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CHAMPIONSHIP



WENDESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2023
ERNIE ELS

MODERATOR: You just got done playing in the Pro Am. How does the course look? New renovation and everything.

ELS: Course is excellent. Greens are very tricky. You know, it's going to be hard to read them. They've got a lot of undulation and stuff. But the course has taken well. I don't see anything wrong with the golf course. Greens are a little firm. The fairways have taken well. The rerouting is brilliant. I think, you know, some of the holes they do. That's 18 now. I think it's good. 18 is close to the clubhouse now. Instead of away. So I think all in all I think we've got a good test.

It's going to be a more difficult test than past years. Just, you know, getting the right freedom. Green is the best.

QUESTION: It's the second or three charge swap golf playoff events. How do you feel about your game coming in this week?

ELS: I feel good. You know, physically I feel better. You know, I've been having a little bit of a lower back. I've been working with physio and his big bang the heck out of me. So I feel better. It's going to loosen up. My years been okay. It's been a consistent year. But I always want to have some wins. You know, I won once. I think Steve Stricker played it. Steve Ames played great he also won four times. Some of the other guys. It's tough winning. What little something could kick you forward to win a little more. I don't quite finish it off.

I don't quite keep it going. I had a couple of leads this year and I didn't quite finish it off. End of card. Coming in. I played it even far around. Going through that. And then also in Houston, you know, it's sort of even around there.

So, a little inconsistent here and there. And obviously putting, if I can make those putts, you know, that you have to keep the momentum going, I'll be good. But, you know, the guys out here, you know, you see how hard they work.

The guys have had it all day long, so they still have a lot of passion for the game. So, you need to play three really solid rounds to win out here.

QUESTION: What do you think is separated Stricker this year?

ELS: Well, I think his consistency and I think all disciplines of his game really worked. You know, his short game, his wedge game, his driving, and obviously the putter. You know, it's always a good putter, but to keep making those putts, that keeps getting the score on the board.

He keeps getting that 66 on the board. So, just a great competitor.

QUESTION: Ernie, how much driver will you hit this week and how many of the par - fives are reachable for you?

ELS: Well, the wind switched to the north now. So, I'll see, you know, that seventh hole, you know, like when it's straight down, the driver is a bit too much. You know, you can go through the green. But there's going to be a lot of drivers hit, I think. You know, they've lengthened some holes. You know, the old fifth hole is now 475, it's a lot longer. So, there's going to be quite a few drivers hit, I believe. Into the wind holes, like number 10, 11, I'm going to hit quite a few drivers.

QUESTION: 16 was basically kind of a par -4 or 18, the old 18. Yes. Just talk about what the new 18 -to -level percent for you challenged, right?

ELS: So we can reach it easily. But they've got two bunkers in the fairways. They've got the one left, the one right. So you've got to kind of get the ball in play through there. But then you have a kind of a middle iron, long iron end to the green. Very undulating green now. But that was a great 18th hole. You know, a lot of drama and stuff there. But I still like the 18th I have now. I think it's a good part four. And you can close the clubhouse. But yeah, 16th is going to be a hole where things can change. You can make eagles there.

QUESTION: Looks a lot different without that tree.

ELS: It does. It seems like they took quite a lot of trees. I only played here once before they changed it. So my memory is not so good on this one.

ELS: You weren't here last year to encourage your dad. You have with your center, you have so much going on. It's with your personal life and things going on in the other party of life now. How do you balance that with playing golf?

ELS: This was a crazy weekend. I mean, we did a cancer, a conquer cancer deal on Sunday night with Jack Nicklaus, Annika and Luke Donald dinner and questioning answer then clinic in the morning. Spoke to you guys and then did a five-hour kind of program. And then I went straight into our deal. The Els for Autism Grand Finale started on that previous Sunday also at the Breakers. So we did Monday afternoon with our guys evening at the center. And then Tuesday morning program again with us.

And then last night we had the dinner and in this morning, you know, start here. So it's a good thing I got kind of tomorrow for myself. I can get my brain back. But that's on the charity stuff and it's all good obviously.

All of that, cancer stuff, you know how tough that is for people and our foundation helping the autistic community. It was really a give back to all our donors and fundraisers through the year. We have 15 events and they raised, as a group, they raised over \$3 million, \$3 .2 million once again.

They go straight into our school. We just opened an adult facility. So that's open now and that we needed to show all these people what our center is about, what we're all about. They know that a lot of them have been with us for 13 years but it's good for them to see where their money is going.

QUESTION: What was Monday again for the ELS?

ELS: There was Conquer Cancer

QUESTION: No, but I mean for you or for the ELS. Sorry, for us it was the grand finale for the ELS for autism events. We have our 15 events around the country.

QUESTION: So with all those, do you get the golfing you want to get in?

ELS: No, no, yeah, I've always been kind of busy. We got the design going and some other stuff going. Also the design is going quite well. We've got quite a few projects. 07:20 I'm a busy guy but I love competing and love playing. I'm not practicing as much as I used to, but I'm playing with the guys. I play at Turtle Creek and Jupiter, the Loxahatchee I play golf and they're great.

So I play a lot but I don't practice too much. I feel I'm sharp enough to compete with these guys. Maybe next year I'll slow things down a bit. I say it every year.

QUESTION: They said you were involved with the Apogee, you were kind of a consultant or whatever. What do you help with them with up there?

ELS: Well, Mr. Pascucci and Mr. Ross, they were really good friends of mine. And, you know, just more a promotional deal at first. You know, I've seen what they've done up there, I've been up there. And they've got great designers. I don't want to get involved with somebody else's work. But, you know, myself and Rory, we kind of ambassadors of Apogee and standing for the project with Mr. Ross and Mr. Pascucci. But I don't want to get involved too much with other people's work. You know, when I do a golf course, I don't want to have somebody saying, hey, listen, move that bunker, you know. I don't think it's like a personal thing, you know. But they're great friends of ours. And I think they're doing a wonderful golf course up there.

QUESTION: So they're just asking your opinion or are you just there to whatever they need?

ELS: Well, I'm just there to whatever they need. I'm just there. You know, I'm basically going to get my membership and I'm a spokesman for them. You know, saying that it's going to be a great project.

QUESTION: And you're spending a fair amount of time at Bear Lakes, did you know?

ELS: Yeah. Through the years. They're doing good work there. They've redone the course and the links course now. I was there yesterday and they showed us the new range. Okay. Yeah. Wonderful facility now. I think it's the best range of community.

QUESTION: Were you around there much when Dana would bring Devon in?

ELS: I was there. I've only been there for the last kind of five years. Oh, yeah. I played most of my golf up north. We are going to do a golf course at by Lion Country Safari. We will make it official at some point with you. We've got the plans going. There's another golf course coming our way.

QUESTION: Out by the Lion Country Safari?

ELS: Yeah, in front of the entrance there, there's 270 acres. We've got that area. So Mr. Charles Copple, his family owns the land, the whole park. So, you know, we're talking and doing that golf course.

QUESTION: You're going to design it?

ELS: Yeah.

QUESTION: Anyone else with you?

ELS: Just now it will be an, you know, else design, else club golf course. And we're going to keep it very exclusive. You know, there's those kind of clubs that kind of left the area now. We're going to really keep it small.

QUESTION: When do you think they'll start?

ELS: We'll, you know, submit all our stuff to the county. Probably, whatever you know, but it's not next year, I would say. Okay. You know, we're not doing too many houses. Okay. So, those kind of things work.

QUESTION: Wild life hanging in there?

ELS: Yeah, we're going to put the springbok in and the impala in. You're going to really bring that African flavor back.

QUESTION: Well, it's at Lion Country Safari.

ELS: Right, right, right. It's just separate from that. It's just, it's a Lion. I don't know. You keep the lion's property before that's. And as you're driving in there, it's basically that's the entrance. The entrance will stay there. We're going to move the entrance to the left side, but that whole area, left and right.

QUESTION: Right off the side of the Southern boulevard.

ELS: Yeah.

QUESTION: What got you interested in Bear Lakes? I mean, do you play links or lakes when you play there?

ELS: I play both courses. It's just friends, you know. Raj is a good friend of mine. He's on the board there. And, you know, I was never really interested to play there. I always played Bear Club, you know, when we lived there. And then when we left there, we went to Old Palm. So I played there. Now I'm at Seminole and I'm spreading a little bit, you know, playing a little bit of a lot more other places so as a sudden practice that much but I play a lot of golf so I like to play around and I have friends everywhere so it's pretty cool.

QUESTION: I actually wonder about the state of South African golf between the LIV coming along and taking out the world ranking guys I think there's one South African at the top hundred right now are you is that an anomaly or is there a pipeline coming there?

ELS: Yeah there's a lot of talent always in South Africa but when the exchange rate is 20 to 1 20 to the 20 rand to a dollar and you get an offer from LIV only have to play certain amount of events guaranteed money don't have to go to the tour school you don't have to travel and get a second home here in the US yeah kind of makes sense to the other side. You know for me as a traditionalist it's very sad it's but you know but you cannot put it against anybody you know even Brandon and Louis and all those guys you know they you know you got families and you know we all have to travel and when you make that decision where you go okay I'm not gonna play major golf anymore and I'm not gonna be in those big events anymore but I'm gonna make a hell of a lot of money then that's that yeah for me it's just a very sad because you you know you lose out and you know and it is what it is and the way they structured you know that I thought go but anyway.

QUESTION: How many courses do you think you have done

ELS: 15 or 17 all over. I don't think we've done anything in Florida

QUESTION: Is this your first time?

ELS: Yeah we've been yeah we've done Hawaii we've done Bahamas we've done Maryland Virginia uh maybe it's not Virginia it's uh uh Fredricksburg yeah it's Virginia Maryland Maryland right I kind of on the border but in that facility but um but yeah there's quite a few around the world okay so we're doing one in Texas Austin Texas and now Lion Country Safari are party well uh oh yeah we're doing the Mexico Mexico will probably start early next year so yeah.