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AN INTERVIEW WITH:

PAUL AZINGER

KELLY ELBIN: 1993 PGA Champion and 2008 U.S. Ryder Cup team captain and now noted author, Paul Azinger joining us at the 71st Senior PGA Championship at Colorado Golf Club. Paul, this is your debut in the Senior PGA Championship. Welcome. You had a chance to play Colorado Golf Club a little bit in the last few days. Some thoughts, please.

PAUL AZINGER: Well, it's absolutely beautiful. It's pretty easy to see that. I'm pretty impressed with Crenshaw's ability as an architect. You can just tell that he has an artist's hand. It's difficult. The green complexes really from 11 on are pretty difficult. Not to suggest that there aren't some tough ones on the front nine as well, I think it's -- but it's just beautiful to look at. I'm glad to be here.

KELLY ELBIN: This is your fifth Champions Tour event. What's the experience been like so far being out with the Champions Tour guys?

PAUL AZINGER: Yeah, I haven't played well so it's been frustrating. So I haven't been prepared either. I haven't really prepared or practiced properly, I don't feel. But this week I'm a little more prepared. Although coming in I had only really played nine holes since Savannah until Monday. But I did work on my game a little bit.

So I've had a lot of time off, really in the last couple three years as the Ryder Cup captain I really just didn't focus much on my game and didn't care about it. I'm trying to decide how much I still care. I mean, really, to be honest with you I want to be competitive, but wanting it and working for it are two different things.

KELLY ELBIN: Open it up for questions.

Q. How difficult is it to adjust to the elevation here? I'm sure you're hitting some different clubs than normal.

PAUL AZINGER: Well, you just huff and puff. I huff and puff just walking up the hill to get to the driving range. So I don't know how you adjust to it. I'm prone to getting shin splints sometimes. Even when I was playing Augusta in my prime in my late 20, early 30, I could get shin splints walking around the hills there at Augusta and it's just something you deal with. I don't know how you adjust to it, you just do it. I think if I was going to adjust to it I would have worked out before I got here, but I'm not doing a whole lot of working out right now.

Q. How about the club selection?

PAUL AZINGER: Oh, club selection, I'm just giving the club selection 10 percent. I'm trying to actually figure out a way to do it just quicker. 10 percent to the front, minus the grade or plus the grade, whatever it is uphill, downhill, and then add the pin. And then just figure the wind.

I want to do it, I want to -- yesterday I thought we had a formula that got it done really quickly so that I wouldn't be a burden and slow play on the group. I played Denver, I played The International probably five times. You can look in the book. But I didn't hit 10 shots pin high in the five times I played there. And so I always struggled with the altitude.

Yesterday even in the wind I hit it pin high quite a bit. So whatever I did differently, I did it, I was doing it right. That's the key. In altitude and when there's elevation change, if it's a 15 yard drop, the trick is being able to hit pin high. The best players week in week out are controlling their distance and that's not only do you have to hit it straight, but that's a big challenge here.

Q. One of the things that strikes me about this golf course is kind of the fun's really just starting when the ball hits the ground in a lot of cases. It's firm, it's not something you can necessarily just fly the ball to the hole on. And the golf course seems to support a lot of different styles of play. A lot of shot making options. Can you talk about that a little bit?

PAUL AZINGER: The greens hold, which is going to make it pretty fair, I feel. But you're right, but then again Crenshaw's ability as an architect, you look at the first hole, if you kill your drive on the first hole and get it creeping over that hill, you can get it on that green. And there's a lot of architects that would have that hill running away from the putting surface, but Ben's actually got the hill feeding to the putting surface. So I think it's very fair in that regard.

The severity are on the greens, I think in spots you're going to be wondering what the heck happened here, but Ben's just got this touch, he's an artist with his words as well. You've all talked to him. It's just a pleasure to hear him talk. And you can see his hand on this golf course. I think the bounces for the most part will be fair bounces. If you play it right, you can feed the ball to the hole here.

Q. You talk about preparation and being prepared. Has the level of competition out here on the Champions Tour surprised you or pretty much what you expected? You see now Champions Tour players really contending on the PGA TOUR as well.

PAUL AZINGER: I agree. I'm not surprised. I watched the scores the last six months before I turned 50 and I was thinking, all right, they're shooting scores like that, you know I've been doing that at home. I know the scores are good. I know Fred Couples is 77-under for 12 rounds and I know that Watson shot 23-under and Forsman shot 20 something under in Birmingham which is a really good golf course.

So I look at these older players and I think that what's different about them? I know them all. I have known them almost all of them my whole professional career. I just think I look at them and I think they have all kind of figured it out really as to how to hit the ball. It's just who has the most desire and who practices the hardest and in the end the only real difference is that it probably don't hit it maybe as far. But most of them do hit it as far because of technology or even farther.

But when you've been at it this long and I guess we have all kind of figured out how to hit the ball by now and it's a pleasure to watch the ball striking out here. You can hear the sound of the impact. There's not a lot of guys hitting it where it sounds like a bag of nickels, clank, you know, it sounds good.

Look at Langer, he's sitting right there, that guy he's just as thorough as he's ever been and he knows what he's doing. He's been at it. You ever read *Outliers*, the 10,000 hour theory, well you got to believe that if you believe in the 10,000 hours, as is what makes you an outlier then you got figure that most of these guys have put in 15 or 20,000 hours in their career. So they're *Outliers* times two.

KELLY ELBIN: Talk for a minute about your new endeavor with *Cracking the Code*. I understand it's in its second printing. You obviously must be pleased.

PAUL AZINGER: I'm happy. *Outliers*, actually, I mean the *Cracking the Code* actually technically releases in June, although we did a launch on May 18th at Valhalla. The story is really just it's just an inside look at how we created an environment that we thought would be the best for these players to be successful. We used an outside the box approach to team building by my believing that 12 is too big a number to bond as two weeks as a team. You don't have weeks and weeks to prepare as a team. But I believe that using the Navy Seals militaristic approach to team building, which is taking a large group and breaking them into small groups was the best way for them to prepare.

And we tell that story as well as telling how the selection process was changed in the book and just really my belief that what a captain could do is create the best environment possible for the players. And it just carries you along. It's not an instruction manual. I use Myers Briggs and personality profiling on the players and green light, caution light, red light scenarios within their little groups.

We empowered them, gave them ownership and the book just carries you along and tells you the story. It tells you how I communicated with players according to their personalities and it's kind of a relationship story, I'm proud of it. I micromanaged every word in that book. If anything comes out controversial, it was meant to be there. And there's not much of that though.

But I'm happy with the book. It actually made it to No. 1 on Amazon and it made the No. 2 on Amazon most sold business books. So it has cross over appeal. And I think golfers are going to love it. I think it will make a great Father's Day gift for anybody who plays golf. It's a short book, it's an hour and a half read. And the pictures are terrific.

So I'm proud of it, and I'm happy that things have gone the way they have so far. And we're early into it. But it just, it just carries you along and tells you the story of how this whole thing unfolded.

Q. A follow-up to your thoughts there on the book, is there a way that you can go out now and expand to the business community based on what you have put together and see that work in the business community?

PAUL AZINGER: Oh it, definitely, Cracking the Code is as -- it isn't that we invented a code, Cracking the Code is really just taking long-used principles to team building and getting the most out of employees and people and it was applied to golf on this massive stage. And we took business principles that have already existed and we applied it to an event. A golf event. And the belief was that relationships trumped assets. That was the main philosophy. Small groups was better than a big group and that relationships trumped assets was my belief.

And so we put players together based on like personalities, having used personalities to really identify tendencies. And identifying the way players processed information. We felt like players who processed information and had similar tendencies in a pressure cooker like the Ryder Cup when things weren't going well they would bond. Where when you have personalities that are red light type personalities, and they get in a pressure situation and things get difficult they end up walking down opposite sides of the fairways.

So that was the belief and really the winning and losing at that level is razor thin. I said this before. It's like in Vegas you only have a one percent edge. So what can a captain do? I can't hit a shot. I can only try to create an environment that would get them to, just shove them to that right side of the edge if I could.

And I never had a job in my life so for me to be talking about business principles is pretty interesting. But for me to also be able to pull all that together by surrounding myself with smart people and people that could help me, and then

watch the application work, that really, in the end, I mean the credit all belongs to the players. They did -- they hit the shots. I mean they were the ones who were losing sleep at night and trying to eat their meals with knowing this. I never eat well when there's a lot of stress or pressure on me. And the pressure's on them to do it. All I could do was create an environment and get out of the way. And I believed in doing it this way. We still could have lost. I mean it was close. Closer than the final score, so.

(Laughter.)

Q. Did you have a sense that what you were trying to get through you were successful in doing that perhaps even before a ball was hit on Friday? Or did you need to see obviously the results and the scoreboard to validate something?

PAUL AZINGER: What I knew was that we had a bunch of guys that were sold out for each other. And they had become a family even before the matches started. You could see it. They bonded in their little four man groups. The message for the week was there was no shortcut to success. That you couldn't hope for it or wish for it, that it was about preparation. And you all know that, that's why you're here, you're great at preparing, you're great at what you do. And this week you're going to prepare in your four man pod. And you're going to have a philosophy and a strategy on how you want to play this course.

And they had been given ownership and empowered within their groups and they even told me who they wanted to go out in their four man pod in alternate shot, in best ball.

But to say that I had a sense that we were going to win, I never talked about winning or losing ever. It wasn't about that for me. It was about preparation and embracing the crowd. And I wanted them to show off for the crowd. And so winning and losing wasn't even that -- of course it's the end all, but I didn't think about that. I just thought about are these guys bonded, and have they prepared properly. That was all that really mattered to me. And then it was up to them to play great.

They were -- I didn't ask them what they were thinking or didn't tell them how to think, I just wanted them to work at what they were doing in preparation and they did it and bonded. And in little small groups. So the result, I was nervous as

all get out, I can tell you that. I was really nervous on Friday morning. Maybe the most nervous I've ever been. But I had let go of the reins on Monday night. I felt like I micromanaged up until Monday night when I delivered the message to the team. We cut limbs late in the day for J.B. Holmes that he thought might be in his way, but once Monday night was over, it's up to you now, it's done.

I did everything that I could to create what I thought would be a best environment for you guys and I didn't say now it's up to you, but that's the way I felt. I can't hit a shot. It was up to them. They deserve the credit. I created an environment that I thought was right.

Some captains create the great environment and they lose. Some captains brag about not doing anything. Some captains are drunk every night and they win. So.

(Laughter.)

I mean, honestly, there's only so much you can do.

(Laughter.)

KELLY ELBIN: Did you feel that they bought in right away to the to what you presented to them.

PAUL AZINGER: They did. They bought in pretty quickly. Mickelson was the key to me and if you are I can was a real key and Cink was a real key. And I thought Justin Leonard was a real key. And so individually I called them after they made the team and I just sold them on this idea of that I had watched this Navy Seals documentary and I sold them on the idea of breaking them into small teams and I told them all that they had been observed and their personalities were identified and that we were using green light, caution light, red light scenarios and I told them all that up front.

I told them that I wanted them to bond in their groups and prepare together and they all really embraced it. Those four guys had been on winning teams and well, lately losing teams, especially Cink and Furyk and Mickelson. And they had grown a bit tired of it, I'm sure, and I think this outside the box approach for them was engaging to them. And it got them invested early in the whole process and they're bright, those are three bright guys and they really were intrigued by the whole idea of it. So that was good.

It was a sales pitch, but it didn't take a lot for those three to really embrace it. If one or two of the three of them didn't embrace the concept, then I probably would have abandoned it. But they loved it.

KELLY ELBIN: Paul Azinger, thank you very much.

PAUL AZINGER: Thanks for your time.

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