

The Evian Championship

Wednesday July 24, 2019

Jacques Bungert

Franck Riboud

Press Conference

(Video shown.)

JACQUES BUNGERT: Thank you for this film. Thank for being here. I'm going to go on in English if you don't mind.

Thank you. I see some familiar faces, and for those who have been here for 25 years, thank you. Thank you. That's why we want this press moment to be a little different this year, because it's not only our anniversary, but it's yours. We really do truly believe and you know we been saying that, and hopefully we show you that we do not only respect your work, but praise the work you've done for us to make us become what we have become and to put us on the map of the golfing world.

Without you, without the players, of course. Without, our sponsor - we have a lot of people to thank -- but without you we wouldn't be here. So for once were, thank you. Thank you very much.

Going on on this, we will pursue the press conference more formally, but maybe before, Franck, you have a comment on the film? I know yesterday you were very emotional about it. Maybe if you can --

FRANCK RIBOUD: I have not few comments. I have 100,000 comments. Normally I am very low profile. Here I am not low profile. I am really impressed by what we did with Jacques and myself and the team. Because everybody feel it's very easy - okay, not very easy -- but okay, it's the 25th. There was a No. 1, a No. 2, and so on and so on, and now everything is doing very easily because you know -- except the weather we never know.

Now, you can't imagine every year what we are doing with Jacques in term of strategic thinking about the future of this tournament. Every year we have to command the tournament of this year, but Jacques and myself, we are already thinking what are we going to do next year?

We consider this tournament as a family. In a family, you have the father, the mother, the cousins, and it's exactly what you represent for us. You, the press. But



the caddie, but the player, but the workers on the film, and I can tell you this year we are going to invest money not for the tournament, not for the spectator, not for you. No. For the gardener, for the people working in the field.

Because I don't think the quality of the -- not the machine, but I think we have to develop something much more better for them all the year long in term of where they can take rest, where they can lunch together. We forget that.

So next year we are going to put the money we have from our sponsors for these people. It's very nice. Thank you, the golf improve dramatically. Okay, well, we know nothing about the golf course. These people know.

I think it's of value to do some something for them next year. The same time, all these beautiful VIP village, I'm totally fed up with this because I'm there since 25 years. People arriving for the first time, Oh, it's wonderful.

Okay, but it's more September, October. We are in July. We need something more natural. We need something with a bit of view of the lake. We need something like a dessert. And it's expensive at the end, you see. This is my old job, to make productivity, so.

Just a small story. The one who were there in the beginning, and you can see that in the movie, we used to have a huge stand behind the 18. I look at the invoice every year and I was, Ah. They are lucky because Jacques every year we go to Augusta. And I said to Jacques, there is nothing? If there is nothing there is no cost, and everybody accept that.

So when we focus on the golf course we take our plan, this hill - some call it hill behind the 18th, and we put the same chair because we look at what weather. We just do something on top the seat because sometime it's raining here. You will see that come Saturday and Sunday. In Augusta they were all in the chair, so when you sit you are wet. So we find a way to improve the quality of Augusta. (Laughter.) Please don't repeat this.

So that's the reason why I'm very proud of this movie, and also because it explains very well the story of this tournament and how lucky we were because of the quality of the player we have from beginning.

Because today it's very fashionable, especially after the Ladies Soccer World Cup, ladies, ladies, ladies sports. Now you go back in 25 years ago. We are going to do a huge golf, ladies golf tournament in France. Where in France? In Paris? No, no, in Evian. Where? In Evian. Ah, not the water? There is a town? And that was so true, that nobody wants to help us to create the tournament.

I asked to many organization, and the first thing they told us is, Ah, it's a ladies tournament? No, you don't need this prize money. You use the prize money like this. You can pay a lot of fee. That was the ambience when we start. Nobody trust us.

Except somebody we never speak about him, because at this time there was a very big tournament in Europe called the Hennessy Cup, but because of law, French law they were no more allowed because of anti-alcohol law. They have to quit the country, and they did it in Germany.

The second person I have to think about is -- okay, there is more than one I have to think about -- which is my father because he was very beginning. But not far behind there was a very nice lady called Valerie (phonetic) at this time. She was 22 years old. She just come back from the U.S. university. She was in the French golf team. My father was at the head of the company at this time said, We need a golf director in Evian. He choose this 22 years old lady.

Now you start to imagine the creativity of this guy and the relationship he can create with people. Obviously that start to explain to us we have to do a tournament. We start with a name (indiscernible.) Don't repeat that, the French. That was no so good. You have this middle class French -- I will not continue to describe. I know exactly what I am thinking.

The year after we did the same with the ladies, and Valerie call all her friend, and we were surprised to have the queen of the French ladies tour, which change a little bit my personal life, I have to say.

It's a private joke. But we have Valerie, we have Sandrine, we have -- I forgot all of them, but they were there. We say, Okay. And my father said, Ah, that's what we have to do. And it's fitting with the Evian brand, too.

But this is beautiful. And the people who are playing with the ladies, okay, not the same score, but we can

benchmark; we can compare. Now I think it's overrun now. I played with Maria Fassi and I need few shots to achieve where she is. (Laughter.) It's a new generation.

But at this time that was very close to the amateur game, so that's the reason why I've got so many emotion on this movie, and I hope we will celebrate the 50. Perhaps I will be like this in a chair with Jacques behind propping me, and on me knees.

JACQUES BUNGERT: Yesterday (indiscernible) was saying, Wow, in '94 when I won probably most of you were not born - until I came on stage as well to give back the trophy. It was a very emotional moment for those who were there. I said, I was born, and not only I was born, but talking about Pauline, who played the Junior Cup and playing the --

FRANCK RIBOUD: No, no. Pauline is exactly what we want to build with Jacques from the beginning. I mean, a young kids called Pauline Roussin-Bouchard playing three times the Haribo Kids Cup, because it's eight, nine, and under-12. Being qualified to play the Junior Cup means she's a member of the (indiscernible) Golf Club. At this club you have Jordan Spieth, you have Justin Thomas.

It's not by luck; that was something we want to build. Now we achieve because Pauline has not a wild card. No, no, no. She got the spot because she finish No. 2 at the Jabra Tournament. So the three Haribo, the Junior Cup, and now the Jabra Tournament, and now the Evian Championship. That was the exact story we planned to build with all this tournament and so on we are doing for the younger generation.

With Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth, we have nothing to say. (Laughter.)

JACQUES BUNGERT: But to make a long story short, it's true that the vision of Antoine and Franck has built on this tournament on women's golf, women's sports. It's very important and true that we talk about soccer because of the fantastic success and we know what the U.S. team has done.

Angela was saying, I was watching the Evian Masters at that time on TV and I was like, I want to be there. And that's cool. That's another thing we want to mention.

Before going on on the question, maybe you have few question on your side. I just want to also stress the fact that Franck talked about the youngsters and definitely his strategy. But innovation is also a part also of what we wanted to build.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Yeah.

JACQUES BUNGERT: Say a few things about that.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Because if you remember, with Jacques we want to create in this place, in Evian, a golf that's (indiscernible) not only because of the tournament, not only because of the quality of the golf course, not only because of the quality of the hotel, but also taking care of the technology.

That's the reason why this year at the academy, not on the side of the player, but on the other side, we have David Leadbetter, Jean Jacques Revit who is somewhere biomechanic guy I ever met. We have typically a present to you the TPT Shaft two, three years ago. It's exactly what we want to do.

That's the reason I asked Francois to come to present to you and to perhaps explain to you about his company, where he was five or four years ago. I'm sure you know player like Justin Rose have won tournament with your shaft now. You have Vijay Singh playing; you have DeChambeau playing your shaft.

Just because of the rumor and the quality of the product and they continue to improve. I would like to explain how you will be helped by being there, so if you can --

FRANCOIS: Okay. Thank you, very much. Thank you for your support, Franck, Evian, Jacques, all the team. I think four years ago, Swiss company based in France off the lake. Not very far. Just a few kilometer on the other side of the lake. Decided to put all its experience in the composite coming from America Cup, from Formula One, from space project, and from some luxury groups.

To put those technical development in the golf shaft, because we have the impression that the golf shaft has not so much improved since 30 years. So we brought many, many innovation in a very simple device. That's the golf shaft. Okay, like every company, we have good times and bad times, but we always got very strong support from Franck, who is a technology freak, and who --

FRANCK RIBOUD: (Indiscernible.)

ANGELA STANFORD: And so I just want to present a new model that is designed for women and that is painted with the pink color of Evian. It's a limited edition. It's a new model. You can test it back side the driving range at the academy when you want to. Just have to apply at the entrance.

You will feel the benefit of this technology. Like Franck

said, we have become one with this technology. Like Kim won this year already. We have Jason Day, Justin Rose, Brandon DeChambeau, big names who played the shaft and won more than 15 U.S. PGA tournaments. So that's the only proof that this new technology is successful.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Thank you very much.

JACQUES BUNGERT: So now I hope you see some pictures, what we call in French mash-ups. I don't know if it means something in English for you. But it's a picture of today mixed with a picture of yesterday. Did you receive it?

Franck will personally sign it for you later on if you wish, because it might be a memorabilia in few years when he's dead. In 100 years, maybe we can do an option and find some money for (indiscernible) foundation. Any questions?

Q. Your dad sitting outside the clubhouse, I wondered if you can just say, in light of what we've been talking about today, what this picture means to you and what would your dad say if you could sort of walk in the door? What would he think about 25 years?

FRANCK RIBOUD: You know, I think everybody has a father. Normally that's the rules. When I look at this picture I recognize my father. He's exactly as he was still living. That's the summary of what was my father. Even if that was perhaps one of the most important few years at this time or whatever, that he was passionate. He loves golf. You can't imagine how he loves.

I think he was even loving golf a little bit too much. Every time he was shooting one shot, we were behind with my brother or Sandrine. We say, Hopefully he succeeds, otherwise the club will go further than the ball.

It was like this. He was exactly like that. Very accessible, very --

And now, looking to me --

JACQUES BUNGERT: I think if I may add this actually, because I know his father. I've known his father. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

FRANCK RIBOUD: That is exactly what - for example, Ellen, because if you look in the movie, you see my father giving a big kiss to Alena (phonetic.) Take me like this and say, Franck, I love your father, which is cool.

Q. Would he be proud of all this today?

FRANCK RIBOUD: More than proud. He loved the golf. Even at the beginning he was the guy who decide to this tournament. He was really involve in golf. He was involve in the club in (indiscernible). So the only thing that's a really personal emotion, as you know, I have a son. I have four kids, but I have one who's playing quite well golf. He is going to live in your country next year. Not far from your president, so I tell him to go on the other side.

I am sad that my father was not there to see his grandson playing golf. He saw the other one playing soccer so that was okay, but golf was special for him.

Q. What aspect of the success of this tournament brings you the most satisfaction?

FRANCK RIBOUD: There is one thing. It's something we decide with Jacques at the beginning. I think that whatever the evolution of the tournament, we will keep the spirit of the tournament. If I want to joke -- and you know that because you are one of the famous golf journalists. We cross you in Augusta. As you remember, we even don't dare to hello. (Laughing.)

But we keep this proximity with everybody in this tournament. I remember when we begin a major. A lot of people thought that is the end of the ambience, that is the end of the family spirit of the tournament. We succeed to keep it.

JACQUES BUNGERT: And Mike and the LPGA, I have to say, did understand that.

FRANCK RIBOUD: And before my time.

Q. (No microphone.)

JACQUES BUNGERT: Let's not mention that.

FRANCK RIBOUD: No comment in French. No comment.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

FRANCK RIBOUD: No, if you want I have time.

Q. What is your biggest goal for the future then? Like ten years from now, 25 years now?

FRANCK RIBOUD: Normally to see the future I ask Jacques.

JACQUES BUNGERT: Forget it. I will be dead before him, so...(laughter.) (Talking over one another.)

Honestly, it's year by year. Honestly, we foresee the future, and Franck mentioned it, in terms of vision, what we are going to build. We were talking about the tents and logistical details.

But it's year by year. We try to adjust. We try to make changes. I think what would be fantastic is that we have more and more young players having played the junior and developing as professional golfers and winning this tournament.

FRANCK RIBOUD: You have an answer if you look at -- as you know, we have some wild card. I even don't call that a wild card, because if you are wildcard you have to win. So the selection of (indiscernible) the tournament, or if you are No. 1 or No. 2 amateur. Normally all our wildcard will be given to the amateur. I discuss with the chairman of Augusta because of their ladies event, and we propose to give a wildcard to the winner of this tournament; we are waiting for the answer.

But that's the way we build things. When I was used to be the CEO of the Danone Company is to make to explain the strategy and the results, and I got always the same question as yours: Franck, what is your vision? My vision? I am just reacting the most positively I can to all the difficulty I have every day.

But it was a question of vision. Having an idea of what you want to build, how you want to manage, respect the people, what kind of role, what kind of sense. And it was not in the movie, but I said that. Because 25 years is very long. It's true that if you look at the big tournament, the English one or whatever, the U.S. one, it's nothing. But it's long for two guys. Without Jacques I would never do that.

But you just go day by day. As I said, it's not a vision. You say, Okay, we never take care of the worker on the field. We are going to do that. Oh, we have to take care of the journalists. Okay, we improve. We have to take care about the spectators. Okay, we do something new.

As Jacques said, we are like the Chinese people. We copy everything. We copy Wimbledon. There is a terrace. I was lucky to go to the -- I forgot which tournament -- and I saw this American spectator drinking beer on the terrace, blah, blah, blah.

Okay, no, no. I saw that if you have a ticket, if you pay ten bucks more you can go on the terrace. Okay, we're going to do that. That's a good idea. Except in the Masters because you can't take pictures, you know, and we are Japanese people. We are taking picture everywhere, and some crazy things.

So I think we will continue. With Jacques than with myself because I passed away.

JACQUES BUNGERT: Talking about that, I think the best way to go on living a long time is to drink

champagne, I think, as well as Evian water. I think we're going to go on with our question. We are here to answer you around champagne that is waiting for us to celebrate together this 25th anniversary in front of the scoreboard.

Let's go there. I think there are more surprise coming up. Last but not least on your question, I hope the world will be a little more ecological, and we're working on it as well in the golf course. (Applause.)

FRANCK RIBOUD: Thank you.