

GREATS OF GOLF INTERVIEW - May 2, 2015



Jack Nicklaus
Gary Player
Lee Trevino
Tom Weiskopf

PHIL STAMBAUGH: I thought I would just start off maybe with a comment from each of you about playing in the event again here in Houston. Tom, your first time, just talk about that. Lee, do you want to start?

LEE TREVINO: I love this, I absolutely love it because I get to see the guys. We don't get to see each other as much as we used to naturally when we don't play a competition anymore against each other. But it's great to see Tom back. We've been beating the bushes here for a while trying to get him to come out and play. And I think he's enjoying it, I think he's having a great time, and I hope that he's realizing how much fun he's missed over the years.

And I don't have to tell you about Jack. Greatest that's ever played. I'm just glad to be paired with him instead of playing against him.

And then Gary, Gary doesn't age. I mean, the man is 150 years old and I'm telling you he can still jump over cars. He does all this stuff. But you know what? I was so impressed last week the way he hit that golf ball. I mean, you just don't hit a ball like that at 80 years old. You just don't do it. You know what that is? All that is is that he took good care of himself. I mean, he works out. And I'm just glad to be part of it, yeah, glad to be here.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Tom Weiskopf?

TOM WEISKOPF: Well, for years I've been invited to play and I just never felt like I could or should because I'm up in Montana 10 months a year skiing most of the time and, you know, if I play, it's in the summertime. I did play a little bit with friends there, I hit some balls, I tried to, but my competitive career ended in 1996 after three years and four months on the Senior Tour. I just had other things, my golf course design business and other activities that I was involved in that took me away from the game.

Lee's right, I'm very happy and honored to be invited to play here because the fun thing about it, Lee hit the nail on the head, we all competed hard, we all knew each other, we know what this game has given all of us, and the great thing about it are these memories that are brought back to us when you get together at night and during the day, and the teasing goes on and a story begets a story.

These are guys that I respected so much. I met Jack obviously at Ohio State. Jack's three years older than I am. When I saw him hit a golf ball for the first time when I was a freshman, I thought, who in the heck can beat this guy, you know. I actually watched him play against Arnold in the playoff; went over to Oakmont because it's very close to Ohio. Oakmont was such a respected, and deservedly so, golf course. He made it look easy. He's playing against the King.

And then Gary, I said this the other night. To look at a man that played against two big giants of the game, Jack and Arnold, not that Gary he's physically fit. You hit the nail on the head, that's why he can still can hit the golf ball. He's active, he stayed active. Anybody as we get older, we have injuries, we feel the aches and pains more, but if you're vibrant and you're working out and doing some stretching, you know, you can feel pretty good and still hit the ball pretty good. That's what the senior guys are all about that are competing here this week. It's just been a lot of fun.

Of course I went to the Elton John concert. I've seen him twice, he's a big hero of mine, I love his music. That was fun, too. Just the camaraderie that all of us have, the memories. Most of the questions start with, you know, how are the kids, how's your wife, how are the grandkids and the great grandkids. Heck, in our time we used to help each other out by watching and babysitting each other's kids so we could get out and be alone with our wives and still compete and have fun.

But the game has changed tremendously. It's still fun. The trouble is, when you really get to our age, you totally now, he understood this, so did he and so did Gary, how to play this game. They knew how to do it. I probably just figured that out about 10 years ago, but sad, I'm too old to play the game.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Jack?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, it's nice to be back and we've had a lot of fun for the last three years and we're going to have a lot of fun today. I'll move right on to Gary. I'm done, what else do you want to say?

GARY PLAYER: Well, you're supposed to say something about these two guys on your left.

JACK NICKLAUS: We're going to get into that anyway.

GARY PLAYER: I think that we're very fortunate at our ages to still be able to compete and have fun and reunite because I think memories are the cushion of life, and I think to have friendships with people is something that you cherish very much indeed. I think golf being one of the few sports where longevity exists, unlike other sports, you basically you're average in all sports you finished when you're 30 and a lot of the times you can't even walk.

But to play with these great players in my life, Lee Trevino, I just loved him. I've loved all these guys. Lee is always happy. I love to laugh. I continuously tease my grandchildren, 22 of them. Jack and I have between us 44 grandchildren, so we have to play just to break even.

Lee's been an incredible man for golf.

One of the frustrations I had was watching a man like Tom Weiskopf, who I used to just being in awe watching him swing, and to see him not have the passion that maybe the three of us had, and had he had that, there's no telling how he would have done. But he was happy, and as long as you're happy doing what you are doing in life, that's all that matters. You can't speak for other people. Jack speaks for himself. He's been a wonderful friend for me in my career. We've done a lot of things together and he's been this incredible golfer, incredible family man. So really, we are inundated with the joy of living.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Just raise your hands for a question and I'll call on you.

Q. Last week, Gary, you and Jack played together up in Branson. When was the last time you played two weeks? I know you're not playing a whole lot.

JACK NICKLAUS: 25 years ago.

Q. How does your body feel after two weeks playing like this?

JACK NICKLAUS: Actually, I'm sure Gary's feels fine. After I left Branson, I went and I played at Augusta on Tuesday. I couldn't believe that, I played 27 holes on Tuesday. We played yesterday. I may have just been able to get over enough to be able to hit a golf ball again. I don't play much golf. When I do, my body pays for it. But I actually, I enjoy playing, having fun playing. We had a great time last week. I played with Lee and Mike Hill, and I think Gary played quite nicely. I hacked it around but actually I did pretty good on the big course. I think I shot 70 that day and you birdied the last three holes, so we did all right. The game is a game that we all enjoyed for many years and had fun with it. It's a game that gave us why we're sitting here and gave us most everything we have in life that's really material. We all have our families and how we have raised our kids and our grandkids and all, that's been part of a great part of our life that we've really enjoyed. Every once in a while we get together and we play, and when I was there last week I was saying, Can you believe we play again next week? When I was at Branson, Can you believe we're going to spend four days here playing golf? I mean, I haven't spent four days anyplace playing golf for, good gracious, I guess it's been 15 years probably. Anyway, we'll have a nice time. We've had a nice time every time we've played.

Q. Do you feel like this can continue?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I would love to have it continue. I'm enjoying watching my grandkids, so if we continue here that means I get to watch my grandkids more.

GARY PLAYER: The hitting playing golf tournaments in my stage of life now is not difficult because I exercise, I exercise furiously. I mean, I still do 1,300 crunches four, five times a week and I still push 400 pounds with my legs, so playing golf doesn't make me tired. It's all relative, depends on what you want to do. It's purely a choice. Golf for me, I could play a lot. I have my own golf course on my ranch, but in a month I might not play one round of golf. When I'm over here I do play a lot of golf and I love it.

Q. I've been here before and Gary and Jack and Lee were here, and the other gentleman was Arnie and he's not with us today. Maybe it's easier to ask you just to sum up a little bit of what Arnold Palmer actually did for this game of golf and how much he got out of it. Start with you well, no better start with Lee. If we start with Gary

LEE TREVINO: You're asking the guy who told you to look up the world class in the dictionary and his picture would be next to it for definition. You know what, I think Arnie and these guys, Arnie was just unbelievable. He's the only guy I know that at a red light would jump out of the car and go sign autographs for the car behind him. I'd run the red light. The guy was just unbelievable, just unbelievable. What did he start, he started in 1955, I think he won the first tournament was the Canadian Open, just phenomenal.

But I'll tell you what, when Jack came along in the early '60s and dethroned him I guess you want to say, the public never left. They pulled for Arnie, they pulled for Arnie. Probably the most recognizable guy in the world when you talk about Arnold Palmer. I mean, if you really look at commercial wise what he does, I mean, he's probably still No. 3 on the chart behind, what, Tiger and Mickelson I would think. But he's missed here. I guarantee every one of these guys will tell you that. Not feeling well, I think the dog tripped him or something, but hopefully he'll be here next year. I certainly hope so, if we're back.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Tom?

TOM WEISKOPF: Well, I think he was the individual that projected how important the association of the player is to his audience, the spectator. The commercialization of what an individual can do representing they were always, just like all these guys, blue chip companies. He was their spokesman and that umbrella, the labeling aspect, if you want to look at it that way. He just was the most recognizable, one of the most recognizable people in the world. If you put 20 people, presidents, popes, all that kind of stuff up there, Elton John's picture, I'll guarantee Arnold might have gotten the most "I recognize that guy," you know what I mean? And I think that's the nice thing about it. He had time for people. When he looked at people, you'd just say, he's looking at me, you know?

He would go for broke on the golf course, unbelievable shotmaking from difficult positions and a lot of riskreward. I didn't realize this until someone said this a couple years ago when we were at a tournament, a major tournament. I was doing a telecast, and he had finished second 50 times in his career, and how many wins did Arnold have? He's in the 60s, isn't he? So maybe a different approach, he might have won a few more. We can all say that, but that was his style. They knew when he stepped on that first hole and did what he did at Cherry Hills, it's legendary, drove it on the green, got him going and off he went and won. So I think that's the thing, so he made it aware. You see this with these young guys, he's made businessmen out of these younger players that are playing the young tour. They're labeling themselves, they're marketing themselves, companies are utilizing them to project, you know, their economic potential basically; you know, they're awareness in the sport.

So that's the great thing I think about Arnold. We all played for him at the Ryder Cup when he was the captain. He's just a man's man. He walks through the locker room and he's recognized, but he has a selfness that he's going to engage if you engage him or he'll see you sitting, how'd you do today, young man. He's just an open, gracious gentleman.

Q. Jack, you had talent put you in a position to go up against him at the height of his popularity, so you not only have to overcome that, the fans, but you let your golf do the talking.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I had I started playing with Arnold, the first time we played was an exhibition in 1958. Then we never played we didn't play again until '62, my first year on tour. I've always said I may have had to fight Arnold's gallery but I never had to fight Arnold. Arnie treated me as an equal. We traveled together, we played exhibitions together, we competed against each other and had a great time. He's been a lifelong friend and a lifelong competitor. Well, we always compete, and if we didn't compete, either one of us would have thought thought one of us would have died or something because that's what we did. We enjoyed it, we loved it and we got a big kick out of I remember Gary and Arnold and I would always come to the locker room, and if one of us shot 75, the other one couldn't wait to get in the locker room and ask the guy, So, where'd you make all your birdies today? We just needled each other, we had a lot of fun, and I think we all have a great debt to Arnold. He's the one that really was the image of starting the public projection of the game of golf because television came along. I think as much as Arnold has helped the game and the growth of the game is that the timing of television and the public was as much to help Arnold. So it was very much a complementary thing both ways because Arnold could have had that same situation without having the media coverage and the visibility wouldn't have made any difference. But he happened to be there at the right time and the world happened to be there at the right time for him, so it was a nice combination and all the golfers have benefited from it.

Q. Gary, you were really in the middle. You were getting it from both sides, the

greatness of Arnold Palmer and the tremendous talent of Jack Nicklaus, but you didn't roll over, you were right in there.

GARY PLAYER: Well, it is very fascinating, the experience looking at it from the middle, as you say. First of all, Arnold was a wonderful gentleman with people and had great respect, and manners make the man, so I was awfully impressed with that. And he really loves golf. I think if you said of the four of us and you put Arnold here, you would say Arnold loves it the most and Lee loves it the second most and I love it probably the third most.

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't know about that.

GARY PLAYER: I think so. You said a couple years ago that you're not crazy about golf. No, you said it right here in this room.

JACK NICKLAUS: No, no, I never said that.

GARY PLAYER: You said

Q. They've got a Keegan Bradley thing going on.

GARY PLAYER: If Arnold won a major championship, he's playing golf the next day and played every day. I don't think you do that.

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't think you understand what I said. What I would have said is that I love the game, I've always loved the game of golf, but when I lost my ability to play the game of golf, I lost my vehicle to competition, which I probably loved more than I love the game of golf. I love competition. I love the challenge of that. But it all happened because of the game of golf, Gary, which I dearly love, I just can't do it anymore.

GARY PLAYER: But I remember the signs at Baltusrol, and Jack, I'll always admire Jack's tenacity because there's no question, as Jack said, the galleries for Arnold, the galleries are so onesided but their friendship was never affected by that, which is really tremendous because I remember at Baltusrol having a sign here at the bunker, "Hit it here, Ohio farts," and that's when the signs, and very few people remember, the signs were taken out of golf. You were not allowed to carry signs because that started when Jack and Arnold were playing. Jack had such patience, he never let it bug him, just as I had demonstrators, I had to handle that. So Jack had a very difficult time coming into golf at that time. And Jack won majors for 25 years and Arnold won for six years, but he was so charismatic, you'd think that he'd won for six years and Jack for him for 20 and Arnold and Jack for five or six. So he was so charismatic and that was such a big help, and he didn't have a long career but they still he was so charismatic they'd think he was winning forever and that helped the tour so much. I mean, he fell out of bed with tremendous charisma. He came to South Africa and it was amazing. We went down a

gold mine and we came up, there was probably a billion dollars, a room three times the size of this. The man said, Anybody can pick up this gold bar can have it. Arnold said, Ask him if I can try, and Arnold put his hand out like that. He said, Sure you can try. You can have it if you pick it up, and he picked it up. His eyes, this guy, he said no, no, no, (inaudible.)

So Arnold, and I just think that the reason people loved him so much, A, he was born with charisma, but he earned that love. He gave love to people. He gave a lot of, as Lee, I think that was a tremendous thing. I think all the guys explained it very well, but he had respect for people and I think it made a big difference, made a very big difference to the game of golf. And you can never single out one person, we must never forget Bobby Jones and Ben Hogan and Sam Snead and Jimmy Demaret, a lot of guys young guys don't even know about. They all contributed along the way, but Arnold came along, as Jack appropriately said, at the time of television. And Mark McCormack who was a genius, he was a genius, this man. All managers should go on their hands and knees because Mark McCormack was the first real manager of significance and it's followed suit. But Arnold came along at the right time, we needed this charismatic guy, and then Jack came along and surpassed him and it was just a great time of golf to promote the game.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Thank you. You've got to get ready to play now. Good luck today.