



# 87TH PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

## BALTUSROL GOLF CLUB

### *INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT*

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2005

An Interview With:

## BEN CURTIS

JULIUS MASON: *Ben Curtis*, ladies and gentlemen, at 3-under after the first round of the 87th *PGA Championship*.

*Ben*, let's go through your card, birdies and bogeys, and then we'll go to Q & A.

BEN CURTIS: Birdied No. 6. Hit a 6-iron out of the fairway bunker to about four feet behind the hole and made that.

JULIUS MASON: 5 or 6?

BEN CURTIS: What did I say, 6? I birdied 5.

14, hit a 9-iron in there about 12 feet right of the hole, made that.

16, hit a 3-iron in there to about a foot really, so it was a pretty easy round with the birdies.

JULIUS MASON: Easy round at *Baltusrol* (laughter).

BEN CURTIS: Everything went well today.

**Q. *Ben*, I'm sure a round like this has to make you feel ecstatic after the troubles you've had the last couple of years really trying to basically come to the interview room once in a while?**

BEN CURTIS: Yeah, I played well at Chicago, so the game is starting to come around. Other than a few holes at the *British*, I played pretty well, as well. Golf is a funny game. It can come and go at any time. I'm just trying to stay patient, work hard and just trying to stay positive and not really worry about those problems.

**Q. Three weeks off agreeing with you or what?**

BEN CURTIS: It was good. It was nice and relaxing. I needed it, get away from airplanes and hotels.

It's kind of the mid-seasoner refresh your mind -- mid-season vacation, I should say. It did a lot of good. Taking three weeks off isn't really

going to hurt your game; it's just a matter of how you feel mentally.

**Q. Did you stay home?**

BEN CURTIS: Yeah, I stayed home. Didn't move. (Laughing).

**Q. Significance of the Giants' getup?**

BEN CURTIS: Oh, just sponsored by Reebok, and I just wear all the local NFL teams. Like this week I'll wear the Jets and the *Giants*.

JULIUS MASON: Did anybody on the course notice?

BEN CURTIS: A few people, yes (laughter).

**Q. During the three-week break, what did you do? Did you practice at all or not touch the clubs or work on anything specifically?**

BEN CURTIS: I practiced a little bit. I took the first two weeks off completely, and then the second week just played every day. That was all I did.

I didn't really practice. Just for me I feel like I got in the habit of practicing too much instead of playing, so on my way home I just went out and played and had a good time, and that just seems to help me.

**Q. Still working with Hank a little bit?**

BEN CURTIS: I haven't seen him since *The Memorial*. I've just been working with Herb a little bit. Hank and Herb got in touch and they talked a little bit at the *British*. Hank is very busy obviously (laughing). I think you know.

**Q. Just talk a little bit about the rough. There's a couple holes where it looked like you were in pretty deep and managed to advance it; 7, for example, you advanced it onto the green. Was the rough problematic for you?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, it's one of those things, the ball can either sit down or stay up towards the top. The few times it did they were kind of up on top. No. 6, for example, I was like 215 to the hole, but the ball is sitting up there so I

just hit a 5-iron, tried to get a good club on it and tried to release it up to the green.

You know, the few times, like Mike today, he hit it and he had to punch out. Same with David. So it's just a matter of getting lucky or not. I think if you miss a fairway, you want to miss it big-time. You can hit it where the people are and it gets patted down. Luckily I did that on 17.

Also, too, just try to aim for the fairway bunkers if you're going to miss, and hopefully it bounced in there because from there hopefully you're able to advance it onto the green.

**Q. You mentioned a few people noticed your outfit. What were the most memorable comments about that? And more generally, what kind of comments do you hear from the gallery given sort of your burst of recognition from winning the *British*?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I think you hear all kinds of comments. It's more from the other team, somebody like that's a New York Jets fan, they're going to say something more likely than the Giants fan. They're going to say, "Come on, where's the *Jets*." When you're out there you don't hear a lot of that stuff. You kind of focus on what you're doing. If you play bad you might hear some of that stuff, but like today I didn't hear too much of it.

**Q. Can you talk about the celebrity that comes with winning a major, and at any point was that overwhelming?**

BEN CURTIS: I don't know if it was ever overwhelming, but I think it was -- it's always difficult to deal with the first time. It's kind of like being -- I was a rookie on Tour. And you can win all the tournaments in the world, but if you win a major, it can be totally different.

I just try to deal with it day-to-day and not really worry about it. Obviously it had an effect on me, but at the time it didn't feel like it. It's a great experience; you never take it back, and you just try to deal with it with the most positive attitude as you can.

**Q. I know 18 is scoring-wise playing the easiest. Are there some other holes in your eyes that you think maybe the field or even yourself, that you can have some birdie opportunities?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I think 2 and 8, if you can get the ball in the fairway, you're going to have a short iron in your hand. There's really not too many of them (laughing). If you hit the fairway, there's some run-up areas, too.

I was talking to Andy earlier in the week, my caddie, and saying if you aim right in the center of the green, if you're pin-high, you're going to have a lot of decent looks at the hole, and that's really what we tried to do. Didn't really try to attack anything too much.

As far as the course, it all depends on where you try to drive the ball.

**Q. Earlier this week we heard about there may be a stretch of holes that will tell a story for the next three days. In your mind is there a picture in that respect?**

BEN CURTIS: I mean, I think the first seven holes are probably the toughest starting holes that we'll see all year or any time in my career. I think those are the key holes. The guys that can play those the best, just because of the sheer length of them -- the fairways are not real narrow, but they're narrow enough that if you miss the fairways, I think the first seven holes are the key holes, especially for me. If I don't hit those fairways, 90 percent of the time I'm not going to be able to get it to the green. I'll be making a third approach shot.

I think for me particularly, 1 through 7 is easy.

**Q. When you did win at *Sandwich*, one of the kind of curious dynamics of it is you never slept on the lead. In hindsight, how much of that advantage was that? Also, it's very early. Are you comfortable being in the lead at a major?**

BEN CURTIS: I think obviously two years ago heading into the final round, you kind of head in under the radar because I was a rookie, but I'm not going to lose any sleep over it tonight. I'm not going to lose any sleep. There's a lot of golf, I'm going to take it one day, one shot at a time and just try to get myself in the best position for myself and try to do the best I can. If it means shooting 72 or 73, then it is, but I'm going to go out there and try to do the same thing tomorrow.

**Q. You mentioned outside there was a couple key putts for par. I just kind of wondered where that was.**

BEN CURTIS: No. 11 and 12, back to back. I think I hit a couple of bad approach shots and I could have left 1- or 2-over after those holes and still was under par. Even though the one on 11 was only like five or six feet, it was a difficult putt to read.

And then 12, I had probably like 15 or 20 feet for par. I think those were the two key holes.

---

---

**Q. What was it like standing on 17 when you've got that narrow window there and you're playing a major?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, 17 is a cool hole. Mike and I were talking, there's going to be several guys this week that are going to be able to get there I think with the wind, if the wind stays down like it is.

For me, it's just trying to get it in position where you can hit it over the bunkers in the second shot so you can hit the green in three. It's a difficult hole, and with the rough the way it is, you've just got to stay patient and have fun.

**Q. Could you elaborate on why practicing too much was bad for you?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I think I grew up, and all I did was play golf. You know, we didn't have much of a driving range. I found it easier for me to take two, three balls out on the course and hit a lot of different shots. I just played a lot on the course. I'd be hitting it good on the range and I'd take it to the course and I couldn't play. So I couldn't hit the shots that I saw on the range.

For me, you hit a lot different shots and trying to score your ball when you're playing. I just got in the habit of trying to work on the swing too much instead of just playing.

**Q. You said overwhelming is not quite the right word, but that obviously winning the *British Open* had an effect on you. Can you describe what that effect was and what it was like to live through the struggles of the last two years?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I think obviously it changed my life forever. I just tried to go out there, day by day just tried to improve and do better and be a better person each and every day.

You know, when you win a tournament like that, actually any tournament, it doesn't matter; there's added pressure on you. I think how you deal with it and how you handle yourself after you win is very key. I mean, I tried not to let anything bother me, but obviously there's stuff that does. Every golfer goes through a rough time in their career, and I went through it the last year or so, but I'm going to try to work out of it and try to stay positive. I know deep down in the long run, I'll be a better player because of that.

JULIUS MASON: Thanks for coming down.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....