

# KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

Southern Hills Country Club  
Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

## Jim Furyk

### Press Conference



JOHN DEVER: Welcome back to the 2021 KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship. We are joined by former U.S. Ryder Cup captain, seven-time winner on the PGA TOUR, Jim Furyk. Thanks for being with us, spending some time with us. You won on your PGA TOUR Champions debut last year and have had a lot of solid play since. No further wins, but you must be pretty optimistic about your chances this week, just based on your play of late.

JIM FURYK: If you say so.

Honestly I got off to a good start on the Champions Tour last year and through the fall played solid. Had another good chance to win in Boca and then took some time off. I came out firing. I felt like I played really well or played very solid in January and February this year, had a couple good finishes on the PGA TOUR, and then kind of got in a little bit of a funk through kind of March, April, and I've been actually struggling a little bit with my ball-striking. I haven't been quite me. Been working really hard on it.

I've had some decent finishes. I've kind of scrapped it out, but I really haven't felt like I've been firing on all cylinders, so the last -- and I really haven't been out on Tour. The way the schedule played out I was kind of out for one, home for one, out for one, home for one. I really haven't felt like I've got in a good flow. Now I'm going to play probably six out of seven weeks, play three on, one off, three on, which I like, try to get in more of a rhythm playing, and I've been working hard at home with dad a little bit on my golf swing and trying to get settled there, as well.

I'm optimistic. I feel like I'm going in the right direction, but the last couple weeks or last couple months have definitely not been something I've been real proud of or excited about.

**Q. How does the course compare to what you remember or events you've played here? How much do you think it's changed? Do you think it's more difficult or about the same?**

JIM FURYK: It's been 14 years. I'm 50 now, so my memory is not quite as good as it used to be, or 51.

The green complexes -- other than 7, the green complexes look very similar. I was comparing yardage books. They're not a lot different, either, as far as slopes and probably had to mellow 9 and 18 out a little bit to get some more pin placements, but the ridges, everything is kind of in the same spot.

My biggest memory and the biggest difference really is all the collection areas kind of around the periphery of the greens. I remember a lot more rough kind of like they have on No. 8, a lot more rough around the greens. It's got a cool look as far as I think Mr. Hogan would have loved it. If you kind of hit all the fairways you don't have to touch rough. The pants aren't going to get real wet. You can go from green to tee to green to tee and never really get out of the short cut. So it's got a totally different look that way.

I think the short game area and the surrounds and kind of the runoffs are just to me what looks a lot different, but past that it looks very similar. I realize they thinned some trees out, but a memory from 14 years, every old golf course now seems to be -- they need to pull trees. They need to create sunlight, airflow, save some water. It's just kind of part of the way that we're going to get golf courses in better condition.

**Q. You saw Phil Mickelson do what he was able to do at Kiawah. Does it do anything for you, other guys in the field in terms of like a little boost or anything, just from the age factor?**

JIM FURYK: I think it's great that -- I think all the guys on the Champions Tour have a pride in the quality of the product that we're putting out there and our abilities. We don't hit the ball as far as we used to, but you look at the scores and guys are still firing, seems like 10-, 12-, 15-, 16-, 18-under wins every week, and a lot of times in a three-day tournament.

I think we have a lot of pride in the product we have, and to see a guy our age go out there and still compete against



the kids and then not only that, win a major championship, create history and then do it on a golf course that that's not a golf course I would expect a 50 year old to win on. It is a long, brutally hard -- there's a double, triple bogey waiting at every corner there. It's not the golf course you'd expect a 50-year-old to win at. So I think you wrap that all together, it was a really cool week, obviously, for Phil and the world of golf, and I think the over 50s take some pride in that, as well.

**Q. What was the main thing you and your dad worked on the last couple months?**

JIM FURYK: Well, we've covered all areas as far as basic setup, dabbled a little bit in my swing, which is something I don't do very often. To be honest with you, I don't feel like it changes very much, it's just the positions I kind of put myself in in setup kind of change the swing. We've just been grinding at it and trying to -- I'm hitting a lot of good golf shots, I just don't like my misses. I feel like when I'm playing well, I'm hitting a lot of really good quality shots, it's just my misses in the last couple of months have tended to be way off. It's not -- when you have to stand up and pipe a drive or hit a really good iron shot, that doubt is not what I'm looking for.

**Q. I didn't know if you got a chance to see your Arizona State women's team; they just made a bomb from off the green from about 30 feet in extra holes to knock off the 1 seed Stanford. I was just going to ask you about your --**

JIM FURYK: I did not. Was it Arizona State or Arizona? Remember, I went to college, so --

**Q. I didn't mean to say that --**

JIM FURYK: Speaking of Phil.

**Q. What's your involvement with your college and --**

JIM FURYK: Yeah, I've kept in touch with the coach there, Jim Anderson. I don't know the ladies' coach personally but got a chance to know our president, Bobby Robbins, and also got a chance to meet our athletic director for the first time at Tucson this year playing the Champions Tour event, Mr. Heeke. Right now they're trying to put together a practice facility for both teams, and they're kind of working with some of the ex-players and that. Still involved and still kind of keep an eye on them.

The men's team made a huge jump this year, as well, as far as they had had some down years and struggling, and they've got a young man that's ranked I think in the top 10 in college and the team is back in the rankings, as well.

Proud of both programs and happy for them. I kind of keep an eye, but I didn't see that -- I kind of just finished up my practice round, so I didn't see what happened.

**Q. Obviously you're vice captain for the Ryder Cup. What does that win do for Phil as far as maybe a captain's pick?**

JIM FURYK: Yeah, it gets him on the radar, right? You look back, in all honesty, and I think by his standards he struggled for the last year or so, and big win gets him -- I think I saw it got him up to the 16th in the points.

The golf courses have some similarities. Both Pete Dye designs, both courses that you're going to see quite a bit of wind. They're not golf courses you play on the ground. You're not hitting bump-and-run shots and running 5-iron shots up on a green like a British Open; they're both aerial attack style golf courses and target oriented like you would expect a Pete Dye.

Yeah, obviously I'm sure it's on his list of goals, and I guess the really nice thing about being a vice captain is that I can give my feedback and my opinion, but I don't make those decisions. I always said the away captain, the most difficult decisions I had to make really were the captains' picks. I think that was the hardest thing for an away captain, the hardest thing for a home captain, again, is your captain's picks, and Strick has got six. I had four. You think six would be easier than four. Two is easier than four is easier than six. He's going to want to round out his team and give the U.S. the best opportunity to win.

You know, that's the hardest job a captain has, and I am thankful that I don't have to make those decisions, but I'll do everything I can and whatever he asks to help out.

**Q. What is the role of a vice captain in the interim between now and the Ryder Cup? Does he rely on you, call you a lot for advice?**

JIM FURYK: Yeah, whatever -- we talk every once in a while, a Zoom call. Strick mentioned it in his presser last week at Kiawah that we had a Zoom call the week previous, and we just talked some strategy.

**Q. Do you recommend Bryson and Brooks Koepka pairing?**

JIM FURYK: There you go. It's probably not going to happen I would guess.

You know, we talk about the golf course. We talk about our team, how it's shaping up. We're always trying to as a team and as a group -- if we were a college it would be a

program, or a franchise in professional sports. We're all always trying to figure out how to make that team, the United States team and make better, not only for this year because there's always a win now and there should be a win now attitude but also trying to help and make that team better for the future. Davis Love is the vice-captain for the Ryder Cup but he's also the next Presidents Cup captain, so we kind of incorporate those teams together and try to make the best decisions we can and help Strick out as much as we can.

He'll always have questions. He's always got ideas, thoughts. He's on-site at Whistling Straits. He's the one that's got to make all the decisions so he's going to have questions. He bounces stuff off of the three of us and we do whatever he asks and try to help out.

I think between now and then, week of, you help Strick with the pairings, you help Strick with how the golf course is playing and then you're his eyes on the golf course.

The one thing that I really was surprised when I was a captain is how little golf I saw at Le Golf National. You're not able to see a lot of golf. In the practice rounds there's always press conferences scheduled and this, and we're going to go practice your speech and you end up being the CEO and you've got to really delegate authority, and those vice-captains you have are the ones that you really rely on to be your eyes and ears and what's going on on the golf course.

And then during play, you all are watching it on television. I'm out on the golf course trying to help on par-3s and club selection, but I'm seeing like a shot here and a shot there, where a vice captain is following for 18 holes. So they kind of have an intimate view and feel of what's going on in the match and how those two guys are playing. Those are the things that I really enjoy as a vice-captain. I really enjoy getting involved with a group of guys, maybe it's two or four or however many guys I have for the week, and really kind of being their liaison to the captain and vice versa and really just the camaraderie of it all.

**Q. You mentioned it's been a long time since '07 but as you reacquaint yourself with this place, what's the biggest thing it asks of a player?**

JIM FURYK: I think there's -- every major tests probably patience. It probably gets overplayed and beat down, but there's a lot of places on this golf course that -- where the fairways are pinched down and you want to hit -- you want to hit driver but 3-wood is probably the play. You want to hit 3-wood but 5-wood is probably the play. But then if you don't challenge it in certain places and you don't attack off the tee, now you've left yourself a little farther shot into the

green and now that second shot is going to have to be a lot more patient.

But it's a ball striker's golf course. If you miss fairways here, it's an uphill battle. If you start missing greens in the runoffs, it's going to be a difficult -- you're going to have to get the ball up-and-down here, you're going to have to hit some shots off those collection areas. A lot of them are into the grain.

You can tell they've had a lot of rain here in the last couple of weeks. There's a lot of grain to that grass. You're going to hit a lot of shots into it. You're going to see some guys look -- we're going to look silly once in a while with our short game because of the way it is conditioned right now and as wet as it is. So it's going to be a ball striker's golf course, but it's really, I think, a lot of patience and putting the ball in the right areas and it's not easy to do. It's a demanding golf course.

**Q. You had mentioned earlier about comparing yardage books from previous times that you had been here, so I'm just curious from your past experience, obviously last time in 2007 the tournament was hosted in August and it was a little bit hotter than it's going to be this weekend and probably was a little bit firmer back then. And with the course changes, how does your personal course strategy change? Are there holes with the collection areas where you can't short-side on certain areas or just for your own personal sake, how do you feel like your strategy has evolved for this course over the years?**

JIM FURYK: Yeah, a lot of it, you think of a hole like -- you can't short side. I'd say like No. 12 here is a very typical hole where you can't go right. If it were playing firm and fast you miss that green right, the ball runs down to the water. Right now it has a chance of holding up.

But the alternative is if you hit it in that left bunker there's no way you're making 4 most of the time unless the pin is on the right side of the green.

It's demanding. You have to be patient, and I think there's going to be places you pick and choose where to be aggressive. It's going to depend on a lot of hole locations. I think every one of these greens has probably got a place where you've got a green light and you can attack, and it's got a number of pins where you have to play pretty conservative and put the ball on the fat of the green.

You know, I guess the difference, we're going to probably play it from a little different yardage. There's certain holes that we're playing from shorter now, and even though I guess it's playing a little longer as far as the ball is not

rolling like it would have during the PGA Championship in '07. We're playing from a little bit shorter yardage, and there's a couple places where we can attack because of that.

**Q. In your experience playing out here and when the wind gets up, are there certain pin locations that would vary depending on if there was 5 miles an hour compared to 20 miles an hour that maybe the break would be a lot different or you would play to a different part of the green? The amount of wind, would that change your course strategy?**

JIM FURYK: Absolutely, a hundred percent. It would definitely -- as far as especially with the runoffs and the severity of the greens here, there's a lot of putts that I hit even today in the pro-am with pretty docile, pretty tame pin placements, 10-footers that had three plus feet of break. Everyone remembers 9 and 18 in the old days, and they've probably been flattened a touch just because by today's standards and green speeds they had to be. But the wind is a big factor here.

It looks like, if I remember right, reading the weather forecast, Thursday had a good chance for the wind to blow.

It's probably some of the fronts blowing out of here and then maybe calming down again on the weekend, but it looked like a lot of 8 to 12 and then maybe Thursday was elevated up to around 15 or something. But I'll take a look at that again tonight and just try to get a feel for what direction it's coming from, how it'll change throughout the week.

JOHN DEVER: Thanks so much for swinging by and spending some time with us. Good luck all week.

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