

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Tuesday June 27, 2017

Nick Faldo



THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to introduce Sir Nick Faldo into the U.S. Senior Open Media Center. Nick is a six-time major champion and playing in his first U.S. Senior Open.

My first question is why is it your first?

NICK FALDO: No, I'm celebrating being 60 in July. So I thought best way to celebrate is be a golfer so come and play some golf.

And then things worked out with my -- really, you know, my life always revolves around your children. So my daughter's Amherst school holidays or whatever she was doing, she was going to be around in Florida. Normally, we run to Europe, the pair of us, for a couple of weeks.

So we were both around so I thought I want to play. I've had a chance to practice. I played last week. Here I am this week. I'll play our British Senior after Birkdale and then plan to do some more through September and October.

So the idea is to be a golfer while I can, you know.

Q. And you spent the last ten-plus years being a broadcaster. And how is that transition from being a player to broadcaster? Was it a natural transition for you?

NICK FALDO: Yeah, going on 13 years now. Amazing. Time's flown.

Well, you have to work on it. It's not as easy as you think, you know. But I enjoyed it. It was like a natural transition. I played golf, obviously, at the highest level, had this great opportunity to be involved with television, and I wanted to stay involved with the game of golf. It's a great way to be there. You know, you're around every weekend, which is pretty good, and I've enjoyed it.

Yeah, so I'm just trying to fit in a little bit of golf now just for the heck of it. I enjoy the equipment. The equipment's so cool now, isn't it? You've got all these fancy clubs. You can get on TrackMan, TrackMan tells you what to do, how close you are. So you think, well, I've got to go and try it.

But the hardest thing is, of course, I play one round in a row normally. And suddenly, I've just got a week's solid

golf now from last week. So my leg -- I'm now off to go and see hopefully some professor of biomechanics for my ankles and knees and hips so I can get even better. You're learning all the time.

But it's hard work. Billy Andrade just said to me, what's aching? And I said, just everything. Just a little bit, but everything is aching a little bit. So it's quite hard work to gear up and come and play, but I'm enjoying it.

THE MODERATOR: And we're back up here in Massachusetts. I know you said yesterday you haven't spent a ton of time here, but one of your closest U.S. Open calls was just 20 miles away at The Country Club in Brookline. What are some of your recollections from that week when you were battling Curtis Strange down the stretch?

NICK FALDO: Well, I remember my own stats, which probably weren't true, but my own stats were I only missed four fairways all week. So that was -- I putted lousy. I had a putter that felt like a frozen block of ice. It wasn't really. It was just crisp. It was way too crisp. I couldn't get any feel out of it.

Anyway, so, wow, that's a long time ago. That's almost the start of everything, the start of the major run. So that's a long time ago.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up to some questions.

Q. I talked to McCord earlier today. He said you've been working hard on physical fitness and really working on your game again and diving into it. Is it the same intensity as when you were the top player in the world?

NICK FALDO: Not really, I mean, but I've really tried to commit pretty hard at it. But, again, it's the science, which I'm enjoying.

I mean, I made friends with one of the physio guys from down in South Africa earlier in the year, and he sends me exercises, which you can now do on your phone. I can say I'm having trouble with this part of my body. I've been working a lot on the thoracic spine. I want speed in my body and that sort of thing.

So I put together my own little program, and I've been

pretty disciplined. I've been trying to do it twice a day, in the morning before and in the evening as well to try to cool things down, keep things moving.

I've been practicing, been on our feet a lot playing for the last week, done a fair amount of practice.

So, no, I couldn't do anything close to the workload that I did moons ago. I mean, you know, I was an animal where I could -- yeah, I would collapse. I would last one day of the old Nick Faldo. I would just be a heap. Beating balls how I used to beat them and play -- yeah.

And everything, every department, the mental intensity and the consistency. The goal here this week is consistency because if you can be smart and hit it in the right place on this golf -- these greens are really difficult, as you've seen. You should know. They've got 3, 4, 5 percent of slope. So if you can be smart and hit it in the right place, don't have to get crazy, you've got to believe that will be better than a huge percentage of the field.

So I'm going to try and -- I would love to play like that. That's my golf. The old Nick Faldo played some real consistent golf.

Q. I was going to ask you what your goals were, but as you look at not only this but the other events you're trying to play, I mean, is winning part of the equation?

NICK FALDO: You know, you dream of that. You send that out like you meant to do it and say what if. But, you know, then you have to get really, really, really stick.

And as I said, I'd just like to find some real consistency. If I could do that and enjoy belting the drives down and hitting the irons in the right place and then giving the putter a good effort, a really good effort, well, yes, I would take that.

Then, hopefully, that adds up to a decent score, and you can survive the week. To be honest, that's the real goal.

Q. Bernhard Langer is about the same age. So instead, he chose to play in the Tour. The Tour was starting to really grow about the time. He's won 32 times here. He's had an incredible career. I don't know if regret is the right word. Did you just make a decision for yourself as a family?

NICK FALDO: No, no regret at all because I had done -- I'd been a pro at that time like 28, 29 seasons or something.

And it was just -- golfing batches were just poor. And

then television. And actually, it was Mark Loomis at Troon, I did something in '02. I did the Ryder Cup in Belfry. And then Mark Loomis said, after Troon, he said come up and -- it was ABC then, wasn't it? And try it.

And I sat and I did 16 hours that weekend with a 20-minute break. So I guess they liked me, and they literally threw a contract at me. And I said, right, give me one more trial. As you know, it was ABC then.

And Zinger and I were with ABC, which was pretty cool. And it was a four-year contract. And wouldn't you know, ABC pulled the plug on sport. All of a sudden, this thing Golf Channel, Thursday, Friday, suddenly appeared. So it all unravelled like that. And then CBS came in the picture as well.

You know, that was a real job. It's funny, the visualization, I knew the ultimate job was, I felt, 18th tower, CBS with Nance. I mean, he is unbelievable. And it happened. And suddenly I was fishing at the K Club after the Ryder Cup, the Monday after, in the loch casting away at 5:00, and the phone rings.

That was exactly the phone call. He said, how would you like the job at CBS next to Nance. I actually fell out. I got my feet caught up in the rope, and I nearly fell out of the boat.

Next thing I know, I was in New York, and it all happened. I've been up there now 11 years. So no regrets at all. It was kind of like a transition. It was like, hey, you can't keep pushing -- I pushed hard at No. 1. I had my time. To keep pushing that is just -- it wasn't happening. So I was quite happy to change.

And I made one rule when I went to tower. I said, don't sit up here and wish you were out there, and that worked. Then I realized what you've got to do to win on a Sunday afternoon, all the little things you can't put your finger on that's got to happen. I thought, well, wow, I could do that. I could make Sunday afternoon. To go out and play with the intention to win on a Sunday afternoon is, like any sport, is the ultimate. So I thought, wow.

And unfortunately, I heard the word gratitude. I thought, wow, I'm really grateful that I had the ability to do that at that time to do that for X amount of years. '87 to '96 is a pretty good run. Even better run in the middle there. Won five majors out of -- I don't know what the real number was, 16 or 17, I think.

So, hey, that was my middle run. This has been my second career. This is now for fun. I don't have to play golf to feed the kids or buy bigger cars. So it's hopefully for fun.

I left last week. I was annoyed. I was frustrated. I was depressed, and I even lost a head. So I thought, hey, I'm a golfer again.

(Laughter.)

NICK FALDO: So I'm back.

Q. When you look at what Bernhard's done, where Freddy was here saying he's probably the hardest worker on this Tour, and he's still got that --

NICK FALDO: Discipline.

Q. You know, back when you were at your 30s making runs at championships, how do you look at what he's been able to do?

NICK FALDO: It's a rare breed, isn't it? It's a rare man who can -- the discipline and determination to keep churning that out all the time is pretty amazing. I mean, to win.

You talk to sports psychologists. Then it becomes like a pattern. You know, his pattern is going and playing and finding a way to win where, as we know, there's many patterns. Some poor guys, their pattern is they miss the cut by 1. Miss the cut by 1. It's a pattern. Even if they're 5 under, they find a way to miss the cut by one.

So you've got to find a way to break patterns. He's in a lovely pattern of finds a way. Sometimes he starts poorly on day one and then, whee, and he finds his way.

It's what Tiger was so brilliant at as well. Tiger had a pattern of making a win happen, just find a way. And, yeah, he's a tough man to beat. I mean, if I could hang with some of the real golfers this week, Bernhard and Freddy and others, that would be pretty darn cool.

Q. Was the transition to television, was that what you expected? I mean, was it more difficult than you expected when you went into it? How much preparation has gone into it for you?

NICK FALDO: Well, I've learned -- it's funny. To be really honest, your first time, there's a box in front of you, and they go, that's your cough button. That's to talk to the producer. And there might be one other or something, and that's it. There's your instructions. Off you go. You've then got a free mike. So you can have it lasting five seconds or, you know.

So I made a very conscious rule to just talk golf, you know. And now I prepare a lot more. I prepare like a golfer. I love going to the golf course. I walk the greens. I hopefully know everything about it. I like to

be able to say on TV, when somebody's missed a green, he's got no chance of getting up and down from there, and I like to be right 99 percent of the time.

Sure, there's always going to be something. But generally, it's nice to be able to say to people, so when they're sitting at home, they can wander around the golf course with me. I mean, that's what I try to do, you know, and give the insight -- it's just give the insight.

I'm the what, how, and why man. What's he going to do? How's he going to do it? And why did this happen?

So it's funny, I've been talking to Tony Romo, trying to give him a bit because he's going to get thrown in the deep end really quickly. I say that's your goal, mate. And Tirico was great at the start. He just said, if you think it's good, say it.

That's the only thing. You know, I kick myself now. Sometimes you can almost predict what's going to happen, and you've just got to go with it. As I say, be quick. That's my three goals. I just say be smart, be quick, and be funny. That's my three goals each day.

Q. To that point, there's a whole generation of people that knew you as a player, and a great player obviously. Now there's a younger generation that's knowing you as the voice of golf broadcasts. Is there part of you that wishes you would be -- you know, your playing career would be the starring role in your life?

NICK FALDO: No, it is. It is because I was very fortunate. When I was doing all my winning back in the '90s, all those gentlemen and ladies were similar age. They were all in their 30s.

They're now a similar age. Their kids have all grown up. I've been amazed when I've gone to places -- I've done clinics for kids, 6, 8, 10 years old, and I'm like, oh, this is going to be rough. They're not going to know who I am, this old lump. And they're all over me. And I thought what? Because it was dad that watched me and copied my swing and brought the Pringle and Mizunos and what have you. And now they've passed it down to their kids.

So, hey, I'm very fortunate because my fan base -- golfers, that was a transition time, I think, in the '90s. It was a good era to have. We had a lot. Obviously, what Jack and Arnold and Gary did before and Tom. But then there was Seve, myself, Greg. It was a good international era in the '90s, and the Ryder Cups. We changed the Ryder Cups around, which was huge, through the '80s and '90s, and then here we are.

So, hey, we've all fast forwarded 30 years. That's a shock.

THE MODERATOR: What's it been like, after being away for a little while, playing with some of your contemporaries again as you did last week, with Bernhard, with --

NICK FALDO: Yeah, you learn little bits. Putting a round together is blooming hard work. That's the thing. It's not like just ball up and hit it. It's all the little things that keep the round going and happening and all sorts of things.

So it's a thousand and one bloomin' things you've got to do in this game to get it right. So that's what we've been trying to do.

Q. Just wondered, from the standpoint of playing in a -- whether it's a U.S. Open or a Senior Open or whatever, precision is always pretty important. Do you have the shots to be precise enough?

NICK FALDO: Yeah, I've been mapping out these greens. These greens, as I was saying, you've just got to be really smart, I think really cautious on these greens. It still means it's a great shot to hit it in the right place to give you -- because if you start missing anything, I mean, everybody is practicing chip shots, five yards, seven-yard chip shots, because you're in nasty rough, and you've just got to -- there's some really difficult ones where it goes up.

I mean, you might be in rough here, then there's a bit of collar, you know, fringe, and there's a rise on the edge of the green. So that's the tough one because if you don't get it perfect on the top of that hill, it comes back to you.

Of course, if you blast it, it's way -- so there's some really tough chipping around here. So I'm trying to think, well, if you can really put it on a string and hit it in the right place on the green as many times as possible and then play cautiously that way.

So we will see. There's some tough wicked greens out there.

Q. Just curious, do you still work with Leadbetter at all?

NICK FALDO: No. I've been doing most of this -- I've got a young guy by the name of Scott Hall who lives down in the South Florida who helps me out. He's here this week. And I've got my son Matthew on the bag. So that's cool.

So, yeah, we enjoy all the -- you know, the guys all sit at the bar and tell stories in the evening. It's a nice

world.

THE MODERATOR: Nick Faldo, thank you very much. Best of luck.