

FRED COUPLES

FRED COUPLES: Well, I like the place, like the course. I didn't come last year because I had some back issues, but it's a very good tournament and it's close to home in California, but I like the golf course.

Q. Speaking of back issues, I think it was hip injuries, we're doing a story on David Berganio. Did you ever play with him in a pairing back in --

FRED COUPLES: Oh, sure, sure. I haven't seen him in a long time. He's down there hitting balls now, but I did not know that was the problem. He hasn't played in a long time. He's a great player and it's nice to have him out here. Any injury's no fun. I can only appreciate back injuries, so I'm sure hip for golfers is no bargain.

Q. So you have played twice this year on the Champions Tour, two top-10s. Are you feeling well and playing well?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I'm trying to play more. I played the L.A. Open and missed the cut there instead of Naples, so that was kind of a bummer.

Trying to do some Presidents Cup stuff. I'm trying to really play quite a bit until Augusta. So I'm going to play next week in Newport and then Mississippi and then week off, then Augusta and then I'll maybe slow down. But I feel okay at the moment. I want to try and really be ready for Augusta. I know it sounds funny, but last year I wasn't very healthy and went there and I made the cut, which was a huge deal because I was basically a cripple.

So I keep looking at it like I can still play this course. I think, you know, I want to play well everywhere I play. I'm expecting to play well this week, I've been practicing pretty hard.

The top-10s, if you play well and make a few putts and if you're a good player, I mean, a top-10 is good, and I don't want to sound cocky or anything, but I feel like when I come to play, if I do okay, that's where I should finish. It doesn't happen every week. Last time I played here I played okay. The time before that I think I finished last, but those things happen.

Q. Steve Stricker recently was named the captain of the U.S. Ryder Cup team. How do you think he will fit in that particular roll?

FRED COUPLES: Well, he's going to do awesome. Jim Furyk was awesome and lost. Tom Watson lost. Davis Love has one win and a loss. These are all guys I've known since I was 22 years old, they're all incredible people. Tiger's the Presidents Cup captain, I'm going

to be assistant, so we'll see. If they win, it's incredible. If they lose, then it's like, is it Tiger's fault? We all know it's the players that play and you've got to get them there and get ready.

But Steve Stricker is a local guy from Wisconsin, that's where the Ryder Cup is, so it will be an incredible week for he and his family.

But it's pretty stressful. I'm sure he's thinking about it every day and it's, what, almost 18 months away or something. So it's a little weird, but he's going to be great. He's great with the players, but they all are. I had Dave Stockton, who was very loose. I had Ray Floyd, who was as stern as anyone, and it's not that big of a deal. We win and lose as players. There were a couple of Ryder Cups where I didn't play well and I felt like I lost for the team, and the one that I was on with Davis and we won and then we tied one, I felt like I played pretty well. It's a team thing, but if you get a few guys that win some points, the captain will look good.

Q. Having played on five Ryder Cup teams, is there a certain trait that you think is kind of the best one to have for a captain?

FRED COUPLES: You know, I honestly don't. I think one quick story, when I was Presidents Cup captain, one of the guys asked me when the bus was leaving the next morning for a practice round. Honestly, I said, "I don't know and I don't care, that's not my job. You find out when the bus is leaving."

So for a captain, once the tournament starts, I mean, you pair them together. And the Presidents Cup's different than the Ryder Cup. The Presidents Cup has a little more of a fun twist where you kind of can match up and you go one guy and the next guy. But the Ryder Cup's very stressful.

I don't think there's anything that you can really say that I've ever seen -- Paul Azinger had the pods and they won, so it looks very, very good and all the players loved it. And when you're on a losing team, all the players hate whatever goes on because you lose and it's a huge week. Those guys that lost in France, you know, it's tough. They wanted to win, they're all great players. If you put that team together, they're incredible players.

So Presidents Cup, Ryder Cup, they're totally different. We win every Presidents Cup almost and we don't win enough Ryder Cups.

Q. Does the Presidents Cup have captain's picks?

FRED COUPLES: Yes.

Q. Because I was talking to Tom Lehman yesterday, he said the most stressful thing about the whole responsibility of being captain is making those picks. That's what he said.

FRED COUPLES: He's correct, yeah. The easiest is making the picks. The hardest thing is calling you at night and saying, "I didn't pick you." I mean, I picked Tiger Woods, I picked Bill Haas. The hardest thing was calling Keegan Bradley, who won a PGA and the Byron Nelson, and saying, "I didn't put you on the team." It went on for an hour. But that's the hardest thing, there's no doubt. Lehman's right on that.

Q. From what you know of Steve, I guess you're close friends, in terms of his temperament, do you feel he has the right temperament for this role?

FRED COUPLES: Oh, yes, yes. And if it's Tom Watson who I had as a captain and he was the captain a few years ago, they have different temperaments, but I would love to be on Tom Watson's team any time. They all know it. They're all champions and winners, they all know what they're doing. They're not going to put any player in a bad spot, it's impossible. But I like Steve Stricker a lot, so I'm very excited that he got the job.