

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
March 7, 2019



FRED COUPLES

Q. First of all, you've obviously won here twice. How special is this place to you among other courses you've won at over the years?

FRED COUPLES: Well, first of all, I like California. I don't have to go very far from the house. I like the grass. The greens are small and it reminds me a little bit of a course where I grew up in Seattle, which is not 9,000 yards long but has small greens, pop-up greens. So you have to be a good iron player here, and length helps on every course, but especially around here.

Q. It's been a little while since you've last won here. Is that hunger still there, you want to try to get that third one?

FRED COUPLES: Well, yeah. I've actually unfortunately missed it I think two of the last three years with my back, but as I get older, I still feel like I can play this course and I look forward to playing it every year.

We've had some, I guess a lot of rain, and I've been pretty sick the last two or three weeks, so I feel okay now and I'm ready to play. You know, I expect to play well.

Q. Southern California doesn't get rain like this. What are the challenges of playing on a slushy course like this over the weekend?

FRED COUPLES: That's a good question. I think if you're hitting most of the fairways and getting it around, you're okay. The rough may be difficult to play out of when it's wet and heavy. I think we're supposed to get some wind, so it should dry up. The fairways are phenomenal, so it should be fine.

Q. Fred, I just wanted to kind of touch on the buzz about the longevity that this tour provides. This year two of the first four winners have been age 60 or older and it's supposed to be just the fifth time in the tour's history. You'll turn 60 this year and have a chance to do that come the Schwab Cup Playoffs. Can you just talk about how careers are getting extended and how the window continues to be even further open?

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, age is -- when you're 50 and you come out here, you're pretty excited. Even if you're not one of the tour's best players, you get 50 because you're still getting the second deal on life. But if you're a good player and you come out and you start to win and you enjoy it, it's a good spot to play.

As you get older -- I'm 59, and Mark O'Meara just won, played phenomenal golf last week.

So I'm not looking at an age yet because I still feel like I hit the ball pretty firm and far, but I think for most of us when we start to lose distance, then we start thinking, oh, God, I'm 63 or 4 or 5. So that will come. Hopefully, it doesn't come for a couple more years.

Q. How are you feeling these days? Last year you had to pull out late.

FRED COUPLES: I feel okay. Last couple years, you know, I haven't played much. Last year was not a whole lot of fun, I didn't feel very good, my back was out. This year I'm trying to play a little more leading up to Augusta and then I'll probably take a lot of time off, but I'm trying to pace myself, so I feel like Augusta will be a good week.

As far as this tour, I would like to play more. It's kind of hard for me to do. We have a lot of breaks, so I get pretty rusty pretty fast, like everyone else. After this tournament we have a few weeks off, then we get a few more weeks off after that, then we get a big stretch.

So I'm going to try to play a little bit in May and June, see how it goes.

Q. How does it feel to play this course? Does it hold any sort of special, you know --

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, for sure. I really like it. I like -- as I said, I've won twice, but I feel like everyone likes it. We get great crowds, huge galleries for us. I live half a mile away, so I can ride my bike or walk or drive my car. But the course makes it fun and I think we all like it. That's the key thing, you know, the Pickups have bought the place and built a new clubhouse and I'm also a member over at Big Canyon where they play, so I see them all the time. I just told them yesterday or this morning that the players are loving it. It makes me feel good because I live here and they all want to live here. They're all far away, but they all want to live in Newport.

Q. We imagine you get a ton of rounds in here, but with regards to some of the things that they put out there this week, I think they're excited about 17, the chance to play some shots over the water. What challenges are you excited about?

FRED COUPLES: Well, always a challenge really is to -- it's three rounds, it's not four rounds. So you have to play really, really well, which you normally do in any tournament, but here the holes kind of run out. So the 17th hole, you know, every day is exciting. It's a little nerve wracking because people are screaming and yelling. I like the hole. I've hit some really good shots on it, I've hit some really bad putts on it, but overall I think it's fun to play in front of that many people on a nice hard par 3.