



August 7, 2007



Southern Hills Country Club

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total
Yardage	464	488	451	372	653	200	384	245	374	3,631	366	173	458	537	223	413	507	358	465	3,500	7,131
Par	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	4	35	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	35	70
Score																					

An Interview With:

ERNIE ELS

KELLY ELBIN: Ernie Els, ladies and gentlemen, joining us at the 87th PGA Championship at Southern Hills Country Club. This is Ernie's 15th PGA Championship, his best finish being a tie for third in the 1995 PGA at Riviera Country Club outside of Los Angeles.

Ernie, welcome to Southern Hills. You've played nine holes and some impressions on what you've seen so far.

ERNIE ELS: I think the course is in great shape. It's very well set up, very fair. You know, it's an old, classic golf course. It's very well-bunkered. I think it will really stand up very well this week.

The rough is fairer, let's say, and you're going to have to be on your ball-striking this week, then you're going to have a good week. If you're not, you're not going to have a good week, simple as that.

KELLY ELBIN: You played in the PGA Championship in 1984 and in the U.S. Open in 2001 here; any comparison in those years compared to the nine holes you played?

ERNIE ELS: It's very similar. We've got that bermudagrass here and it's a little different than what we've had last week at Firestone. But it's a very similar type of a course where you've got to keep the ball in the fairway. You know, you're

not going to use too many drivers out there. You can, but you know, you don't have to. So basically the strategy is to get it in the fairway and then take it from there.

But yeah, I played in '94, the PGA. I just remember it was very warm back then. I played the 2001 U.S. Open; it was a little different, the U.S. Open. Also played some TOUR Championships here, so I've played the course quite a few times and seen the course in different ways of setup.

KELLY ELBIN: Open up for questions.

Q. In the past I understand some of the international players have been frustrated by the layout here, or just game hasn't been on when you've been here. Can you talk about that a little bit, and do you feel like the course doesn't suit your eye or just something in your game when you've been here?

ERNIE ELS: I'm not sure. In '94, I was kind of in contention after three rounds. I was still trailing Nick by four shots going into the final day or five shots or something like that but didn't have a good final day.

Then we played some TOUR Championship events here, which obviously we played in November. So you know, come here in November, it's a lot different than being here in August. The weather was a bit -- got a little funny every now and again.

At the end of the season, especially with my schedule in November, you get a little tired. So

I think that might have had an effect on the way I played the course and how I felt about it.

But I think it's a wonderful layout. It's a nice, classical look. You know, as I said, your strategy is to get the ball in play off the tees, and then take it from there. So I'll be trying to do that this week. And I think I've had one Top-10 finish in all of the events that I've played here. So I might have played this course five times in five events, and one Top-10 finish. So it's not something you want to write home to about. But it is what it is and I'm looking forward to this week.

Q. Since you've been on Tour, the number of international players, like yourself, has gone up dramatically. What do you attribute that to?

ERNIE ELS: There's a lot of foreign players. (Laughing) And the foreign tours out there, as I say, we are producing more talent, and the foreign tours are playing at a higher level than they have ever played. I think players like myself and players from other countries who do well around the world, you know, you go back home and you play on your home tour. I think a lot of players have boosted the players who are trying to get to where you are. They see where the game has taken you and they want to go a similar path.

I think especially back in South Africa, we have got a very healthy, young group of players, and they all want to become stars and they all want to, you know, become No. 1 in the world, whatever their goals are. And they want to, you know, basically get out here.

I think a lot of players are jumping college. They don't go to college like a lot of the foreign players used to go to, and basically turning pro. They start out playing in Asia or in Europe, and then eventually they come out here and they do it on a much more regular basis than, say, in the early '90s.

Q. Just to follow up on that, are there any particular challenges or anything like that that an international player encounters here in America that an American might not?

ERNIE ELS: Oh, absolutely. I mean, you're not in your home country. You're not sleeping in your bed. You're thousands of miles away from your family. There's a lot of sacrifices you have to give up.

A lot of players get to a certain stage and then they don't like it and go back home. That's also the case. There's a huge sacrifice; your whole life, you change your whole life trying to come out here and play in a foreign land. You know, it's a wonderful dream, it's something that you want to do, but some players don't like it; some players can't cope with it. You know, it's not the easiest thing in the world, but if that's your dream, you follow that. You know, some of us are lucky enough to be able to do that.

Q. You've had some outstanding rounds in major championships this season, I'm not going to say you haven't closed well, but do you feel like you are not back to the point where you were before the knee injury where you were really on top of your game?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I'm working on it obviously. Somewhere there's been a bit of a dip in confidence and it's been tough to get it back to the level where I want to get it back to. At times, as you say, I've played some wonderful rounds of golf, but I haven't quite closed the deal, so to speak, in a lot of the tournaments.

Seems like I've been on better form outside of the U.S.; don't ask me why. I've always enjoyed playing over here in the U.S., but for some reason, it's not quite happening for me at the moment. At the moment I'm striking the ball really well, I struck it really well last week in Akron; just found it a bit difficult on the greens here and there.

But, you know, I'm playing good golf. You know, I feel like I'm striking it well, and I'm just trying to enjoy it a bit more. You know, the British Open, it was very close call for me. On paper I was two shots away, but I was right there in the mix of things, and as you say, I didn't quite close it. The back nine, made some mistakes and, you know, didn't quite roll in the putts the way I wanted to.

But I've got to take positives out of all those and take it to this week. It's my final chance of winning a major, and I know it will be very, very difficult, but I just want to try and give myself a chance.

Q. We have three first-time major winners this year, can you recall how much that helped you or how that changed your outlook on majors, when you won your first

major, all the difference it makes confidence-wise?

ERNIE ELS: It takes all of the pressure off. I won my first major when I was 24 years old, and you know, just took a lot of pressure off, but also added a lot of other stuff, you know, because now you're 24, you almost feel like you need to prove to people that it wasn't a fluke.

So for a good period after that win, you know, I felt like, hey, I've got to show people this is not just a flash in the pan kind of a thing. But I had a really good year that '94 year. It basically took the pressure off and added a lot of confidence to my game.

So you know, you basically can't win a major early enough nowadays.

Q. The last ten years or so, the number of international players on the PGA Tour and Nationwide Tours has really increased. Could you give me your thoughts on why that might have happened?

ERNIE ELS: You obviously came in a bit late. (Laughter) But I'll try and do it again for your sake --

Q. No, no, never mind.

ERNIE ELS: Are you okay? All right. Thanks. (Laughing).

Q. 25 years ago, Ray Floyd fired a 63 out here for a course record and that record still stands a quarter of a century later. Can you see anybody going that low this tournament? Is that record going to survive this week?

ERNIE ELS: Well, if I could have seen into the future, I would have gone to Vegas and put a bet on it or something maybe.

No, you know, I think it's got a good chance of being equalled this week. I played nine holes yesterday, and I think the course is in unbelievable shape. The greens are perfect. With this heat, they have got to keep the greens quite soft, I would imagine.

So a guy that hits fairways, puts himself in position, he can start attacking some of these flags. So I would think that, you know, with today's equipment and today's athletes, I think it's got a good chance.

We'll have to wait and see, but it's amazing that in, as you said, 25 years, it has not been

broken. But it just shows you the class of the golf course. With any kind of equipment, you've still got to get it in the fairway and from there you've got to get on the green and then in the hole. So this is why this is such a great golf course; you know, it's stood up to the test of equipment; and I think that's a sign of a great layout.

KELLY ELBIN: Ernie, do you go into a major championship thinking in terms of a certain number; if you get to this number, you have a decent chance?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, you obviously want to give yourself a chance on the final day, so if you can be three, four shots behind going to the lead, if you're not in the lead, I think you've got a great chance, and normally that's around par. I think this week it will be a couple of shots under par. I think 4-, 5-, 6-under might lead through three rounds, and anything can happen on Sunday.

So that's all you can hope for.

KELLY ELBIN: Thank you very much.

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