

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

PGA Frisco

Frisco, Texas, USA

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Jerry Kelly

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Jerry Kelly is joining us at the 83th KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship. Welcome to Fields Ranch at PGA Frisco. Have you had a chance to experience the East Course yet?

JERRY KELLY: I did. I played nine holes yesterday. I walked 18 between our Dallas and Houston events. They were nice enough to let us come out.

I've got a couple good looks. It was nice coming into nine holes yesterday actually having visually seen the golf course. It was nice to get on it and hit some shots.

Q. Earlier this year you made the weekend at THE PLAYERS. How would you summarize your 2023 so far?

JERRY KELLY: You know, just like everybody, battling injuries, trying to get healthy, trying to stay healthy. Getting stronger is something that's not really happening. It's just managing how you get weaker as you get older.

I'm not a long hitter, so it's been tough. I'm always trying to find that extra 20 in the genie bottle, and I haven't been able to rub that lantern yet.

Still my game plan is to stick with what I do, stay in my lane and hit the fairways, let my iron play and my short game work, which I think that'll do pretty well for this golf course.

I see this as a second-shot golf course completely. There's a few drives that you've got to pay attention to. I'm not going to overpower any of the trouble, so I'm in some of the wider parts and just trying to hit the fairway so I can use what sometimes is a long iron in, but still have a good iron shot out of the fairway. That's going to be the key.

Q. You talked about coming out and walking the course, which is interesting preparation. When you're at a brand new place that's new to everyone this week, what kind of edge do you try and get in learning a

place like this?

JERRY KELLY: Well, that was really key for me is being able to at least see it because then I could sit during my treadmill sessions or going to bed at night and visualize every single hole, visualize how I'd hit the shots. It was blowing about 30 that day, so I was, boy, how am I going to hit that shot or what if they have that pin. Then seeing yesterday, pretty benign conditions, it was much easier to see how you'd access those spots, but even without the wind, accessing some of these fingers out on these greens is going to be extremely difficult. It is something that you take on. It's not something that you just, oh, hit a wedge in there.

Even with 60, 70, 80, 100 yards, you are really having to pay attention, and distance control is paramount.

Q. What was your impression getting out here and seeing the new home of the PGA?

JERRY KELLY: I mean, the expanse is pretty cool. It's a cool golf course. I really like the way it meanders through on sides of the hills and using the creek beds in some of the spots.

I think they did a great job with the terrain: I think it's made for today's game, number one, with the length that they can put it at, and the way that the hole locations, the accessibility of them, especially on some of the longer holes, it is definitely made for the bomb and hit it up in the air regardless of the wind. It's a good test for us, and we're a good test for the PGA of America to see what has to happen going forward.

Q. Along with the expanse, of course there's a lot of things on the campus itself. Have you gone around and seen where the fans can go, like the two-acre putting green and the lighted golf course? Have you done any of that?

JERRY KELLY: I have not seen enough of that yet. I've seen the bar. I've seen the restaurant. It's quite a campus. From the headquarters to that TopGolf teaching bay facility over there, the range, the short course. I haven't

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

seen the lighted area yet.

But yes, I can see why they moved, to be able to create something like this on their own, and I think they did a fantastic job. It's an incredible campus.

Q. Is there anything else like it or remind you of any other place?

JERRY KELLY: Maybe Niketown. That's about it. I haven't been to apple's headquarters, but they're creating something singular in this business. It's really cool.

Q. You mentioned that length wasn't necessarily your thing off the tee, but you don't feel like that's at a premium this week; is that right?

JERRY KELLY: Talking to some of the longer hitters, they're not able to go for a lot of these par-5s, either. So anytime that length is kind of squashed, I'm sure they'll move it up in a few spots to tempt, 18, things like that, depending on the wind direction, but they're completely out of touch for me. Anything to stop them from going forward, I'm okay with.

They'll move it up most likely and give some chances, but there's a lot of penalty around those greens. If you're going to go for it, you have to have something coming in high. There's no way that you can hit something flat into these pins, into these greens on the par-5s. It's not going to be a risk-reward, it's going to be a risk, oh, look what I have left. It's not going to be easy.

I'm happy anytime I can go wedge to wedge from a lay-up spot.

Q. And you do see the potential in this place hosting a major on the regular tour?

JERRY KELLY: Oh, no question. They've got plenty of grass out there behind us that they don't even need to mow this week. I think it plays up to 8,000 if I'm not mistaken, maybe even longer. It's kind of future-proofed.

Q. I'm curious when you walked it, walked the 18 holes, because golfers have uncanny memories, you can probably recall a shot that you hit 10 years ago, did you take physical notes or did you just literally mental snapshot of every hole?

JERRY KELLY: Yeah, I stand on the tee and I see my driving lines, and then I stand in the front of the green, in the back of the green, sometimes on the sides if I want to see the depths of the bunkers and just try to soak everything in. I'm a complete visual guy.

I had a yardage book but I didn't use it. I like to use a scorecard that doesn't have the pictures so it forces me to bring back everything I have. There are a few holes, you can't remember what that was, then you go to the scorecard, okay, that was a 510-yard par-4. Now I remember that one.

I like it that way. My caddie and I, we've been working together for 17 years. I don't even carry a yardage book anymore. When I feel like it's a pin that's going to be next to something that I can see in my head, I'll look over and say, okay, where is that one.

But I leave the numbers to him. He's fantastic with numbers. He gets one mistake a year, and he did it on the first hole at Sony this year, so we got it out of the way right away, so I think we're good for the rest of the year.

Q. What did he give you at Sony?

JERRY KELLY: I can't remember. I caught it, though, which was good. And I rarely catch it because I trust him so much that I let it go. But we were in the fairway for the first time on my first shot at the Sony on 1, and I think it was the difference between about, I don't know, for me it was probably 210 to 90 or something like that. I mean, it was a pretty good amount.

Q. He was just testing you.

JERRY KELLY: I'm guessing that's probably the case. He wouldn't have let me hit it. He would have said, no, no, just kidding. But I have full trust in him. I try to keep it visual for me, have him do all the arithmetic and things that would get me out of that side of the brain, keep myself in the visual side, and try to create.

Q. And I understand you haven't played the back nine, but is there a stretch of holes on the course that kind of jumps out at you that's particularly tough or interesting?

JERRY KELLY: No, I think it's all pin placement related. I think every hole could be difficult, depending on where they put the pins.

Some of the shorter, easier holes, there are going to be some spots where they put the pins where you're going to have to shy away from the pin, and if you take it on, you're going to have bogey, double an extreme possibility.

There's a few spots where you can go back and forth all day long that sooner or later you're going to have to take that chip where you go, okay, I should have done this with

my first shot, but I'm going to chip my chip over here and chip a 20-footer and putt a 20-footer.

I'm not big on patience, and it's a patient golf course. It's hard for me to shoot away from pins. But I'm talking myself into it this week as I'm talking to you guys. I know what I need to do, and I just have to be smart.

Q. As you look at your game this year, handful of top 5s, what are you looking for in your game to maybe dial up a hair to get you a little closer?

JERRY KELLY: Yeah, I need to dial it up more than a hair. I'm on my third set of clubs this year, and I'm looking at trying even more shafts. Things are just getting a little heavy. I'm still using regular X1s at D0, so I try to make them as light as possible, but that makes them really stiff.

I don't know how I'm still able to use them, but I can still make the ball click. I can still hit it where I want. It's just that I hit my shot and I go like this and then I go down to look at the flight that it actually is. My window is up there, but my ball is coming down here.

Whether that's speed or flex, I haven't quite figured out. Speed would be weight, and flex is flex. There's some dialing that I definitely need to do, but I'd like a stretch of me being healthy and strong to actually find out and work those in instead of working something weaker in because I'm hurt, and then by the time I get healthy, they don't work. That already happened once this year.

Q. You guys are coming off a major. Your good buddy there pulled away on Sunday. As well as you know him, what do you think inside him gives him that gear to kind of separate sometimes?

JERRY KELLY: I mean, yes, you all know him as the nicest guy possible. Oh, gosh, shy. But you've talked to him in the Ryder Cup situations, and you know how this burns. This game burns in him as hard as anybody, and he's seen the other side where he had those tough years.

It put a chip on his shoulder. Hey, I think it's still there because he didn't achieve the major that I think he really should have. I still think he should be looked at for Hall of Fame, just the same way he was looked at for the captaincy of the Ryder Cup.

I think what he has done within the game and the person he is within the game, I think it warrants that look. I'm glad the PGA of America saw it that way and gave him the Ryder Cup. I thought that was really cool and very deserving.

He's basically an animal out there. He really is. We are best of friends, like brothers, and you fight hardest against your brother. We want to beat each other so bad.

But that spurs us because we're truly happy with the other person's success, too. It's a great dynamic. It's really fun. I just wish I had more wins than he did.

Q. What are some of the names on the Alfred S. Bourne trophy that stand out to you?

JERRY KELLY: Hmm. I mean, the guys who paved the way, really. Byron, Hogan, I'm going to put Snead in there, Sarazen, right up to Palmer and Nicklaus. I was really lucky enough to meet all those guys and what they meant to me, and there are a lot of more current guys who when I came out were nice enough to actually smack me around when I was doing things wrong and teach me what the PGA TOUR is about. Those guys did it by example that we grew up learning about and knowing about.

History is great. I'd like to see this generation that's out there right now, there's some great still young guys who have been out here for a long time, and I think they're good stewards of the game, and I'd like to see them really impart to those coming up, the way that those guys that we cherished being out there with, that they did for us. I put that on those guys.

Q. If you win this week, where would you put the Alfred S. Bourne trophy?

JERRY KELLY: Wow, glass case above my front door maybe. No, I don't know. I'd definitely have it somewhere close by that I could see it every day. That's for sure. That's not something that I want to go to the next tournament and forget what just happened, forget the history that was made. I would much rather see that every day and remind myself because I'm one that can get caught up in the moment, in the present, in a bad way, and I want to look at that and feel good every time I do. Somewhere close.

Q. What's the biggest challenge of facing a course like this?

JERRY KELLY: Well, there's a two-parter right there. I feel like there's not a whole lot that I haven't faced in competition. The second part is, I know there's going to be something that I have no clue what it is that I haven't faced that I'm going to face. It's not what it is, it's how you handle it.

I'm all for it coming at me. Careful what I ask for, I know, right? But it is how you handle it, not what it is.

