

# Masters Tournament

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Augusta, Georgia, USA

## Fred Couples

### Quick Quotes



#### Q. How are you feeling?

FRED COUPLES: I feel great, shockingly enough. Yeah, I played another nine. I play 8:30 tomorrow, so it was actually good to get up at 5:30 and get ready to come out. I had a good time obviously with Tiger and J.T., but I feel good.

#### Q. Was it better than the previous years maybe?

FRED COUPLES: We haven't had that many Champions Tour events so far and I've skipped them all, but I haven't played golf since November, Thanksgiving. To say I was hitting 20 or 30 balls in the basement and then my back would go bad so I would stop.

I know the only time I played, I played a Pro-Am at Newport, and then I didn't play in the tournament on Friday. I couldn't move. So I've played so little golf. But it's okay.

#### Q. When you have a cool, damp day like today, how do you feel, and how does that affect you?

FRED COUPLES: That's all fine. It's kind of not one of those things -- I mean, my body goes all the time. So I'm fine. Even the one year I played probably, as my teacher said, is the greatest golf he's ever seen me play, and I barely made the cut and I wore a back brace, and I was hitting woods.

I have all kinds of woods this week too because I don't want to take many divots, but I feel fine. I am fine.

#### Q. How did Tiger look compared to Monday when you guys played?

FRED COUPLES: He looked the exact same, maybe a little better, a little sharper. J.T. was way better too. We flew in on Monday and laughed a lot. Today they were pretty serious. They're ready to roll, and they're ready to go tomorrow.

Tiger is Tiger. I said it on Monday that he's not like a lot

of us where I've been injured even at age 35 and I go play just to play. He's not going to do that. He's won so many times, and he's just not a guy to go do something mediocre. He'll compete, and he'll be ready to roll.

#### Q. Mentally, you're able to play with pain, but is he somebody who can really play with pain and not let it affect him?

FRED COUPLES: He plays in lots of pain lots of times. My pain is more pain in the neck, except it's a pain in the back. It's always -- but, again, I'm 62, and I've maybe had four bad times where I've been out four to six months.

This time I didn't think it was as bad because I slipped. It wasn't a golf swing, and it wasn't a blowout where I laid in bed for four or five days. This was just I feel great. Like when I'm at home since November, I do all these little things to try and strengthen whatever it is, and then I go play golf one day and the next day it's gone.

But he's -- not from his car crash, but other little -- the car crash, it's amazing he's here. We all know that. But the pain he has sometimes is a lot more, but he's younger and you get used to the pain.

But I continue to play because I needed to. He -- I won one time after I was 38 years old. I won in Houston. If he was in the rest of our shoes, that's not something he wants to do. He doesn't want to play to play. He can play at home. He can enjoy his kids, play with them every single day and have the time of his life, but for me, I still like to play, and I go to a tournament every now and then. If I do okay, great. If I don't, okay.

#### Q. To the untrained eye, it looks like a pretty fun threesome for nine holes. Can you describe the dynamic in the group and a little bit about the conversation?

FRED COUPLES: I'm a humorous guy, and I like to tell them stories, but usually on the tees it's very quiet and I let them do their thing, and as soon as we step down the fairway there will be a story about this guy or that guy or

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me or Tiger. Then we laugh until we get to a ball.

I'm smart enough to know that I love playing with those guys. J.T. is someone I admire, and Tiger is maybe one of my best golf friends that are not on the Champions Tour. So I know not to be stupid and make them laugh while they're trying to drive it down the 11th hole. Once we step off the tee, it's all free game.

I get beat up. They make me hit last every hole, but it's fun. We play all the time, and it's nice because they only want to play nine holes. I am great with nine holes.

**Q. What was the conversation at 16 when you all three --**

FRED COUPLES: Well, we were -- (Laughter). There used to be a bank there, right? But now there's not, so you're on top of it. Tiger said, I feel like I'm going to hit this over into the crowd on a bullet. I'm going, you don't want to do that.

Sometimes it's do we want to do this or not? But the people want you to do it, so it's fun. That was that conversation, and it's always the same. Can you spin it? He stuck it right in the bank, and J.T. said he about missed the ball. Yeah, it's a fun little shot.

**Q. You've played with him in practice rounds here a number of times throughout the years. How does he look after playing these holes with him this week compared to 2018?**

FRED COUPLES: You know, what a great question. I personally think -- I really personally think he looks the exact same. I don't know if you watched any holes, but he stood over the ball, and he says watch this, and he drew it around the corner.

He hit a great iron on 12. It hit the bank and went in the water, but it was a flush iron. He knows where to aim, go over there to the left. Basically, No. 13, hooked it around the corner. He looks the exact same to me.

**Q. How do you explain that?**

FRED COUPLES: I really can't. I was on this thing on Monday, and people were asking me, and I said besides golf -- he's Tiger Woods, so I'm not worried about watching him hit a ball ever because he's the best player I've ever seen play.

It's a miraculous thing. 14 months ago I'm bawling like a baby every day, and now you pair with him and he looks strong. I know the leg is hurt, but he's driving it with J.T. Maybe J.T. today was a little more pumped

up, got him a few times, but he's hitting it plenty far enough to play this course, and he plays this course as well as he does where he's won seven or eight times, and he's won here a bunch. He knows what to do.

If nothing -- I mean, the poor guy, even if he just hits wrong, it hurts. That's why we're kind of -- when we walk, we just walk. Last thing I want to know is getting them laughing at me and him step on a sprinkler head or something, but we're all paying attention. He's a brilliant guy. He's a great player, and I think it's amazing for him to be out here.

**Q. How is the gallery when you're grouped with him?**

FRED COUPLES: On Monday I've never seen anything like it. I've been in the last group here, won here, fought on Thursdays with great -- I've never -- I came from the range through here, and I could -- I ended up going to the 1st tee through there because they were only four deep.

I have pictures that I'll probably have made up. They're not about me, it's just the gallery people have sent me, that I didn't even know you could get pictures from. You know, No. 8, No. 7 way back in the corner, and there's ten deep.

So they wanted to see the big guy, and they saw him, and they saw good golf. He gets that here all the time, but I think Monday it was -- it was unbelievable. It was unbelievable.

**Q. Once the tournament starts, how much does the adrenaline help to overcome the injury?**

FRED COUPLES: I can say it helps for anyone, especially the more powerful you are and the more of a winner you are. Like for me a little bit, I get injured, and I don't feel well, but when I was 35, I would fight as hard as I could. At 60, 55, I then just start to maneuver the ball around the course.

You can't do that here. I'm hitting drives as hard as I can, and I'm hitting a 5-iron to that green whereas ten years ago I was hitting a 7-iron or 8-iron. So it's different.

For him, he fights through all this stuff. He's pretty tough. When his back goes, that's when the golf swing gets hard, but he looks beautiful. The swing is beautiful.

**Q. Fred, do you feel like you cherish these practice rounds even more over time?**

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FRED COUPLES: Yeah, because someone was -- I've never been paired with Tiger in this tournament, but I've played maybe 20 practice rounds with him, and it's a blast.

But the bottom line is I enjoy watching him, just to watch him play. The way he hits it, the way he looks around the course, you know, some shots where he goes. A lot of times I know I missed over there and I can get it up and down, but then he's chipping from over there, and I'll watch why because he's missed the green there.

So we all miss them in the spots we think is the only way to play, so I feel like I'm helping J.T. a little bit and I'm learning from Tiger because maybe if I can get a shot saved out here, I might shoot one shot lower than I'm hoping to shoot.

**Q. It seems for you guys that this is one of your favorite parts of the week in some ways. Yeah, you want to be here for the tournament, but this is one of the great moments.**

FRED COUPLES: We enjoy it because we know it's going to be a nice nine, but tomorrow on the 18th, they're all wound up and ready to roll. We all play in the morning, so I'll be out way before them. They're both ready. They're ready to go. Enough of the dilly-dally.

**Q. How about you?**

FRED COUPLES: I'm ready to go. I'm ready to go home and rest and come out tomorrow early.

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