

Fred Funk
Pre-Round Interview Transcript
April 30, 2025

Question: This Friday you become the 25th player to reach a thousand starts between PGA Tour and PGA Tour Champions. What does that mean to you when that number is, like, a -- wow, a thousand?

Fred Funk Answer:

Exactly. It's a "wow, a thousand" for sure. I never dreamed that I would even be thinking about this happening. But when I saw that it was a potential of happening last year, if I could stay healthy enough to come out here and keep playing, that I always wanted it to be this week because the Woodlands has meant -- this golf course and this area has meant so much to me.

And, you know, it's been mentioned before, but I -- I had to go through Q-School when I got through my -- after I lost my card my rookie year, I got it back here on this golf course. And I got my first win in '92, and I got the course record still from that tournament on Saturday; I shot 62. That's really cool. But the best thing, I met Sharon. And we got married two years later and still got -- wow. That's pretty cool.

And godparents of my kids are here that I stayed with since 1989, and we still stay with them.

And what else? Oh. And then 20 years later I won this tournament, the Insperity, with Taylor on the bag, which was a dream come true, to have him on the bag with me. Always wanted to win one and did it in grand style when Lehman and I were coming down 18 and we were tied. And I hit a 5-iron about a foot and a half and needed a 7-iron to six feet. And he did everything but make the putt, and I made mine and won the tournament.

So everything has just fallen into place to have this be a milestone I never thought I'd reach. But I've done a lot of things I never really thought I would do when I got on Tour. I really had a modest goal that let's see if you can keep your card one time.

And I remember when I lost my card. I got through Q-School to make the Tour, and I lost it my rookie year. I felt like I didn't accomplish anything. And then I got it back, and I kept my card. And then I felt like, "Eh. Now I got to do a little better than this." So then I kept driving, driving, driving.

But turned out to be a really good career, a fun ride, a gruelling ride. But, you know, obviously the game of golf and the way the game is is a lot of ups and downs and highs and lows.

But the friendships out here, the people I met, the -- I call it the traveling circus that we have out here between the players, the caddies, you guys, the media, our -- our rules staff, everybody that travels every week in and out from town to town, putting on our little show each week and

moving on to the next one. And it's not a glamorous life. And it's really cool to have the family that we have all become. And I don't think you'd get that in any corporate world that we have out here.

So that's why I'm still playing because I'm not competitive anymore, but I love the guys. And, you know, I -- my days are really -- I don't know whether I'll get to 1100; that's for sure. So, you know, I -- I'm kind of speechless right now because I've said about everything that I can think of. But I'm going to get a little emotional, but -- yeah, it is a big deal.

Question: Talking about special moments, take me through the relationship with your caddie on your bag this week, having him back?

Fred Funk Answer:

Oh, that's the one -- I'm glad you said that 'cause I -- I forgot that. So Van was on the bag when -- We went to school together. He was best friends with my best friend; they were roommates at University of Maryland. And he was on the golf team. And I got to know Van really well. And then he caddied for me early in my career. And in '92 he was on the bag when I won here.

And he's been going through an incredible battle with cancer. Right now he's won it. The last two to three years he's been, you know, almost -- he was on the edge of death there for a while. And we weren't sure he was ever going to even have a chance to come out here.

And it's -- it's worked out really cool. But the fact he lives here now. And we got him that ADA so he could get the cart. And if anybody deserves the cart, it's him.

And we're going to be able to make this work this week, if I can hold up. I'm hurting with my wrist and things. So I'm going to do everything I can. If I have to swing with one arm, I'm going to finish this week and get this one done and then see what happens afterwards.

But, yeah, Van's a -- a huge other part of everything -- my past, present. And that means a lot to me -- means a lot to him.

Question: Oh, yeah. Well, speaking of that, being the emotions and everything, maybe that's something with you guys. Do you think you and him, it'll hit when you're about to tee off like the emotions of "wow, we're about to do this together"?

Fred Funk Answer:

The emotions on the tee and everything are -- I think will be pretty cool and get that tee shot out. And if I whiff it, I whiff it. We'll see.

Question: Fred, what do you attribute the longevity of your career to?

Fred Funk Answer:

You know, tenacity more than anything 'cause I've had a lot of -- I've already had 16 surgeries since I've been out here. That's crazy. And I need another one right now on my wrist. And -- and, you know, I never took a medical when I had all those. I never really missed that many events. I -- they'd say six weeks, eight weeks of rehab; and two weeks later I'm out here playing.

So I kept pushing myself through it and – and just stubborn bulldog tenacity. I just wanted to get back out here no matter what, whatever the cost was on my body.

And my body's taken a toll. It's – it's really beat up. I'm older than the 68 that I am right now; I'm almost 69. So I think it's just a mind-set that I just want to get out here and keep playing.

Question: You talk about all these significant moments in Houston. Just what does Houston mean to you?

Fred Funk Answer:

Well, this is where it all happened. I mean, I really would have never had a career if I never got through the Q-School here. I mean, who knows whether I would have made another one. And once lose your card, it's hard to get through these things, especially now it's even harder. But it's always been a difficult thing and a pressure-packed week when you got to go through Q-School. Then, ironically, in '92 I was having terrible West Coast swing, and I had a terrible Florida swing. I just missed the cut at – in Harbour Town, golf course I love and should play well on that one. And I pulled out of Greensboro, and that was a week before here. So I was already thinking, I'm going to get my resume together, and I'll just go back to coaching or club pro or whatever I was going to be or what I could find at the end of the – that year.

And I came in here, and I – it was like coming home. I came to a course that I love, and I was with the family I stayed with. And I just said, "Let's just go play for the love of the game again and not try so damn hard." And I made the cut easily.

I think I shot – I know I was 4-under when I made the cut. I shot 72-68. I don't know which order it was. And then I shot the 62 on Saturday. That came out of nowhere. And now I got the lead. And I never had a lead before.

And I'm paired with Fulton Allem, and it was an awesome pairing because Fulton couldn't have been more of a cheerleader for me than – than anybody out here. It was unbelievable.

We off the first tee, and he says, "Freddie, let's go." Said, "I'm rooting for you. You rooting for" – I was rooting for him all day. And then when he hit it in the water on 13 and kind of knocked himself out of it, and then he became – he just was pushing me, pulling me in, pushing me, pull, whichever direction, he was getting me to the house. And I'll never forget what Fulton did for me that day.

So, again, that's part of the – you know, that fraternity we have out here. Not everybody would do that. In fact, very few would do that. So I'll never forget that, what Fulton did.

And that gave me some chance to – you know, it made it harder, actually, because now I had a win; and I didn't want to be the one-and-done guy, you know, that fluky win and "Where did that come from?" and you had a career and you have one win and say, "Yeah, you got lucky one week." So that second win was tougher.

And then it still took me – you know, now I get back to how I was thinking and stuff. But mentally I think I was always the bulldog, but I never felt like I belonged out here until I was about ten years into my career, at least eight years. And then once I felt like I belonged, I really started playing good.

From 42 to 52 I played at a really high level. And my goals then were to make top 30 Tour Championship every year, and I did it a lot at the end of my career and then won the Players and then Mexico after that and then the Senior U.S. Open.

So things – things were coming into place, the order I got, until I reached whatever that plateau was, I jumped off the Grand Canyon, and then – then my game wasn't anything.

Question: How did you and your wife meet in '92?

Fred Funk Answer:

We – we met through Duke Butler, who was working out here. And she was living out here. She was Tail sportswear for all Texas and Oklahoma with Tail. And, anyway, they introduced me to Sharon, and she is just unbelievable – she was so freaking pretty.

And she was way out of my class. I mean, I would check the covers. But we met in '92; we didn't – we didn't talk to each other – we didn't talk or even see each other until '93 because I was in the middle of a separation and she was in the middle of a relationship, and she was out of it '93, and now we're both available. It started in '93 when we started really – when I asked her out. And got married in '94, had Taylor in '95. And the rest is history.

Question: Did she going to school here?

Fred Funk Answer:

She went to Houston. She went to UT. She went to both. I think she got her degree out of Houston, though. She was born here – her dad was House Ways and Means chairman representing Houston, Bill Archer. And he was House Ways and Means chairman with the two Bushes and Clinton. And then he – he's still alive at 93, 94, something like that. Unbelievable. But, yeah, it was a special thing to meet her. And the fact that she married me was shocking. I think she's still saying that. I mean, now we think, "What the hell was she thinking?"
