

**LEGENDS OF GOLF INTERVIEW:
BEN CRENSHAW, HALE IRWIN AND DAVE STOCKTON**



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Q: Do you guys recruit players for the PGA TOUR Champions? Will it be driven by money?

BEN CRENSHAW: I don't think we've actively recruited because our era – the players that wanted to play, they're going to play. Now, I don't know whether it's changing a little bit now; I don't know that. But I think economics have a lot to do with that. But it's a little bit like the three gentlemen that were here before. You don't – the competitive skills don't leave you, and you want to compete, so I don't think actively, so much, because a lot of them will.

HALE IRWIN: I don't simply because I think we're on our part of the golfing world and they're on their part of the golfing world, and where those paths may cross... Ben in Austin, there's some players he may run into, and I live in the Phoenix area, and there's some players you may run into, but they're pretty dedicated to what they're doing, and the occasional player may ask, but I don't think we're necessarily actively recruiting. The headquarters staff would probably be more inclined to do that and then ask us for our participation at a dinner or something like that to create the buzz for them and explain what it's all about. And to answer your question before, will it be driven by money? Absolutely not. They're going to have enough money. Will it be driven by the competitive fires? Most likely. And that's why I think most of us – maybe not the earlier guys, those really old guys [laughter] – they may have been driven by economic reasons, but I don't think today's player will be driven by that. Vijay and those guys have won so much money that that's not going to be... But will they be happy sitting at home, watching on television, doing nothing? Because it's not going to be – their skill sets won't be as great on the regular Tour as it once was, but they certainly will be out here. So will they make that transition? We hope so.

DAVE STOCKTON: They generally learn it over time. Obviously, the majors – they're going to attract a lot of people, but then some of the better tournaments... Like Corey Pavin, for example, playing here. He's going to skip whatever's on this Tour and play Colonial, which was my first win. Things mean more to different people, and I think one of the things – if we tell anybody there's a tournament run by Hollis Cagner or Bryan Naugle, we tend to show up because of the way we're treated. This is why you're seeing what's happening here. You'll see us again out at Minnesota. And the players kind of feed of that vibe. There's certain weeks you really don't want to miss on the regular Tour, and there's certain weeks you don't want to miss out here. But obviously the economics... If they can still play, you don't blame them [for] doing it, but now the crossover that you have now, with having a President's Cup and having a Ryder Cup – you have a reason for someone in their 50s to stay out there and keep being a part of both scenes. But as far as recruiting them, that's not our job. We've been out here, we supported our Tour for a whole lot of years – both Tours.

HALE IRWIN: But to pick up on what Gary said about Lee – we had a Senior Tour player make more money in 1997 than anybody in the world, and I bet you never found that out. It's just one of those facts that they didn't want to put out there.

Q: The success that the people have as they make that transition seems to recruit on its own. Is that fair to say?

HALE IRWIN: Yeah, but you're looking at the three guys that were up here prior to us. Now, name a handful of players, before you get to Spieth and Day and Fowler, and we're talking about 22-year-olds versus however old they are. There's a lot of players in between, and how many of them are we, collectively, focused on? That's part of the issue, is how we take those guys that are 45-50 and make them aware. And recruit them. And make it something they want to do. Because you have to want to. If you don't want to, then you're not going to perform.

DAVE STOCKTON: And like the other three guys mentioned, it's not as easy out here as they think it is. It's not that easy to win, although Hale made it look fairly easy.

HALE IRWIN: Well, I was playing against you, Dave. [Laughter]

Q: Is the way the game is currently trending good for golf or bad for golf?

DAVE STOCKTON: Are you saying this is easier out here?

Q: No. I'm saying it's harder, probably. Is that a good trend?

BEN CRENSHAW: Golf course setups are a lot of what's happening. There's no question that the young – it's a power game, and they don't play anything like these two guys played. To carry that further, on this tour here, the courses have gotten longer and a little tougher, too. But both these guys have won major championships on very tough golf courses. I mean, if you could wind the clock back and see the golf courses they won on, they were tough. Dave won at Southern Hills, and that is a tough golf course anytime, and then Hale, winning the Opens, especially the one at Winged Foot... God, I mean, obviously, keeping the ball in play... Nobody did it better than Hale. Yeah, there's so many – it's just unfathomable, really, to see, out of 150 guys that started on their tour any week, 75 of them can carry the ball 300 yards. And where, how they play, it's kind of not their fault sometimes because of the equipment. That's the way they play. The equipment encourages that.

HALE IRWIN: The course setup – you have to remember, we're only there for a week. The other 51 weeks a year, members have to play it. So there is that fine line you walk between what clubs will allow versus what maybe the Tour would dictate. So it's a multi-headed question. I'm not sure there's a correct answer to any of it. But it's evolving. I think we have to look at the equipment, specifically the ball. Every player has said that for years and years and years, but nobody's listening.

DAVE STOCKTON: You might talk to Weiskopf a bit, who's redesigning Torrey Pines North. It was interesting – him, a few weeks ago, the Tour had some of them out, and they were asking about the fairways. And basically, they're going to be close to 30 yards, and the Tour wanted 24 yards. This is a golf course that's going to be played by the Tour two days, and it's not on the main course. And they're trying to tell the designer, "We want 24 wide fairways"? Don't think so. So there's a fine line. I mean, the equipment's so much better. It's incredible. It's different, but I watch Nike – every year, the driver can go 10 yards farther. Maybe I can't, but everybody else can, but when it gets to the agronomy part of it, I was really glad to see Merrian stand up. Everybody's worried about this short course going to get run over – well, no. And Ben's correct – on

this Tour out here, they don't play this thing short, and they don't play it easy. A lot of the people who have come out from the other Tour and think they're going to win out here, don't necessarily come running into it. There's been great stories. Dave Hill was much more successful on the regular tour than his brother Mike, then Mike came out here and he did really well. The Wadkins brothers – same thing. Lenny was great on the regular tour, got a bad back, obviously, but then Bobby shined out here. It's different things for different people, but the product being produced is phenomenal. And the key is getting – I've heard some of the comments Woody Austin's made, and about him – he's won three out of four times, and I'm hesitant about, the more we win, the smarter we are, and the more we can talk. I'm not into necessarily buying all that. But this tour – both these tours are in a fantastic spot. And they called it a different type of personality and people, but you don't force anybody to come out here and play. Again, we're all competitors, for whatever reason. And you want to be competitive. This is a place to come.

Q: You guys were in just as good shape as these guys are now, and they're hitting it farther. Is that accurate?

DAVE STOCKTON: No, no. Hell no. [Laughter] He was in shape [pointing to Irwin], but I would say the caddies today are in better shape today than we were as players. Few exceptions. This is a world tour. You might be playing in Florida next week, or Australia, or Germany or somewhere, and they're flying all over, and they are competitive. We used to think it was a big deal when we went to the British Open and maybe a couple of fans would follow or something... I've seen serious travel. They're going all over, and the caddie's got to go, too. So no.

HALE IRWIN: I mean, what's the first thing we're required to be if you were to join the Tour now? Length. How do you get more length? Stronger. So what happens? You go work out. Now back when we were playing, you try to get longer with that old ball and those heads, and yeah, good luck with that one. [Laughter] So players weren't driven to the gym. They weren't driven to be fit as today's player. All those kids out there today, with the exception of a few, they're all 6'2" and 170 pounds. They have no body fat. Well, that's fine, but I hurt my back 15 years ago or so, and even then, I went to see a guy in Las Vegas, and he was seeing kids in high school that were having back issues related to golf. That was being brought about by the way the equipment slash teachers are teaching the game. And encouraging. So you're right, you're going to see some of these young guys break down. The muscles are bigger, but the tendons and the attachments are not. You can't fix that. But you can put more pressure on them, and boy, the way these guys torque and swing now, hopefully, they'll tone it down and usher themselves into a more serene, over-50 lifestyle.

DAVE STOCKTON: Tiger changed the entire model of everything and showed what hard work and all this stuff can do. But now, he's paying for it.

Q: What runs through your mind when you came into the room and those three guys [Nicklaus, Player and Trevino] were sitting up there?

DAVE STOCKTON: This is my first time for this kind of thing, and whenever I do see them, it means so much. They've given us so much, and they've allowed us to do what we do, and there's an awareness in the golfing world that those three and Arnold

Palmer – they had given us the opportunity to do. But to see them together, collectively – you watch, there’s three completely different golf swings. And to see what they’ve done in their careers, it’s astounding. But it’s great to see them, and we owe them a lot.

HALE IRWIN: You see respect written all over the room. And I think that’s what every player with whom I’ve played with and against all these years, I have the greatest respect in the world for what they’ve done on the golf course. That’s where I know them the best. And off the golf course, we have different personalities there. But we’re just one big family, and so it’s like seeing brothers. Interestingly, if I had one of those clicker things you can count – at dinner the other night, Bruno, Don January, Bryan Naugle was there, and the stories... If I could – one sentence would click another story, and another story, and they had all been told before. We had just forgotten about them. There had to have been 80-100 different stories at that dinner alone. That’s fun – to hear guys like Don that can recall so clearly, at 86 years old, what happened 60 years ago. I don’t care if it’s true or not, if he remembers every exact detail, but it’s great. That’s the fun part, is that we have this fraternity that we do the same thing, we’re together all the time, you have his kids and his kids are my kids... We’re just all together all the time, and you get bonds, and it’s great to see those three up here. We miss Arnold, big time, because he really was the catalyst that got everything going.

DAVE STOCKTON: And another one that we miss obviously being here is Casper. He is elevated to their status. We all know the Big Three could have been the Big Four at that point. To me, sitting there and listening up on the stage the other night, it’s – I never swung the golf club nearly as good as either one of these two guys, and I didn’t come out on tour thinking I could beat anybody. I just knew Cathy and I were going to go against the world and work as hard as we could. But I tried to mentally pick people apart. But not their swing. I knew my swing didn’t even match up. I wanted to find out what was inside their head, and I enjoyed just stepping in the door and listening to their last comments because I am going to listen to what they have to say because what made them the champions they are, to me, is not the golf swing. To me, it’s what’s inside the ears. One gentleman I didn’t mention when they asked us who our, who we had the biggest help from, and I did mention Dad and Cathy, but I would have mentioned Don January. Because he is the one at the L.A. Open my second year on the Tour that gave me a tip that literally paid my way to win my first major at Southern Hills, and it was a mental thing. It wasn’t a physical thing. And why, as I’m stepping off the first tee he said to me, “Son.” And I stopped dead. He asked me what I saw up there as we’re now stepping off the tee. And he told me something in the next two minutes that literally changed my life. I don’t know why he told me, why he picked it up, but that’s what the respect we have for the guys who came ahead of us. And that’s what hopefully the younger guys – now just 50 and so forth – will go glean from what they see that we accomplished. But that to me is, is the intelligence and their foresight to be able to play this game like Gary and Jack in that span and Lee, but the two obviously for a whole lot more years. I just can’t get enough of it. I know they want to rush out and watch them hit it, but I do like the stories and I do like the mindset that they take into the game.

Q: Do the kids today, Jordan and Rory and Jason, do they get it?

DAVE STOCKTON: Absolutely. I think going – I work with two of them, Spieth and McElroy, and I think you throw Day in the picture, you throw Fowler in the picture, I think these guys definitely get it. I think they understand the work ethic it's going to take them to be No. 1, I think they're competing for that, but what I like is the way they treat you. I mean, how do you feel coming into an interview area and getting an answer instead of getting, "Yes. No." And they're looking at you, like, that was a stupid question. They'll look and you'll see their mind working, and they're giving you answers. I think this game's been a heck of a place. You go to the LPGA, and you see Lydia Ko who's got everybody confused by how nice she is, and how not under pressure. So it's in a good spot. I think those guys are doing just the right stuff.