

**May 2, 2013**

An Interview With:

## FRED FUNK

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Thanks for joining us this morning. Obviously coming back to Houston to defend, a place you've had very good vibes and a lot of good things over the years have happened here. You're coming off a second-place finish at the Liberty Mutual Insurance Legends of Golf, game's fine. Maybe just talk about coming back to defend.

FRED FUNK: Yeah, this is like come back home here. I've got a lot of great memories here. I got through my last Q-School I ever had to go through was here to qualify for the '90 season. I've always loved this place.

And then I got my first win in '92 here and I met my wife here and Godparents of my kids live here. I've stayed with the family back here since my rookie year in '89 and still stay with them; like I said they are the Godparents of my kids. Have the course record here from the year I won and 20 years later I win again here last year. So it was all kind of a magical week last year, and a magical finish.

So you know, I really -- definitely great memories when I come here. I love coming here. When they announced coming back to this golf course, how many years have we been here, five? I just thought that was such a great move for me personally just because I have this love affair with TPC courses. So, really good.

Although this year it's a little different with the greens -- with the new greens, at least the other day, I played in the pro junior and they weren't holding very well and I was here at Media Day and they weren't holding at all. It's going to be interesting. And then with the weather forecast, I think scores are going to be high prior to even the weather forecast. So, who knows.

But it's a great test of golf, and I just love this layout.

### Q. How's your progress this year?

FRED FUNK: Good. I was struggling really bad with a back, I usually don't have back problems but I had a muscle problem in my back. I still have a little bit of it. But it's not debilitating like it was, even though I tried to play through it.

I got it just the week before I went to Boca, and Boca was fair and in Naples it was really bad. I shouldn't have played and it still was getting me at Newport Beach and Biloxi. It got a lot better the last couple weeks. Atlanta, I felt really good, played good. Last week I played really well with Mike Goodes and it's feeling pretty good right now.

Body is cooperating, so that part's good.

### Q. What did you do?

FRED FUNK: I played through it. I did my normal thing, instead of resting it, I worked out harder, and I went the other route. I was trying to get it stronger and doing my own little deal and finally it released enough that I could get the rotation back in my body without too much pain.

So right now, it feels pretty good. It's kind of a weird deal. It's where all the muscles attach on the lats on the right side. That whole rib cage area just felt like it was a knife going through me when I was swinging. So that was not a good feeling at all. But now it's good.

### Q. What's the mind-set of yourself, other players that have come before you out here, keep wanting to succeed out here year after year, as you get older.

FRED FUNK: For me personally, I have more passion for the game right now than I've ever had, and I've always loved the game and love working at it. I love competing, basically, and I think that's the bottom line is the guys love to compete. It's what we've done our whole life.

We like getting into that position to choke because we all are choking at some different level coming down the stretch. You have nerves going and everything else but that's what we practice for

is to get ourselves in that position to succeed or fail.

I want to stay in the hunt. It's no fun being out of the hunt. It's just fun when all your work is coming together and you can produce the scores that you need to to be in the hunt, and that's really the goal of everybody.

So I think the guys that really want to work at it are the guys that are playing well out here. It's no difference than there was when they were young.

I think the difference is that I now see the end of the tunnel a little more. Now I'm not this young guy anymore and you have no idea or concept of when your career might come to a close. I mean, you're always an injury away or something but now it's an age thing.

Hale Irwin is a great example, and I think Gil Morgan, last week I played with him, they are 67, 68 years old, somewhere around there, I don't want to make a mistake, but physically those guys are fantastic. They just play great golf tee-to-green and can still get it going. On the right venue, both of them can still win and that's where I want to go.

**Q. When you look at Irwin, what do you see? He's been the man out here.**

FRED FUNK: He's a highly competitive guy. He hates to lose. Works really hard. He's physically in great shape. Still hits the ball well enough to win.

I think if there's a difference I see in Hale, he was always one of the best putters and clutch putters there was, and he just doesn't make quite as many putts. He may not hit the ball quite as close as he used to, so his proximity to the hole might be a little different, which makes it harder to make more putts.

That's the same with everybody out here. But you need to, or he still has the game to compete out here, and he pops up on that leader board when he gets feeling good and he's at the right venue.

**Q. The course setup this year versus last year?**

FRED FUNK: It will be a big difference. The setup is the same. They just have new greens. Any time you get new greens, they are usually really firm.

I played the Media Day a month ago, and I played the nine holes on the back the other day with the juniors and it's hard to get it close to the hole. The ball just doesn't stop. Now you used

to land it, you expected a little bit of release, and now you're getting a lot of release.

It's going to be very difficult on some of these greens. The way they are designed, which is what I love about this golf course, you can tuck the pins in all these little areas of the green that they have on all the holes, but now some of them are going to be impossible to get to, especially with the wind forecast that they have.

If you get a downwind shot, and a narrow pin like right of 2 is a great example or anywhere on 14, I don't know how we are going to play 14 if it's downwind, the par 3; that green is so severe. I don't know how -- the only way is to try to keep it below the hole; below the hole is water.

**Q. So why exactly did they do this to you guys?**

FRED FUNK: Well, I think they were just trying to get the modern grass in here. I'm not even sure, is MiniVerde what they put in? I'm personally not a big fan of MiniVerde because I've seen the difference of what they did at TPC at home with the MiniVerde and MiniVerde and they seem to have a little trouble with it. Down the street we have TifEagle at a course that has the best bermudagreens I've ever seen, and the MiniVerde doesn't seem -- in my opinion, doesn't even compare to the TifEagle.

So hopefully it will be a good strain and they will have great success with it but we'll have to wait and see. I didn't mind what they had before. I thought they were great.

**Q. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.**

FRED FUNK: Exactly. I know the greens trunk over the years because of the mowing patterns, they tend to shrink in and they shrink by a yard or two or three yards over the years because of the encroachment.

**Q. No doubt in your mind the course is going to be a lot harder?**

FRED FUNK: I think it's going to be a lot harder and with the weather forecast that we've got -- I don't know, honestly, what's been the winning score the last few years? I don't even know what I shot last year.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: 14-, 15-under.

FRED FUNK: I could honestly see with the wind, even par, somewhere around winning par will be the winning score. It will be pretty

tough.

**Q. Going to feel like a mini-U.S. Open?**

FRED FUNK: It really is going to be difficult I think. Unless the greens somehow completely change with the rain or something. But you know, it will be a challenge. It's going to be up-and-down for us; there's going to be a lot of chipping going on.

**Q. So anybody that says that the Champion Tour plays easier courses needs to come out and hit a few balls here.**

FRED FUNK: They could see it any week, and a lot of people still have the idea that we are playing at 6,400, 6,500, 6,600 yards, and that's not true; we are playing 7,000 to 7,200 most weeks.

We played this golf course exactly the way we played the Shell Houston Open, and last week in Atlanta, other than about three holes, we played the same sees they did during the tournament and played pretty long. I think we played last week's course just over 7,200.

You know, the guys can play. These guys, the Kenny Perrys and John Houstons and Freddie Couples and those guys are just still TOUR long. They have got the TOUR length still and learn hard hits it longer than he's ever hit it. I'm hitting it longer than I've ever hit it. It's not very far but it's longer than I've ever hit it. With technology and everything else, we play really good golf courses.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Thanks very much.

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