



May 23, 2007



The Ocean Course ~ Kiawah Island

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total
Yardage	394	535	390	458	185	450	537	170	425	3,545	439	562	428	445	194	421	540	197	430	3,656	7,201
Par	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	3	4	36	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	3	4	36	72
Score																					

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

HALE IRWIN

KELLY ELBIN: Hale Irwin, ladies and gentlemen. Joining us at the 68th Senior PGA Championship at the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Resort. Four time Senior PGA Championship. Winner most recently in 2004 and a member of the 1991 *Ryder Cup* team here at the Ocean Course. Hale, welcome back. Thoughts on playing the golf course twice, both the pro-am yesterday and earlier today.

HALE IRWIN: Two different golf courses. What we saw yesterday was relatively benign, compared to today. I was out very early this morning. In fact, I was the first one out off the No. 1 tee. And a bit surprising how it was blowing then and it's certainly picked up over the last several hours, the last nine holes in particular those holes coming into the clubhouse are playing very, very difficult.

So I think what I've tried to tell everybody is that in previous years having played here in the *Ryder Cup* as we mentioned and in the UBS Warburg Cup, when it was here in 2001 or whenever it was, those are match play events, folks. Now you got to retrieve your pellet and play it and put a score down. And that becomes more difficult.

So it's a whole different mindset how you play, how you prepare to play this course may be similar, but it really is different in the end, because you have to see your ball all the way into the hole this time. And in match play you're out there slashing away and you can give it up and only lose

one hole. But out here you slash away and you can lose your life. It's a far different preparation, believe me.

KELLY ELBIN: Questions?

Q. Having been part of that '91 team could you remind us maybe how harrowing an event that was for the competitors? I mean, it was great drama and TV, obviously, but how difficult was this course and how hard was it to play in that situation?

HALE IRWIN: Well, as we all recollect it was a very new golf course. I don't think it had been open very long at all prior to playing.

KELLY ELBIN: A couple months.

HALE IRWIN: Yeah. And we were really kind of the first folks on the course. It was very raw. You had a fairway that you had a little bit of scruffy grass and sand. Then you had Pete's delights out there. And there's been some modifications, certainly some addition of those I don't know what to call those bunkers, they're not even bunkers, they're holes, up lifted holes.

And I think it was, trying to go back 16 years and find every little nook and cranny of grass was difficult, but I would say that you probably have more areas in which to play now than you did then, because some of some of it has been softened, some of it has been modified, grass has grown into some areas. However, with the addition of some of the bunkering that has taken place here, that advantage, if you wish, has been quickly taken away.

17 is still over water.

The 18th hole, while it may be different, it's very similar to the old 18th hole.

There's the grass on the greens, the

paspalum is a much different surface than what we have had. We don't see paspalum much at all. So it's -- we see it in Hawaii, but other than that, we, it's a new surface.

Depending upon what happens with the wind, as you can see any hard by the sea golf course it's affected by wind and any different direction, it could manufacture some scores that will be unbelievably high. If the wind gets up from what it is now. It's pretty stout now. And I don't know where the committee's going to place all the holes and tee locations, but I'm sure they're not going to be for the people that are going to be wanting them elsewhere, they're probably going to put them in the championship location, which they should. But it's a tough course.

Q. Mark O'Meara was in here a little while ago saying that he remembered being around the 18th green, that Bernhard's final putt and wishing that -- he was empathizing that anyone be put in that kind of situation. As somebody who was there as well, I mean, how, was that a relief, was it, you know, a mixture of joy and relief? To kind of see that win this tournament, yet see what you guys have to go through to get there?

HALE IRWIN: I wonder how many that question has been asked of me and I just cannot answer it. From the perspective that it gave great drama to the event, to the *Ryder Cup*, to the television audience, to the viewing galleries, it was tremendous to have it come down to literally the last shot.

Would anyone want to be put in that position? I think there's probably not a player on either team that wouldn't accept that challenge. And if they didn't, then they shouldn't be on the team.

Empathy is one thing, wanting to put yourself in that position, you kind of hope to say, you know, that's why I play golf. I look for that. I want those. Now for me I've done what damage I could, I'm just sort of like everybody else. I'm watching. The only thing is, and I said this many times, is that in some of the practice rounds I had here before the team arrived I had noticed that the grain on that 18th green was stronger back to front than it was any other green on the golf course.

And at a team meeting I mentioned that. I said, if you have a putt at 18 just remember that that grain is stronger than you think. And that's what I was thinking when he was over the putt. Was I hoping he would make it? Of course not. But there was little I could do about it. But I was wondering if he knew what I thought I knew. And

he did not. Because he said that many times he hit the putt he wanted to the way he wanted to and he just missed it.

But if there was somebody who was level enough to accept what happened it was Bernhard, as witnessed by him going to Germany, because I went with him the next week and he won that event over there. So he's the kind of guy that can shake that kind of stuff off and not let it bother him.

But if there was anyone that didn't want to putt that, then I wouldn't want them on my team. And you might say fortunately or unfortunately it was somebody that was not known for great putting. But when you hit a putt the way you want to, it's a little left to doubt then.

Q. I don't want to say at your advanced age now, but clearly at this point in your career how do you look at events like this and just playing on the *Champions Tour* versus how you looked at these type of events when you were on the *PGA TOUR*?

HALE IRWIN: That's a pretty big question.

Q. You're big enough to answer it.

HALE IRWIN: Well, these kinds of events certainly draw greater attention as witnessed by the preparation by the players, the highlighting on calendars and all that playing in and around these events to try and get your game ready. So that hasn't changed any from day one. Whether it be this TOUR or the Regular Tour. They still are highlights, very big highlights on anybody's schedule.

Having not played in that many events over the last several years on the Regular Tour, I'm pretty well separated from that environment. Not so much that you don't understand what's going on over there. And do I miss it? Of course. You miss playing against some of the best players in the world. But you've got some of those players that are playing here that are still very much could be a factor as witnessed by what *Fred Funk* has done, winning on the Regular Tour this year and playing over here.

There's probably a handful of guys eight, ten, 12, whatever you want to call it, if they really put their minds to it and want to play on the Regular Tour probably could play over there and play relatively well. And what well is, I don't know. Call it making cuts or making money or whatever it is.

But there's just things that change in your life. The intensity level changes. We have seen *Jay Haas* for instance, what a making the *Ryder*

Cup the last time around did, how well he's played. It's all possible. Just what you want to do to make it possible. And a lot of times that intensity level and that tunnel vision is lacking a bit. Because your children are grown, they're out of the house, you have other things in your life you want to do. You have business opportunities, whatever it is. It makes it a little different.

So this event is certainly one of the better events and one that I look forward to every year. Is it bigger and better than the week before and the week after? Well, yeah. Simply because it's elevated in press teeing and prize money and golf course preparation and quality of field. You name it. So I am looking forward to it in a big way. And returning to Kiawah, really is very exciting. Did I answer that?

Q. Good enough for me.

HALE IRWIN: Sorry?

Q. Good enough for me.

HALE IRWIN: Okay.

Q. I'll be interested to know when you said before, if there are any elements of your game that you would say were stronger now than they were when you were playing on the Regular Tour in terms of your sort of mental an approach to shots that you play now and just how you view that.

HALE IRWIN: A lot of -- I don't know as there's any particular part of my game that clearly out shines itself from now to 20 years ago. I think that my overall game probably is just as good as it's ever been. Maybe I drive the ball a little less accurately than I did. But maybe I drive it farther. I like to think my iron game is pretty much the same.

If it comes down to any one part, it's not so much an execution of the golf swing, it's probably in how quickly I used to be able to, if I made a bad swing, how quickly I could correct that swing. I find that that's harder to do now, just simply because my mind just doesn't stay on focus the way it used to. A lot of success is just your focus. And many players here in this field are, can still get very focused, but can they get focused over a 72 hole event like they did 30 years ago, that's the question.

And it's not necessarily physical stamina, at least I don't feel like for myself. I feel like I work out and I'm, I think I'm in good shape. But I think a lot of times it's just maintaining that dimension of focus over a 18 hole round of golf and four days in succession. Versus kind of letting it go and an accepting something else.

It's just, that's the hardest part, is staying at that level all the time. And when you're younger it's easier to do, because you have less outside interests, less conflicts, really. So it's actually harder to do now and easier to do then.

Q. Following up sort of on what was just asked, you among the players on the Champions Tour have been perhaps the most successful at maintaining a level of excellence throughout the career. A lot of those guys have come in and they're great for four or five years and then you can sort of see the numbers, it tails off after about 55, 56, you seem to be able to defy that. What's your secret, I guess?

HALE IRWIN: I'm not going to tell you the secret. Well, if I really knew what that secret was, I would perhaps go write a book and sell a bunch. But I'll have to go back to a little talk I had a couple of weeks ago to a bunch of university students that I told them successful people have the will to prepare. I think I've been blessed with the will to prepare. Whether it be working on my game or working out to try and stay physically ahead of the declining curve. I'm willing to do that.

I'm willing to recognize what I can and can't do each given day and not say, well, I did this yesterday, therefore it must be good today. I'm willing to learn, willing to listen to new ways to do things. I don't feel like I've ever really accomplished in golf what I felt like I was capable of.

But that's not to say -- I'm not satisfied. I think that's, I've never been clearly satisfied that that is the best I can do. And I think that's kept me going. It's kept me pushing and now maybe it was as good as I could do, but I just didn't want to accept that that was the best I could do. And I think that's part of it. It's kind of a long windy answer to a short question, perhaps, but I don't feel that there's an end of the road right now.

And I'm going right from here I'm going to go over to the trailer and work out. I'm trying to keep myself physically and mentally fit to compete at this level. The difference between being 50 years old and 55 and nearly 62 is enormous. It's not like 20 and 32. As some of us in the room can understand.

So I think that as you get older those years decline, your physical deterioration becomes more precipitous. And so I'm just trying to keep up and stay up and I enjoy the competition. I enjoy what I do. And it's a constant challenge. And I love that challenge.

Q. If I could follow-up, obviously you talk about working out in the trailer, working out, that's the physical part. Talk about the mental part. What do you do to keep sharp that way?

HALE IRWIN: Well it's hard to tell. What I try to do to keep physically or mentally, what do I try to do mentally? If you accept the fact that you know it all you're never going to learn. And I have stated many times and more often to myself than not that I still have a lot to learn in golf. I go out on that practice tee and I can watch guys hit balls and try to learn something every day. And to incorporate some of the things they may do in their games, which will help mine.

And the one good part about now and some reference to the question earlier was I think I can make some adaptations more now, more quickly better more efficiently than perhaps I could 20, 30 years ago. Because the experience and what I've seen and what I've tried and I can go in and out of that. And, well, the flip side of that is maybe you go in and out too much. So there's good to both sides. And I'm always one that's very positive. I like to think of my cup is half full and getting fuller. That's just the way I operate. And that too is part of that quest to be as good as I can possibly be.

Q. Apologize if somebody already talked to you about the wind and all. But we know that physically that can have a physical affect on your golf game. Mentally how much does it factor into what you have to process when it's blowing like this?

HALE IRWIN: Well when it's blowing like this I couldn't hear all of your question necessarily, but I think when it's blowing preparation that we had yesterday is sort of halfway out the window today and depending upon what happens tomorrow it may completely and it's dragging behind you in the car.

This is the kind of course that if we have a wind reversal, which we saw -- during the **Ryder Cup** it blew four different directions during the week. So there was nothing that was the same. And when you play a course like the Ocean Course, or you play in wind that can shift, you have to have a lift and shift mental tee. You have to have flexibility in your game. You have to have been there, done that, experienced this.

And that's why I think that the players that will most likely play the best are the players that are going to have great experience and great patience this week. And that's not a commodity

that's shared by everybody. Some people are just more patient, some people are more flexible and can make those adjustments more quickly. It's not necessarily on this course how many great shots you hit, it's how many poor shots you don't hit. Which is sort of a negative, but you know this kind of wind and this golf course it kind of puts you on your back side a little bit when you have to try and maintain that even keel and accept the fact that you are going to have some problems, but you're going to have some opportunities as well.

KELLY ELBIN: With the variances of the winds could we very easily see a winner over par come Sunday evening?

HALE IRWIN: Go ask Kerry Haigh, where, again, I go back to how is the course going to play. You know, those holes coming in 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, not too long ago were pretty stout. And playing where we had the tees and even with the forward hole locations which sometimes are some of the hardest, but at 17, I tried to hit a hybrid and was on the front edge with each one. I would have had to hit a full bore 3-wood or metal 3-wood to get to the green.

18, very much the same. Andy Bean who clearly is along player had to hit a 3-iron to 18 today.

So it's going to be playing, if they put the hole on those tee locations, even with forward hole locations, if the holes go back another 10 or 20 yards, just add another club or two to that. So I don't know. **Kerry Haigh** said yesterday that the depending upon how the wind blows so will the tee and hole locations be placed.

Q. Some players have been in here saying that maybe the equipment modifications have been made this week to try to help kind of suit this course. Have you done anything like that?

HALE IRWIN: What kind of modifications?

Q. Equipment.

HALE IRWIN: Oh, equipment. No. No. As I told Phil, I'm dancing with the bag I brought. The only changes I would make is in a hybrid versus a fairway metal. Instead of a driver, 3-wood, 4-wood, I would hit driver, 3-wood, hybrid. Simply that a 4-wood gets it a little higher, the hybrid bores it just a little bit more. I hit them, without any wind, I hit them about the same. But one's got a little more spin and a little higher, I don't want it up high this week. I want it down as much as I can get it. So that would be the only thing. But that's a week to week change anyway.

KELLY ELBIN: Questions?
HALE IRWIN: Done? Okay. Thank you.
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