

PNC Championship

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club

Fred Couples

Hunter Hanneman

Quick Quotes

THE MODERATOR: Like to welcome Fred Couples joined by Hunter. Freddie, obvious question, just a couple comments of how this week came to be, making your first start here, and so far how much fun you guys are having.

FRED COUPLES: We're having a blast. We both had great two teams today. I turned around and watched Hunter hit a few, and he's driving it really well. But basically we played in a member member last year, in Palm Springs, and we won. And the second round we played with John Elway and another friend, J.J. And so we had a lot of fun.

And then we were sitting around, really three months ago, and I said, Hunter, there's this tournament. They really want me to play with you down in Florida, the father-son. And he's watched it. He thought about it for a day, and then he came back and said --

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Yeah.

FRED COUPLES: So that's how it worked out.

So, again, it's a trip. We got on a plane yesterday. He's come to tournaments I played in, but packed his clubs, and I'm praying to God that all our clubs make it because this is a big deal. And we got off the flight, our clubs made it. And then told him we got to be ready at 8:00, 8:15, check in, register.

It's been fun for me to watch him. He's got one of his best friends who plays on the high school golf team -- he's all volleyball. He's a golfer during Thanksgiving.

How many rounds did we play?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Five days in a row.

FRED COUPLES: So he just got back from a volleyball tournament. He played Friday, Saturday, Sunday. And then he had finals, he and Trevor. And then we flew here,



and now we're ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Volleyball seems to suit well. Just a little bit of background, when did you pick up the game of golf, and what do you say most impressed about what part of your game are you comfortable with?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: I would say I picked up golf maybe two years after Fred met my mom. So when I was like ten or so.

FRED COUPLES: Yeah, right about then, yeah.

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Ten years old. I'd say I really like how my driving is going so far.

Q. A lot has been made of the six woods in your bag this year. What went behind that decision?

FRED COUPLES: Well, at Augusta I hurt myself, or before that, and I played, and I really think that if I had all these woods at Augusta, I might have -- the scores were a little higher, I might have been able to play a little better, but I wasn't even really swinging. But I hit these clubs pretty well.

And then when I got home, I had a couple comments make me up a 3, 4, 5 and 6 rescue. And honestly, they've become my favorite clubs. I've picked on it pretty quick -- now, again, in the wind, things can get a little different. It's hard to six a 6-wood or rescue or hybrid low, but I can hit it high, and I can flight it a little bit.

But just from hitting the ground. You know, I've always hit driver, 3-wood, 5-wood, pretty well, but I seem to hurt myself on most 4-, 5-, and 6-irons because you're still going at it really, really hard. I just tried these, and I absolutely love them.

Q. Have there been any comments from friends?

FRED COUPLES: I wish I owned some company. They've sold a lot of them, or people are using them. They're very easy to hit. And I say this loosely, but if I was 50, 55, I wish I would have had these. I'm a better 5- and 6-iron player with these than I ever was.

Q. You're pretty fired up to watch Hunter this week



and take it all in. What about yourself?

FRED COUPLES: I'm probably more fired up than Hunter. I really am because he's a great volleyball player, but to do this, it's a little different animal. Not saying -- he gets up early and surfs, we were laughing about that. But golf is a morning thing, and you've got to be prepared.

He's got Trevor here, and then one of our good friends, Jerry, who has helped a little bit with his golf swing.

For me personally, I've seen enough of it that every pro that walks off the 18th green says it was the greatest week of their lives. And if I don't say that, somebody better come and shoot me.

Q. You've been doing this for an awful long time. Do you still enjoy playing? Not talking about this week, talking about --

FRED COUPLES: I do. I just don't last very long. So I've tried my last six or eight years to figure out how I can be competitive and not just go somewhere and play and not beat anyone. And then I practice a little harder, and then I'll go play a tournament, and then my back goes out.

Last year was awful. I couldn't really play. And I went to Augusta just because I'm stubborn and I wanted to play. Then I took three months after. And after those three months, I actually, knock on wood, feel really, really good. At 65. We get to play the two tees with Nelly. So if I watch him hit some drives, I may not even have to swing. I'll save some energy.

Q. When did this event get on the radar that you thought maybe some day you'd get to play it?

FRED COUPLES: Well, you know, at 10 and 11, I knew he played a little golf, and he played football and basketball ball and blah, blah, blah, blah, he played them all. But really at 14 and 15.

I've told you a few years, right?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Mm-hmm. Yeah. About a couple years now.

FRED COUPLES: And so if he doesn't play golf, the last thing I want to do is bring him here just because he can hit some good shots. And he showed it Thanksgiving. We played five straight days. He did great.

He has no problem hitting a ball. It's just hard. It's hard to judge a 7, and he hits it a long way. But hopefully we won't have -- unless they're into par-5s, we'll have the 7-irons.

But I think we have a few years -- I hope to play five years. For me this came on the radar, some of my best -- Ray Floyd has been one of my dear friends and mentors forever. He used to win this a bunch. Davis Love I watch play. I watch them all. But you talk to those people, and Davis Love, to play with Drew, he just lights up.

Q. What did Tiger say when he heard?

FRED COUPLES: He does text me. He said, Dude, I'm so excited for you. It's just the hang that you're going to love. And I already know all that, but then he said, You want to play? I said, No, we are not playing with you and Charlie. That is not going to happen.

But we did get Nelly and her father, and we're really excited about that because for Hunter and I to be on the same tees with Nelly, we'll settle each other down a little bit and have a good time.

Q. Hunter, what translates from volleyball to golf or golf to volleyball, if anything?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Not much, but I would say, well, past tournaments I've played in front of a lot of people. So I think it helps in terms of just playing with crowds. So it helped me a lot.

Q. What's the biggest volleyball crowd you've played in front of?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Probably last weekend. Played in Las Vegas. We were in a semifinals match. And, yeah, there was a lot of people.

Q. But you are more used to playing volleyball. So getting up to stand on the tee and hit a drive with about as many people there, do you put that out of your mind? How do you put that out of your mind?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: I just try and focus on the ball.

FRED COUPLES: That's correct. He hit a good one. I went to the other edge of the thing, and he smoked it right off the first tee, which is great today in the Pro-Am.

I don't think it really matters for him whether it's the Pro-Am or first round, but, again, we played with Elway, and that wasn't -- he knows what we were trying to win. We were leaving, and he actually plays better under pressure than just screwing around. He really does.

So I don't see any issue with him and his golf game. He's not Matt Kuchar or Charlie or Justin Leonard's kids and all



that, but he can hit it, and we'll do just fine.

We have to putt. Correct? How did you putt today?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Eh, okay.

Q. Which of these legends, Hunter, are you looking forward to meeting while you're here?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Definitely Tiger. Also looking forward to meeting Charlie too.

Q. Hunter, when your mom started seeing this guy, how much did you know about his record and what he had accomplished in the game? And it's okay if you say nothing or everything or whatever, but did you know who he was and what he had done?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: When my mom first met him, I had no clue. I don't think I watched a single minute of golf in my life before he came in. But eventually, like, I started realizing he's a big deal and he can play.

FRED COUPLES: I met him on flag football. So I drove to meet -- we had a blind football date, and we Hunter throw the rock around. I still have the video of that. That's how we met. And I knew he was a big deal nine years ago because he could throw a football.

But he really loves golf. But volleyball is his deal. And I said earlier, you know, someone said, What do you like about volleyball? I said, Well, I like watching him play.

And by the way, tonight there are two ladies matches in the semifinals in the NCAA that we'll be in front of, big-time schools, and going to fun to watch.

Q. You're watching sports --

FRED COUPLES: Well, women's volleyball is very fun to watch. I think they're all top four seeds. So this is like Nebraska, Pittsburgh, Louisville, and Penn State.

Q. Did you watch the match the other day, Fred?

FRED COUPLES: I did. I did not know -- no, I did not know it was on. Somehow Brooks let me down. I text Brooks quite a bit. And Suzanne saw a picture from Meredith and said, Why is she in Vegas? And I said, Well, they're playing the match.

Then I got a text from someone, Are you watching this? Actually from Joe LaCava. And it was a text -- I don't even need to say what the text was about.

But then when I turned it on, they were on I think the 5th hole. It was pitch dark and freezing. Now, I don't know why they would do that, to play a match that big.

But I thought it was fun. It didn't matter to me who won. I bash LIV, I bash the Tour once in a while. Those are four great, great guys. I have a lot of heart for Brooks and Bryson. But I love Scheffler and Rory. But it didn't matter to me who won. I think they put on a show. I just was -- we just didn't get pitch dark. I don't even know what --

Q. Really cold.

FRED COUPLES: Yeah. You know, it was just weird.

Q. Did you see Bryson's jacket?

FRED COUPLES: Oh, we saw it. We saw it all. I think the Internet saw it too.

Q. You never played in one of those, did you?

FRED COUPLES: No, I've never been in one of these, no.

Q. The skins game is coming back in some formation next year. Since you are known as Mr. Skins --

FRED COUPLES: I've already talked to them. I believe, if it works out, I'll be introducing the players on the 1st tee and the 10th tee. That's my job.

Q. Honorary starter?

FRED COUPLES: I'm an honorary starter for the skins game, yeah. I'm pretty excited about it.

Q. Why do you think it went away?

FRED COUPLES: Well, I think because of money. We weren't making boatloads of money, but I think a few people didn't want to fly -- I live in Palm Springs, so I loved it. But some people didn't want to fly all that way for zero. If you don't win a skin, you spend four or five days Thanksgiving, and you win no money.

Now, I only speak for the people I know. Maybe some other guys got paid. I'm just curious what they're going to play for. This is going to have to be a ton of money. Like, I can't even start, 300-, 500-, 700,000 for six, one through six --

Q. It seemed like purses started to pick up a little bit.

FRED COUPLES: You don't see me complaining.

Q. No.

FRED COUPLES: I didn't return any of those checks when I won money.

Q. It was big money when you won them, though, right?

FRED COUPLES: Sure, it was.

Q. Compared to what you were playing for on the Tour?

FRED COUPLES: You better believe it, yeah.

And I played, as we know, remember, I played in a lot of Canadian skins too. I played well in those things. It was the other tournaments I butchered.

Q. Obviously, you got a lot of great accomplishments in the game of golf. Being able to share something like this with families, what does it mean to you and how different is it than some of the other accomplishments?

FRED COUPLES: We do a lot together. We travel a little bit. I watched him play with my back most of his football games.

But now we're coming to mine. I'm going to watch Hunter a lot, watch Nelly a lot. I'm going to watch Hunter more. But it's going to be a blast because, again, it's not the cliché of what every other pro has said. It's my first time, but for Hunter to play golf, I think golf will go a long way in his life.

He can be a professional or a great college volleyball player, but once that's over, then he can do other things, play beach volleyball, do whatever he likes.

All eight people pulled me aside and said they had a blast with Hunter. I was never really worried about it. He's a shy assassin. He knows what to say.

His favorite football team is?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Steelers.

FRED COUPLES: And where were the guys from?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Pittsburgh.

FRED COUPLES: Right. So they all hit it off. It was almost like a setup. But we had a blast. And come Saturday, Trevor will be there, Suzanne will be probably caddying if I can get a cart, and Jerry right here will be

caddying.

The five of us will have a blast. I plan on playing as many years as I can. Now that we're in this, why would we not come back and play three, four, five years. Right?

HUNTER HANNEMANN: Mm-hmm.

Q. I don't know how much you pay attention week to week of the PGA TOUR, but do you have any advice for these guys on how to be better entertainers, or do you think they are already?

FRED COUPLES: What a question. You know, sometimes I sit and think about that and what did I do. I get mad -- but, I mean, when you play well, you've got to give the people more than they expect. And when you play poorly, that's when it becomes you don't want to do anything stupid.

Golf is a game of happy things. When Rory missed that putt at the U.S. Open and lost, you know, I don't know what anyone would have done. He got in his car and he left. You can pick on anything that he wanted to do.

But we have to get people to love the golf again. Everyone loves to play golf, but I think it's got nothing to do with -- I laugh when they say LIV this and the Tour that. Our Tour is really what I'm worried about, and I don't even watch their Tour. So I don't know if they're laughing and giggling all the time. But our guys need to show a little more.

And I think also -- tell me the guy that used to come on, the old curmudgeon from CBS that was a big friend of --

Q. Bob Drum?

FRED COUPLES: Bob Drum. I love The Drummer. I think if someone like that could come, bingo. Bob Drum. Do you remember any of his little things, where he was climbing over? He used to do things and get players involved I think.

I think that's fun. I don't know if anyone knows anything about Luke List or Patrick Cantlay besides Patrick Cantlay seems to not be friendly. Well, he's one of my best friends, and he's as friendly as anyone. He's just not outgoing, but that's why he's so good.

I don't have any answers for that. I love watching it. I don't have any problems with smaller fields, more money. I don't think there's any problem with that at all.

I think the Tour is being carried by the best players. And if you're not one of the best players at the moment, you can

be.

But it shouldn't just be easy. They want it all easy if you're 75th to 130th on the money list. And every time you go to a tournament, all the signs when you drive in are all of six or eight or ten guys. And I think they run the Tour.

Q. No names here, but the dead weight, if you want to call it that, is there more now or than there was, say, the mid '80s?

FRED COUPLES: No, I think the players now, well, one, they hit it, we all know, so far. I don't know if they're better players, I really don't, from 75 to 125. But they're just stronger and younger. The Tour has become pretty young, I think. I don't know how many guys in their 40s are -- you could help me out here, but when I played, there were a lot of players in their 40s that were really good.

But, again, they didn't hit the ball 400 yards so the game didn't pass them by. Justin Leonard. Nick Faldo. Even guys like I play with now, Maggert. Unbelievable ball-strikers, but they can only hit it so far. And then once you turn 50, then you make up for life and play on the Champions Tour. All right. Thanks. We're going to go putt and chip.

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