett can still nail it out there a little bit.

I still handle the ball, the bunkers, the chipping, working the ball, but I can't hit it anyplace. So what happens is when you play a golf course and you're hitting golf clubs that you're not used to hitting, you're not going to play well. You're back there hitting hybrids. If I play a long golf course, I'll have as many as six hybrids in my bag. I have an 8-hybrid, yeah, and it's like stealing hitting with that thing.

The great thing about a hybrid is not naturally that your swing changes and everybody says that the wind -- it's the weight distribution on the clubhead and it has nothing to do with that. Actually, the hybrid, it's confidence. When you put a hybrid down, a 5-hybrid, and you see the size of its head and everything and you put a 5-iron down, you've got more confidence that you're going to hit this one better than you're going to hit this. It's all a confidence factor is all it is.

Q. As far as this tour goes from when you stopped playing it on a regular basis to what you see now when you watch it on TV and when you go to like the -- whether it's the 3M or the Bass Pro Shop, what's different about it and what do you see as being the biggest change when a guy like Bernhard comes in and dominates?

LEE TREVINO: It hasn't changed that much, to tell you the truth. They're still hitting the same clubs into the second shot simply because they're so much longer.

Everybody says, oh, the course is now 7,000, 7,100. You're probably playing what here, 7,000? Okay. But that doesn't -- it's the same as playing 6,500 20 years ago and the reason for it is because this driver now is going much farther and these guys are bigger and they're stronger and their swing speed's faster so they're hitting it longer. Technically speaking, they are still hitting the ball to the green with the same club.

Now, if they would let me put my ball next to John Daly's, as long as he's not in the trees, I would play, you understand? But I wouldn't have any problem with that. But technically speaking, they're still hitting the same golf club into the greens because the clubs are stronger also. When we started playing golf in the '60s, a wedge had 52 degrees of loft on it, a pitching wedge. Now it's got 45 to 46. The reason they were able to do that is technology, by being able to (indiscernible) the weight on the golf course or you could make a wedge stronger but still get it in the air.

The only reason that the muscle-backed clubs didn't have more loft on them is simply because they wouldn't get in the air. In order to get them in the air, you have to put more loft on them, you see? So that's what's changed, they're getting stronger and stronger.

Now, I think there's a lot of misrepresentation when these companies talk about this driver's seven yards longer than the last one we sold you, because if that was the case, Callaway -- I've been using Callaway for a long time and I get all the new drivers. For the last seven years I've had about eight new drivers and they keep telling me that I'm going to get seven yards longer with each driver. I figure I should be chipping back on par 4s, you understand? It's a bunch of baloney is what it is. It's a bunch of baloney.

Q. Lee, when you came along, seemed like with your background, your swing, that you kind of opened the game up to the masses more so that you didn't have to be a country club person to succeed. Were you aware of the following that you would bring into the sport then or has it grown maybe as you've gotten older?

LEE TREVINO: I actually think -- if you look back at the history, I actually think that people have forgotten where this game really came from and it did come from the caddies and it came from people that -- the pros. In other words, they couldn't afford it. Very few people with a high education and a lot of money played this game professionally. If you really look back at the '40s and the '50s and even at the beginning of the '60s, these guys were all ex-caddies and everything.

I think I actually brought it back -- I think I was more recognizable because I was a minority, dark skinned, and could play a little bit. I think that is what -- plus I was happy and I was thankful and I appreciated everything about it, you understand? And I still do that. In fact, I was talking to John Paul that's driving me and I was telling him, I said I always look at the positive side. There's always a negative and a positive and I'll always look at the positive. I never look at the negative.

R.D. Hubbard wrote a book at Bighorn, I've got his shirt on right here, and he wrote a book and the title of it is, "Don't worry About Anything But Tomorrow.) [sic] Don't worry about yesterday, and it's a hell of a book, hell of a book. He's from Kansas and became a billionaire from nothing, but he really preaches this positive thing.

But I think this is what happened, it was all there. Hogan was a caddie, Nelson was a caddie at Glen Garden Country Club. Even Arnold Palmer, our great Mr. Palmer, his dad was a greens superintendent and he caddied there at Latrobe.

I think -- I think that -- I really believe that golf right now is in a great place. I mean, the talent is just unbelievable, unbelievable. I mean, if you see that lineup, when you see -- when you see those guys, I mean, I could name you 12 of them. You cannot pick one of those guys that's going to win this tournament, and they just keep coming and keep coming.

Has a lot to do not only with equipment; technology has a lot to do with it. You know, the TrackMan, the quad, the instructors. The individual now, he wants to be an athlete. They're in the gym, they're running. In my heyday, when you finished playing an 18-hole golf course, the first thing you did was get a Coors. You got a Coors beer and you chased it with about five more, and that's before dinner and that's what we did. But next morning you get on the tee and you took a deep breath, "Man, I feel bad," and then you go out there and play.

These guys are training, they're training. I mean, Gary Player said it. Gary Player said there's going to be a LeBron James come along -- six-eight, 260 -- that will rule this game, and we've got two of them up there right now that are pretty good. The man just won Opens back to back. I wouldn't want to run into him. Then he's got DJ backing him, I don't want to run into him, either. They've got some big boys out there playing. But I think it's in great shape, I think it's a good thing.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Speaking of the future of golf, we're going to take a question from The First Tee over here on the right.

Q. I'm Drew, junior course reporter. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your 18-year-old self?

LEE TREVINO: What was the question?

CHRIS RICHARDS: Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your 18-year-old?

LEE TREVINO: When you go out to practice, leave the cell phone at home. If I knew now, you know, now. I have a 25-year-old boy. I take out to the practice tee every day and I go with him and we'll hit balls. He'll hit balls three hours, but he only really hits balls one hour because he's on the cell phone the other two.

There's nothing wrong with having a cell phone, I think it's great for safety, communications with your parents because a lot of information you can get off of it. But if you want to be a golfer and you want to be a player -- this is an individual sport, you're not going to get any help. You're not a quarterback where you've got 10 guys trying to help you out. You're by yourself. I think that a lot of times right now there's a tremendous amount of distractions right now when it comes to playing and you're young.

The other thing, too, you being with The First Tee, is don't ever forget all the people that are trying to help that organization. We started that. Manhattan, Kansas, I remember, I was there, I made the speech. The commissioner was there, everyone was there. Coach Snyder was there at Colbert's place, Colbert Hills, and we did the whole annual thing when we started The First Tee. It's a great organization. I support the one in Dallas and Ft. Worth and we'd like to see more golfers come out of there.

The big problem that we have with The First Tee is they have no place to play. We go out in the community and we try to beat up some of the clubs to allow us to send a couple of players here and there and maybe practice.

What we should do with The First Tee, and I've suggested this many times, is The First Tee should have been an organization run by The PGA of America. The reason for it is simply because we have a tremendous amount of golf professionals that do apprenticeships, and after they get out of college or whatever, they want to be golf professionals, PGA pros.

Every city in this country has a public golf course that's in dire need of finances that's going downhill. I would like to see every city, and we got Hartford -- I got Hartford, I got Keeney Park and Goode Park.

The mayor wrote me a letter and I wanted the PGA to take it over and I wanted to let The First Tee kids -- I mean, you in The First Tee, how would you just like to go out to the golf course and tee off anytime you want to? Some of them might be able to do it in some spots, but not everybody. L.A. is very difficult because there's not enough golf courses, you can't get on them.

But I think every city should have a golf course, take donations, operate that golf course through the PGA and let The First Tee play all they want and practice on it. The First Tee's not only about golf, either, though. That's the other thing, too. It's not only about golf, it's about life, life lessons, which I like. I like that.

Tiger Woods has his organization and it's not about golf. Everybody thought it was going to be about golf. Oh, my God, you're competing against The First Tee. He said, "No, no, no, mine's all high-tech stuff, it's not golf," which I think is good, which I think is good.

How long have you been with The First Tee?

Q. Six years.

LEE TREVINO: Good. Do you have quite a few? How many do you have in The First Tee organization, a lot of kids?

Q. Yes.

LEE TREVINO: Oh, good, that's good, I'm glad. Glad, that's good.

Q. Lee, your name is on one of the golf courses down at Geneva National with Gary Player and Arnold Palmer. Jack has a course up in Sheboygan Falls. With that foursome, you guys have been -- you were kind of that era. How do you see yourself in that group, and did you have an opportunity to watch or absorb the par 3 contest at the Masters this year --

LEE TREVINO: Wonderful.

Q. -- when Nicklaus and Watson --

LEE TREVINO: I watched it, yeah, I watched it. I watched it because that young man is a friend of mine.

One of the things a lot of people don't know about Jack's grandson is he plays golf, made the hole-in-one on No. 9. But you know what he really does real well? He can play the hell out of a guitar and he sings and he writes music.

At the Father-Son this year, we had an entertainer and John Daly got up and he plays the guitar a little bit, strums it and he got up and performed Knocking on Heaven's Door, you know? And Daly did a hell of a job.

Then Daly says, "Well, I'm not very good, but that young man there," and this kid gets up and does about -- he had them on the tables in there. I mean, this kid can really sing. Big, strong, and he can play.

We played with him at the Father-Son, yeah. He's a good player, he's a good player. Sometimes for some reason there's never been too many golf professionals that actually their sons have followed them, in other words, in the capacity that they played against. Maybe a grandson will do that. But I don't know if he's that interested in the game or not. He's interested in music, um-hmm.

Q. How did you see yourself before the -- has it been a great friendship?

LEE TREVINO: Oh, we've always been great buddies. We've never ran together or everything, we just see each other on the golf course or anything. I tell everybody I took that job at Geneva because we used to go eat at the Playboy club. Their headquarters is right down the street there. No, we never went over there. It was gone, it was broke, it was broke, yeah. But that's -- that's good. But we're going to have some fun today, it will be a lot of fun, lot of fun.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Thank you very much, Mr. Trevino. Have fun today.

LEE TREVINO: Thank you.