

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
April 24, 2019

ROGER CLEMENS



Q. Well, what do you think of what you're seeing so far of Big Cedar Lodge and Top of the Rock?

ROGER CLEMENS: Well, we're getting to see it all. We're here just for a few days, but we made the most of it. We got in early to stop in Springfield. Our godson plays left field for the AA Cardinals, Conner Capel. So we got to surprise him, watch him play a game.

Then we snuck down this way and done a little of everything so far. We've been on the move and got to see quite a bit of the property. So looking forward to the golf today and tomorrow, too.

Q. Have you been out this way before at all in Branson?

ROGER CLEMENS: I have not. This is our first trip.

Q. How did you get involved with the tournament and what got you out here?

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, so it's been a couple years, they've been trying to get us to come this way. I do a little work for the Astros, too, and my two young boys are playing professionally, too. I've got one that's playing for the Blue Jays, one's playing for the Tigers, so we're kind of all over the map and it just worked out good.

So we're excited. Like I said, when it has to do with golf, I've played with the senior guys before. Obviously played with a lot of them when they were on the regular tour, the PGA TOUR, and I'll get to see them again in my hometown in Houston for the Insperity. It's coming up, it's coming soon, so I get to see some of the familiar faces, guys I've played with over the years.

Q. Do you have any relationship with Johnny Morris business-wise?

ROGER CLEMENS: I don't, I don't. You know, like I said, we've -- the guys have told me about it and just never had the opportunity to get up here. So my schedule, I tell people I should unretire to retire again because with my schedule. It's been nice. It worked out perfect for us so we can get in and out of here. Would love to come for the whole week next time, but we have to get back, we've got some work to do. So we'll play today and tomorrow and then we'll cut out, and we'll probably watch some of the festivities over the weekend.

Q. Roger, I understand you like to hunt and fish. You're in a hunting and fishing mecca right here.

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, yeah.

Q. What do you like to hunt most?

ROGER CLEMENS: We hunt whitetail and pigs and turkey and stuff like that in south Texas. We love it down there. The boys, you know, it's special for me because my father passed away when I was young, so I really didn't have a chance to do that. So when I had the opportunity to get my boys outdoors and teach them about the wildlife and the fun stuff, they really enjoy it. So it's fun for them. It's really a great time for me as a dad with the boys, the quiet time, whether it's on our lake. We have a -- we're on Lake Conroe there about an hour north in Bentwater. We love it up there, we've got a place there. So that and we'll get about anywhere from five to 10 days in the offseason with the boys' busy schedule and mine. It's great quiet time for us.

Q. What's the biggest fish you've ever caught?

ROGER CLEMENS: I caught an 11-pound 9-ounce bass, and it was Lake Toho outside Kissimmee when we were training there with the Astros. Lake Toho's got some toads or --

Q. Bass fishing capital, for sure.

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah.

Q. Have you been turkey hunting this spring?

ROGER CLEMENS: Have not, have not. We need to get that going, too. The boys stay on us big time. You would have to talk to the real boss down there, she runs our program a lot. She loves getting outdoors and loves to golf also. We love it.

Like I said, it's really through the game of golf and a lot of outdoor stuff, I've done a few things for a couple of the big clothing outfitters for TV and had a really good hunt in Illinois for some underprivileged kids. It was just a great deal. We're getting some at-risk kids out doing things that normally they wouldn't have the opportunity to do.

Q. It's great outdoors. Great for America, really.

ROGER CLEMENS: Absolutely.

Q. How's the golf game?

ROGER CLEMENS: Golf game's not bad. I need to play a little bit more. We have our, what they call our celebrity events coming up where we win some money for our foundations. I'll play a little bit more.

Some of these guys play a lot and they're really good. They play three, four times a week, sometimes 36 holes a day and they're really good. I enjoy playing with the pros, the big dogs, because you just kind of watch them swing. I'm a visual person, I've been that way ever since I pitched. Looking at different photos of guys that I watched when I was young like a Tom Seaver and a Nolan Ryan.

So when I'm out there playing in some of these tournaments, like say AT&T or the old Bob Hope tournaments, I'm playing next to the guys when they're actually trying to earn a check. It's fun for me because I see their swing plane, see how they attack the golf course and how they methodically go about their work doing it.

Q. You mentioned your godson, Conner. Is that a family relationship or a family friend?

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, family friend. I went to -- his dad and I were on a national championship team at Texas. So we've got some boys playing around the league. When I get a chance, like I said, to do some work for the Astros, I work with probably 20, 25 guys in the big leagues, it's more the mental part of their game. They're already in the major leagues, they know what to do and how to win.

Sometimes you can get a little down on your game or you need to make a little adjustment in your mental part of your game or maybe your grip or a pitch or two. A lot of guys are trying to learn my split finger, which was a devastating pitch for me, especially my second half of my career.

So it's just fun. When the guys ask pointed questions, I give them a pointed answer, and same thing with the boys. The boys, I just stay out of their way and I try to play the dad role, but if they come to me with something that's on their mind that we can be specific about, we're dead on with that.

Q. What was that visit with Conner like in Springfield? It was a quick one?

ROGER CLEMENS: It was quick. The hardest thing was we got there early for him to see me before his at-bat because it's the first time I got to see him play this year, and whether he would be nervous that I'm there and try too hard, try to hit a homer or something or just wait for a few at-bats.

So I waited for a few at -- bats to go by and I snuck down right behind the dugout and I told him he was actually facing a sidearm guy and he's a left-handed hitter. I said, "You need to go hit right handed off this guy," and that's when he was like, "Oh, my gosh." So it was fun to see him and get to see him play in person.

What's great about the minor league game now, most of the ballparks do have TV or something, so you're able to pull it up on your smartphone or whatever. So even when we're -- yesterday we watched my number three child, Kacy, with the Blue Jays. They had a

double header, so you could watch them on your smartphone. It's really cool. I don't feel like I'm that old, but they teased me that they had to call in the coordinates on a satellite dish and you got static or you had to listen by phone.

Q. Of all your achievements in Major League Baseball, which one is most precious to you?

ROGER CLEMENS: Oh, man, there's -- I met so many cool people through the game of baseball, and golf for that matter. I tell people I think probably the most memorable and probably the coolest thing that's ever happened to me came from a tough situation.

I was supposed to pitch on 9-11. I was a New York Yankee. I was starting that night in New York City and what happened wasn't too far from where we lived. I was pitching against my former team, the Red Sox, so it was a big night in the city when everything -- when our world changed.

But what came of it, my agents went to high school with General Myers, our four-star general at the time. General Myers called me to go to the Middle East to see our men and women. It was six, seven days, it was a trip of a lifetime. I got to see our men and women and really how young they were but how professional they were.

My brother went to Vietnam and I had five, six uncles that served. So I always tell people I tip my hat to them, you know, families that have loved ones that they've lost or served. It was pretty tough treading during that time of being a Yankee. Mr. Steinbrenner brought back all the police and firemen and people that lost loved ones when we resumed that season.

But it was really cool flying over on Air Force Two and getting on a C-18 transport plane with about 25 of the toughest Marines you've ever seen. They made me look like a punter standing next to me, they were giant.

But it was fun. Those were memories from playing my 24 years I'll remember. Facing different guys like Reggie Jackson and having the opportunity to talk to Ted Williams. I played on the field right where Lou Gehrig gave his farewell speech. It doesn't get much better than that when you talk about history.

Q. How much does watching your sons and godson kind of climb the ladder, how much does that take you back to the early '80s when you were kind of cutting your teeth?

ROGER CLEMENS: You know, it's hard. It's hard these days because now, like I told them, they're all hitters, and really when I played, if our pitching coach came to the mound in the 8th inning or our manager came out in the 8th inning to take the ball from me, he was going to have a hard time getting the ball from me. We wanted to complete and finish what we started.

Now, you can go five, six innings. So I told the boys, "You might see a pitcher for two at-bats and then that pitcher's gone, and then you face three different guys at the tail end of the game and all of them throw 100 miles an hour and from all different angles."

So it's tough. They're in a big learning curve to understand that every night you're going to face pretty much the No. 1 starter once you get to the professional ranks. But I loved it that they played at the University of Texas, followed my footsteps there and that they both graduated from Texas. The youngest one just got named male -- Deborah? What was his honor?

Yeah, so our youngest one just got yesterday named Male Athlete of the Year for the season he had, so he's feeling pretty good. I think he's going to try to remove my retired number off the wall and put his up there or something.

But it's fun. Like I said, I play the dad role. I was that way even when they were little and try and keep the dads calm, because they can get pretty excited about even when your kid's 7, 8, 12 years old, 15 years old, whatever. Just want them to enjoy the game.

It's very tough to play. You can't forget about how hard it was as you get older. It looks easy from the stands, let me tell you. It looks easy and it looks slow. But when you're standing in the box and I'm whistling one in there about 98 miles an hour, you might hear it. You might not see it, but you'll hear it.