

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
March 8, 2018

TOM WATSON



CHRIS RICHARDS: This afternoon we have Mr. Tom Watson joining us. Thank you very much and welcome to the Toshiba Classic. You played in the pro-am this morning. Can you tell us the state of the game and what you thought of the golf course?

TOM WATSON: Well, the state of the game is a little questionable right now. I haven't played very much, but I actually hit some pretty good shots. Hit a close a couple times today, it was nice. I drove the ball very nicely but short. I keep looking back on these par fives and my caddie's going like this with the range finder looking back at the tee. I say how far did I hit that one? 247. I say spot on. The next one on 18, I hit it pretty good. How far did I hit that? 242. So, you know, par 5s are -- I used to be able to knock it on these par 5s in two, but I better get -- I better swing a little harder. But yeah, the golf course, I miss the trees. I miss the trees.

Q. The ones they took out?

TOM WATSON: Yeah. They can take all the palm trees you want out, I'm not a palm tree guy, but they took out a lot of the trees that I really thought were just beautiful. Really framed the shots. It actually made the golf course easier when they took the trees out on a number of holes.

Q. Especially 5 and 6, right?

TOM WATSON: Yeah, yeah. So I just like the old look better than the look here. I guess I understand some of the trees had root issues and things like that, I understand that, but I'll tell you, it takes a long time to grow a tree. You can't replace it. Once you take it out, you can't replace it.

MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Curious about your playing schedule this year, what your thoughts are on looking ahead and how much you do still want to play. Obviously you love coming to this tournament.

TOM WATSON: I do, I do. The reason I'm still playing, I'm 68 years old, but the reason I'm still playing is that I really enjoy the competition. I really haven't prepared very much, the weather's been bad, my wife's been sick, and I've been riding horses to be honest with you.

But I'm playing -- I'm champing at the bit to play. Every year about this time I'm thinking about Augusta. It just comes up, when March 1 hits, you're thinking, all right, the first of

April, I've got to get ready for Augusta. It's just kind of -- it just happens. Even though I'm not playing, I still have that feeling. Spring's coming out, it really hasn't hit yet in Kansas City, there's nothing green there yet. All the daffodils are starting to come up. When that starts to happen, you start thinking about hooking it, got to hit that hook, got to practice that hook going around those corners, 9, 10, 13, hit that hook out there.

So this time of year my juices are flowing pretty good this time of year. I'll be playing Atlanta at the Mitsubishi Electric there, I'll be playing the Legends with Andy North. I'm looking forward to playing in the U.S. Senior Open at the Broadmoor, love that place, and of course the British Senior Open at St. Andrews, the Old Course there, that will be neat. Looking forward to those tournaments.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about this tour and the time that you've been on it and how you've seen it change, and the 50-year-old guys?

TOM WATSON: The young old guys.

Q. Are the young old guys coming to this tour more prepared than they were when you first started, do you think?

TOM WATSON: Well, the answer to the last part of your question, no. When I came on the Senior Tour back then, then it became the Champions, now PGA TOUR Champions. I wish they would get the name straight. I still call it the Senior Tour.

When I came on the tour I was ready, I was prepared. I didn't play any differently out here than I did on the regular Tour, and the same thing with these guys coming on the PGA TOUR Champions, they're ready. They've played. I haven't really seen the tour change. We still play -- we have 26 events. I guess when I first started maybe they had 33 events maybe, 33. At their height I think they had 39 events out here, they had a ton of events out here. But I think 26 is the right number for this tour. That's pretty much the way I think about it.

It's fun to go out and still be competitive for a 50-year-old comes out, okay, let's see, every year you've got the same thing happening and it's a new thing you can write about. The thing is, who's coming out, who's going to take the golden ring out here this year because they're 50 years old. Well, sometimes that just doesn't happen, you know? The old guys can play. These guys are good, as they say on the PGA Tour.

If I look back on my -- I've been out here, what, 18 years now? I really didn't start losing distance until about five years ago. When I was 63 I started losing distance. My caddie said yeah, Watson's always complaining about hitting it shorter and shorter and shorter. Well, I am hitting it shorter and shorter and shorter. Just part of those things, just one of those things that happen. You just don't have the speed.

Q. Talk about the old guys who can play, how do you explain the enduring success

that Bernhard Langer has had? I mean, at The Open 10 years ago you experienced a lot of success well after you were 52, but what makes him stand out?

TOM WATSON: There's a few elements there and it comes out to be solid gold. The elements, first of all, the guy can really play, he can really score. Second thing is he keeps himself in marvelous shape, he really works out, keeps his body strong, supple. Third thing, he's better prepared than anybody out here. Terry, his caddie, prepares better than anybody, and Bernhard prepares better than anybody. He really studies the golf course. You add those three factors together and it's pretty hard to beat the guy.

Q. What was it that brought you back out here? I know it's been a few years since you played, but you had a 62 out here, 63 out here. You just like the traditional old-school golf courses?

TOM WATSON: Well, to be honest with you, I asked my wife, I said, should I go compete in the Eastern Nationals or go to Toshiba? Eastern Nationals is the cutting horse show and I had already planned to go and compete. It turns out that she couldn't go and she said, go play in Toshiba. This was -- I don't know when it was, about three weeks ago I think I committed to Toshiba. Maybe three weeks, maybe three weeks ago.

But essentially I've always loved to play here. But my love right now is trying to learn how to be a horseman and learn to be a cutting horse showman, that's what my love is right now. It's a new game for Tom Watson, real new game. The back of a horse, you go into a herd of cattle, you go in really softly, you come back out through it, you pick one and you get it in the right position and you force it out, separate it from the rest of the herd. Once you separate it from the rest of the herd, you have to throw your reins down, you can't use your reins anymore to guide the neck of the horse, you've got to do it with your feet. A horse is trained to keep that cow, because that cow wants to go right back in the herd, keep that cow from getting back in the herd. That horse blocks, blocks, blocks, stops the cow, stops the cow back and forth. And you're on the back of that horse holding onto that pommel. You're watching that cow because whatever that cow does, your horse is going to do in a nanosecond and you had better be prepared to go 180 degrees in a nanosecond and that's the rush that I get.

My wife's been doing it for a number of years and I've been watching her do it, and I said that's enough, I can't watch anymore, I've got to do it. About a year and a half ago I made the commitment to learn how to be a horseman and start to show.

Q. Have you competed yet?

TOM WATSON: Yeah.

Q. How is the competition?

TOM WATSON: I think I just went over \$7,000 in lifetime earnings. my wife's got over

\$200,000 in lifetime earnings. She can get it, she can get it. I'm just learning, I'm just learning and I have a lot of people helping me and the only way to learn it is really to be in competition, is to go into the show arena and show your horse. That's when you learn, that's when you learn your skills, that's when you learn how to do it right.

It's one of those things that I tell kids, I equate it to golf. That's the advice I got from Arnold Palmer when I was 14 years old, I had a chance to play with Arnie as a kid when I was 14. And my dad, after the round was over, he said, Arnie, what one thing will help Tom be a better golfer? He said, have him play in as much competition as he can. Like that, simple.

And the same thing about learning how you are under pressure, learning the game when the chips are down. The same thing, learn how to be a cutter. It's a show arena, you've got the judge over here, or judges. You make a mistake, oh, that's a negative, that's a minus. You lose the cow, that's like hitting it out of bounds two times. That cow gets past you, you know? You don't want that. You want to be -- you want to keep your horse in position. Sometimes you can ride the horse, you get a good horse that takes care of you, but I want to do it right.

Anyway, that's kind of the future for me. I'll be playing professional golf and I'll still get prepared for it. Later on, I'll be working on my game before this next couple tournaments I'm playing in, I'll hit balls at the Masters over there in the corner, keep me getting ready for the following week in Atlanta. I don't want to embarrass my partner Andy North, either, in the Legends. That's kind of where I am.

Q. Have any of your fellow competitors in the horse arena, do they know about your past in golf?

TOM WATSON: Yeah, they do a little bit, yeah. But it's -- you know, some of them like to play golf, they really do. But being an eight-time major champion doesn't get you anything when you go into that herd on your cutting horse, it doesn't. It's like teeing it up the next week after winning a golf tournament. Do you tee up the next week with a five-shot lead? No, it's all even, it's all even. It's what can you do now, what can you do now? It's not what you've done before.

Q. Do you have a horse?

TOM WATSON: You have to own the horse to show it, yeah. Don't ask me how many horses I have.

Q. I assume you've got only a select few that you compete with?

TOM WATSON: That's right, yeah. There are different classes you compete in. It gets really confusing. You've got the aged events, you've got the futurity events, you've got a five-, six-year-old event. Then you have older horses that can compete in certain other classes. You have a senior, you can actually -- you go into a class right there and there's a

senior division so you can add another \$400 or \$500 to your entry fee and you can compete against all the seniors. It's kind of like the old -- it's like the old double dipping Senior Tour.

Remember the super seniors, the supes? They were out of here with \$19,000 first prize. Then they win the tournament, you know? It's double dipping. But you've got to pay for it in the cutting horse world. You pay for geldings, you get incentives for having a certain horse -- that's been bred by a certain stud, you have incentives, there's a lot of different things in there. But it's brand new, yeah.

Q. Tom, you had mentioned that you get a little pep in your step every time the Masters comes around, but in addition to that, I was wondering, you look on and you see some things that maybe inspire you further just to keep being a competitor, something like maybe your favorite Kansas City Royals winning the World Series in 2015, did that maybe inspire you as well?

TOM WATSON: Not so much in the golf world, it just inspired me because I'm a baseball fan. I love baseball. As with Bumgarner, he got the last out in the 2014 World Series in Kansas City, I was watching that. It was a disappointment. We had Gordon on third. And then the next year we just went right through the Playoffs and it was great.

To see other people, other sports such as baseball -- I have a good friend, George Brett's a good friend. We share our feelings about how our sports are, kind of inside the curtain. How he thought about the swing, how I think about my swing or the competition or the work ethic that goes into being a great player. There's a lot of common ground between George and me in a lot of ways although our sports are really different.

What inspires me still is that I still feel as if I can compete out here, even though I hit the ball shorter, I still feel as though I can still get it. I didn't get it last year, the first time, I really didn't have a close shot winning a tournament last year. But heck, I'm only playing seven tournaments a year. Maybe this year I can get it, I can get it back, get it close, do something special.

Q. The Old Course is looming. You reiterated your comments on the golf ball that you've endorsed Jack's view and you've had your view for many years. Is one of the things when you come to a golf course like this, the scale of this golf course, is it the ideal scale and is that something that fuels your comments on the golf ball, the expanding scale of a golf course?

TOM WATSON: You know, the way -- the long hitters are always going to have the advantage. I was one of the longest hitters on the tour in my heyday. There wasn't anybody really knocking it by me. I could hit it high and I could hit it long. I had the advantage. Plus, I could putt the eyes out, I made everything in the '70s there.

So you combine that and I didn't have to hit the ball too straight. I'm hitting wedges into the greens and these guys are hitting 4-irons or 5-irons from the fairway. The way the game has

progressed as far as that's concerned, it's hard to make them long enough, these courses long enough where these guys are hitting a driver and a 3-iron to a par 4, you know? Hit lots of drivers and 3-irons into par 5s, but they hit a driver to a par 4. So what do you have to make the par 4 to make it a driver and a 3-iron, 550? 580? Par 5, 600, they knock it on in two, it's 600 yards. Justin Thomas at Erin Hills.

Q. 700 yards.

TOM WATSON: Damn near 700 yards and he knocks it on the green.

I have a story, does anybody remember Lowell Thomas, the travel log. I had the opportunity to go up and visit his property up there, I think it's between New Hampshire and Vermont. He had a farm up there. He had Gene Sarazen come up there and design a golf course for him there and he had a 760-yard par 6, and he also had eight and a half inch cups. Gene said why do we have to play four and a quarter inch cups? We have an eight and a half inch cup out here.

I get on that golf course, it's going to be easy to make these putts. I couldn't make anything. You're just hitting it real hard, knock it eight feet by, 10 feet by and missing it coming back.

I remember that 760-yard par 6. Well, now they're going to have to make a 760-yard par 5, okay? Why not? Problem is, you don't have any land. It's expensive. There's a lot of turf you have to take care of for 760 yards. That's one of the things that gets me. I believe that you have a course -- my good friend Sandy Tatum that passed away this last year, he played a thousand rounds at Cypress Point. It's one of my favorite golf courses, I love Cypress, the eighth hole, the ninth hole, little dinky par 4s. You can drive the ninth green. The greens are like this, and if you miss it you're making 8, you know?

I remember him saying that he went out and played with one of these young pros and he said he had an iron to all the par 5s on the golf course and he never hit more than a wedge to any of the par 4s. And it ruins the golf course. Said move the tees back. He said we're not doing it, we're going to make this an example of what courses used to be, what used to be.

The first hole there, we hit driver, 5-iron on the first hole. These guys are hitting driver, sand wedge. Used to have a group of trees over there, I was long enough I could carry over that group of trees. A lot of the guys couldn't, so you had to keep it left over here. These guys blow it by those trees by 70 yards. And there you have it. That's the golf ball and combination of the driver. That's what happens. So do you take the fun out of the game for people hitting the ball a long way? No, I for one just said, all right, I think because of the golf courses -- I think you play in a shorter amount of time because you're playing a shorter golf course and I think you get the same amount of enjoyment playing golf, hitting the shots that you normally hit to these par 4s and par 3s, and you wouldn't have to have all that extra expense for the extra land you have to take care of. Shorter amount of time. In this day and age, shorter amount of time, you've got to get back to this, you see? You've got to get it

back to this.

Q. Why can't we have a tour ball and a regular hacker's ball?

TOM WATSON: You know, I guess the way I look at it, I still want to compare myself to somebody hitting the same type of ball. I do, yeah. You want to play with Tom Watson, he's 68 years old and you catch one on the screws like this and you outdrive Tom Watson. It wasn't because you had a golf ball that went farther than Tom Watson's golf ball, it's simply because you outdrove Tom Watson. Hey, I just outdrove Watson, you know? That's the reason you don't change it right there.

Q. But couldn't you have the option of doing it? With the Tour you have the option. The rest of it, you want to hit a Tour ball, great. If we don't, it shouldn't matter. Why couldn't that be?

TOM WATSON: It might happen that way, but don't hold your breath. I don't think they're going to wind the golf ball back. I don't think they have the guts to do that, to be honest with you.

Q. Even Augusta?

TOM WATSON: You can't do it for one tournament. You have to do it for the entire tour, the entire professional game. You can't do -- one tournament can't say you're going to play a golf ball that goes 10 percent shorter, can't do that. They would have a mutiny on their hands.

Q. Have you talked to the people at Augusta about replacing Arnold on the ceremonial --

TOM WATSON: No, no.

Q. Because I heard rumors about that last year, that maybe it would be you.

TOM WATSON: They've got two great people to start -- they had Freddie McCloud and Jock Huchison for years and years and years. They've got Gary and Jack, and that's who should be starting. Nobody else should join that parade.

Q. But if they ever asked you?

TOM WATSON: Have they ever asked me?

Q. If they ever asked you.

TOM WATSON: Have to be a lot older.

Q. Not there yet, hmm?

TOM WATSON: Not there yet, no.

Q. You mentioned the name of the tour, how it went from Senior -- the PGA Senior Tour to Champions Tour to the PGA TOUR Champions. What about PGA Tour Legends?

Q. Don't give him any ideas.

TOM WATSON: Yeah, Legends Tour. That rolls off the tongue, doesn't it? The Legends Tour.

Q. Write that down.

MODERATOR: I'll send a text right now.

TOM WATSON: That's a good idea, I like that.

MODERATOR: Tom Watson said --

TOM WATSON: No, no, he came up with the idea.

Q. So when you've been off for a while, so what do you do to get ready besides what you've told us? Do you just come here and start hitting balls and hope it comes back?

TOM WATSON: No, I start trying to analyze what I need to do. The putting here, the greens are really fast and they take some real skill to putt, and I haven't putted for a long time and my touch -- my touch isn't real good. I've got to learn that touch real quick, learn that downhill putt, how hard to hit it. I practiced a lot of putts on the greens today when I was playing the pro-am, if I could get a feel for the speed, the speed. Most important thing in putting is speed, you've got to hit it the right distance. I didn't a couple times today, it got away from me. But I'm trying to get that feel back in my putting stroke.

I chipped the ball a little bit long today, too. But I drove the ball well. I hit a lot of good iron shots, hit it on the clubface. Hit some good shots today. Driver's good, the Epic driver. I've got the Rogue out here now, the Callaway Rogue, but I still like the Epic better, it spins better for me.

Q. (No microphone.)

TOM WATSON: Actually, I'm playing the new Double Plus soft ball that they've come out with. They have it in the Truvis, they're going to bring it up here or get it to me tomorrow, I hope. I played with the ball first time today and after about four holes, I said yeah, I like this

ball. It's softer, but it still goes the way the ball that I played last year, the Double Dot goes. I like that a lot. The feel is better, I like the feel, man. It's kind of like the old balata, that feel really. The ball goes and it spins nicely but not too much. That's what I was worried about, you get that too much spin on the ball and -- although I like seeing the ball spin.

Actually, it reminds me of the story of Sam Snead. He's giving a clinic out there and he's hitting. One of the greatest shots I ever saw, Sam came to Kansas City and he played with us in the Children's Mercy Golf Classic, and there's this fourth hole at Blue Hills Country Club. He's on the downslope like this to an uphill green, and he couldn't hit the ball very far when I played, he was like 70, 74, 73, and he took this long iron out of his bag and he hit this straight up in the air like that, and it came down so softly. I couldn't do it. It's just so solid.

It reminded me of the time when he was -- he was doing this clinic and he's hitting these high, soft 3-irons and the ball would just go out there and take one hop and stop. A guy out of the crowd says, Sam, I've got to ask you a question, how do you put that backspin on the 3-iron? Sam turns to him and said, how hard do you hit a 3-iron? He said, well, I hit it about 180 yards. He said, why in the hell do you want it to stop for? He had a million of them, Sam. He had a million of them. He was a funny man.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Well, thank you very much and good luck this week.

TOM WATSON: Sure, thank you.