

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**September 12, 2018**



**TOM GILLIS**

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**Q. What does it mean to be so close to home?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, we only get -- you don't get many home games in golf, so it's kind of a one-time deal. I would say -- I wouldn't say it's bad, it's good and bad. There are distractions just because you've got so many people and all that.

**Q. Are you staying at home?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, yeah. You feel a little extra pressure playing at home. I always did when I played the Buick here. Still a lot of fun.

**Q. Okay. Do you like this course?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, I do like the golf course, always have. There's no tricks. If you play well, you usually get rewarded. And there's just not a lot of variables that you can't control. It's usually straightforward.

**Q. Do you get up here often or --**

**TOM GILLIS:** I was up last fall I played, I played in the spring, and I was up a couple days last week, but not a ton. It's only 30, 35 minutes from the house. I should come more because I enjoy coming out.

**Q. Are you a member at Indianwood?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, I'm basically a resident Tour pro I would call it more than I'm a member. They've always treated me like family since I was a kid. I started working there in 1981 and I still live a mile away.

**Q. It's a beautiful place.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, yeah. It's been home for me. I mean, without that place, I don't think I would have ever made it as far as I did. I was treated like a member ever since I was a kid, so I could play and practice all I wanted.

**Q. Oh, okay. Wow.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. So you've done well on this Champions Tour?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, I've only played two events. I'm two for two on good weeks, so that's nice.

**Q. So does that give you hope for the --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, I think so. I figured that my game would resonate well out here just from only being removed from the Tour, the PGA TOUR just two years ago, competing against some of the best in the world at the time, so I figured I would transition fairly well.

**Q. Yeah. Umm, and you coached at Notre Dame Prep?**

**TOM GILLIS:** I did, yeah, coached not this spring, the spring before. I coached the golf team.

**Q. Okay. Was that fun for you or --**

**TOM GILLIS:** I enjoyed it, yeah. I just -- I would have done it this year, but I was trying to get ready for this, so I was spending -- I've never had to actually worry about six players' golf games. I was only worried about one, so that was a big adjustment. A lot of change for me, and having to remember that they're 16 and 17.

**Q. Yeah, that's tough.**

**TOM GILLIS:** But I had a bunch of great kids. It was just I didn't have any control over a lot because they're playing the tournaments, I'm watching. It was a really different side than I've ever experienced.

**Q. Was it kind of --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Oh, I enjoyed it.

**Q. Was it good?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah. And I'm still friends with all those kids. I had five seniors and one junior and I still talk to them all.

**Q. Oh, do you really? Okay, that's a good thing.**

**TOM GILLIS:** They're all good kids and most of them are off -- all of them are at colleges and that. Run into them in the summer once in a while. So yeah, it was -- it was -- there were some nice relationships made, and with the parents.

**Q. Oh, okay. And you just turned 50 in July, right?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yep.

**Q. So kind of worked not great coming into the middle of the Tour?**

**TOM GILLIS:** It would have been nice to be 50 in March, yeah, because you don't have a lot of -- there's not a lot of time to establish status on the Tour so you're fully exempt next year. So fortunately, I got off to such a fast start, I've got a really good chance to do it here the next four weeks.

**Q. So how many tournaments are you playing in?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, we've got this one, and then we're in South Dakota next week. I'm not in there yet unless I was to top-10 here or go over there and qualify. The week after we're at Pebble Beach, I did get a spot there. And then we have Raleigh is our last one, that's it and then the Playoffs start.

**Q. Okay. So you have to make so much --**

**TOM GILLIS:** You've got to be in the top-54 on the Money List at the end to be exempt for next year. So I think I'm 55th right now. I'm on the hot seat, yeah.

**Q. So since you hadn't really -- have you competed some in the last --**

**TOM GILLIS:** No, not much in the two years. I played the Michigan Open in 2017 and there wasn't -- that was really about it for the year. Kind of just totally stepped away from the game as a whole. Didn't go to the gym for a year and just totally stepped away from everything because I was a little burned out. I was a little bit tired of the whole life you call it; just travel, travel, travel and trying to get ready every week to have your game ready. So it was -- for me, it was just nice to totally step away.

Then started in January this year, the 1st got right back in the gym. Back three days a week in the gym, got strength back and started to get -- played some more tournaments, some smaller tournaments in the spring leading up to July 16th. So yeah, that's kind of --

**Q. Was it good for you to get --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Oh, I think so. I think it's always good. Not many players ever do that. Players don't like to take time away, you know, because you lose spots on the Money List. Well, I wasn't playing anywhere, so I didn't have to worry about being away. The hardest part was just adjusting to it and not being used to being on the go. So it was an adjustment for my wife, my kids, myself. It was more me. They were happy to have me home. Me, the first few months were pretty difficult just because I couldn't sit still and I didn't have anything to do, which is what it needed to be at the time.

I kept thinking I've got to get ready, I've got to go, go, go, and then I would sit there and go, there's nowhere to go, so it would be like somebody retiring. Whoa, and it did open my eyes to that. All you want to do is retire but who wants to retire. I was pretty bored the first year, really bored, especially when you've been on the go 28 years. It's just like whoa, sticker shock.

**Q. Right. And what do golfers do? I mean, regular people retire to play golf.**

**TOM GILLIS:** They play golf, exactly. So I like to fish and I was at all my kids' sports games, which is fun. My wife coaches volleyball and basketball at Notre Dame Pre. I was there watching that. It was nice to be part of their lives more instead of being home a week, gone two, home a week, gone two or whatever.

**Q. How old are your kids?**

**TOM GILLIS:** 12 and 10.

**Q. Oh, okay. So they're just --**

**TOM GILLIS:** They're young.

**Q. Just getting into --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Sports.

**Q. Are they into sports?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah. My daughter plays volleyball at Notre Dame and then my son plays football and basketball, so it was fun to see all those games.

**Q. I think you almost have to play sports if you go there, don't you?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, it's more academic --

**Q. It's such a -- oh, I know they have good academics, but --**

**TOM GILLIS:** It really is more academics, but the sports are --

**Q. It seems like --**

**TOM GILLIS:** We're a sports family, so --

**Q. It seems like at Notre Dame they always do well --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. -- athletically. I liked Betty Wroubel.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, Betty's good and she was good to me when I coached and she's been good to my wife, Jenny. We're moving next spring after this school year back to Florida.

**Q. Oh, you are? Oh, okay.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah. So Betty was crushed when Jenny went and told her. She was like, you know, she was bummed because she liked Jenny as a coach. She liked having us around. She's like, you never want to lose good families here. But it's basically a decision for me in that last chapter to be able to prepare and practice properly.

**Q. Year round?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. Is that the thing?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, year round.

**Q. Have you lived down there before?**

**TOM GILLIS:** We have. We lived in Jupiter before and we actually bought in the same neighborhood we lived before. We just bought a house last week down there. So we know the neighborhood and we still have a few friends there, so it's really not a blind move.

**Q. Yeah. And when are you moving again?**

**TOM GILLIS:** After the school year next spring, June. So I've got so much family up here, we're in the doghouse for leaving. My mom and dad are here and we're taking the grandkids. We've got one more window, one more chapter of this book, let's do it right.

**Q. Yeah. It will be a nice place for them to visit.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, we bought a -- yeah, we did, we bought a nice home. It's got six bedrooms, you know, and so my sister and my mom, my brother and Jenny's family, they can all come visit. And we love to have visitors, so it should be fun.

**Q. Yeah, that's kind of a good time for your kids to move before they get --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, it's got to go now or it doesn't happen. Jenny, my wife's the one that really said we've got to think about it. I'm just not as motivated up here as I was when I was in Florida. We live on Lake Orion and it's nice and fun and relaxing. And I just don't have the desire to practice as much as I did down there. When I'm down there I don't have as

much to do, and I train at a place called the Bear's Club where there's 25 Tour pros. So now you're playing with Rickie and Dustin and McIlroy and players like that. Well, that helps you big time.

**Q. Yeah, I would think, plus you can do it on your own pretty much?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, yeah. It just keeps that edge, you know, so when you transition out here it doesn't feel like much when you're competing against the best in the world. That's kind of -- when I had my best years, that's where I was, I was down there.

**Q. Well, good for you.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. What do you think this week will bring?**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, we've just got to temper the expectations is the toughest part here because, you know, it would be a good story if you could pull it off and we're capable of doing it.

**Q. You've been shooting in the 60s, is that --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, it usually takes 15 to 18 under every week out here. About 6 under, 5 to 6 a day usually does it. The scoring's good out here, it really is. These guys, I've been watching it for two years and I've been impressed with the scoring, and then after being out here, I'm like, you know, just because they're over 50, there are still guys that can really play. Kind of cool, really.

**Q. I used to cover it when it was down at TPC at Dearborn.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Q. They used to have a senior --**

**TOM GILLIS:** They did, that was a good one.

**Q. Yeah, it was always fun to go out there.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. Well, I used to cover the Buick Open, too. That was great. I love coming here. Golfers are --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Well, they're probably more approachable than some of the other athletes that you cover day to day. Especially out here, everybody's guard's down because most of

them made their money. They're here and their kids are grown. They're like, this is fun this is great.

**Q. Even Tiger Woods when he was out here, it was before all his troubles.**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. There was one day that like the Thursday had been delayed so Friday was -- you know, he didn't get done playing until Friday when it was dark and he met the media out by his car. Talked to us. I'm like, he could have gone --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah, he could have gotten right out of here.

**Q. It was late, he had a good excuse, but he was --**

**TOM GILLIS:** Yeah.

**Q. Well, good, it's nice to talk to you.**

**TOM GILLIS:** You, too.