

May 26, 2010



AN INTERVIEW WITH:

HALE IRWIN

KELLY ELBIN: We would like to welcome Hale Irwin to the interview room here at the 71st Senior PGA Championship at Colorado Golf Club. Four-time Senior PGA Champion. With those four victories, Hale is second all time to Sam Snead with number of Senior PGA Championship victories. Also Hale nice to, I'm sure, to be back in Colorado Golf Club where a few days ago you were an all-conference safety at the University of Colorado.

HALE IRWIN: A few days, yeah.

KELLY ELBIN: What does it mean to you to come back and play in this state and also initial impressions of the golf course, please.

HALE IRWIN: Well as always it's great to come back to Colorado where I have many friends and family still. The golf I always felt is a part of the tremendous sports scene here in Colorado. With the universities we have in the state and of course the professional teams here in Denver. I always felt that professional golf should be a part of our permanent landscape here because it's a very supportive community for golf.

So there's a few years ago when we were down in Colorado Springs the Broadmoor and that was terrific. Back here and then the Denver area here is great stuff.

The championship here is I think going to prove to be a very difficult venue. There will be no doubt about that. The golf course is playing difficult. Who is the weatherman here? Who is going to tell us what the weather is going to do? If we have winds like we had on Monday it will be impossible to play. If we have winds like yesterday it will be very difficult to play. Today it's not too bad. So hopefully we'll have more days like today.

But it's a very challenging course and a new venue to very many of us and not that familiar since Monday got winded out for most everybody. And those that did get to play in the pro-am yesterday. So it's sort of a grab bag out there as we speak now with a lot of guys comparing notes and wondering where to go and what to do and trying to pick up all the nuances, it's not that easy to do. So I think we'll be challenged. There will be probably, if the weather stays constant one way or another, it will probably be better scoring towards the end of the week, simply because the players will know the golf course better.

KELLY ELBIN: You have two Top-10 finishes on the Champions Tour this year. How do you feel about your game coming in?

HALE IRWIN: Let's say it's improving. The last several years have not been very good. Frankly, I've just played terrible. But I have as always many of us that have ever played this game you're always looking for that special club, the secret shot, the pathway to success that only you know. And we all look for it, when it basically comes down to good fundamentals and good mental judgment. And I've been pretty shy on all of those fronts here of late. I'm starting to make some inroads. I think I'm getting back a little bit more to the things I want to do with my swing and of the approach to playing.

Much like today, the way I really mentally geared up I'm going to see my nine month old granddaughter this afternoon. So it's not like I'm putting in a lot of practice. But part of it too I think is after all these years there's just physically so much that my body can put up with. Between a few issues in the back that I've had and sort of manifesting themselves now in my hip and I got some tennis elbow. So after awhile you just think, hitting balls is just, I've done that, been there, done that. Do I really, how many more do I need to hit? I really kind of need to refresh the brain and if that's working, then my game will work. So that's

what we're trying to do. Go talk to the nine month old this afternoon and get a lesson.

(Laughter.)

KELLY ELBIN: Great. Thanks. Open it up for questions.

Q. I think I probably know the answer to that, but I got to ask. Do you think you can win?

HALE IRWIN: Yes. I've been shooting some better scores of late. And I'm hitting the shots. It's not as if I'm not capable. I'm not hitting them as frequently as I need to, but I am hitting them. And I'm not going to draw an exact analogy but sort of a parallel is back in 1989 I just finished the '86, '87, '88 and '89 years and just played terrible. At the end of 1989 I sat down with a legal pad and I wrote down the tournaments up to that date that I had won. And I put down remarks. Positive remarks. What was I thinking that week that led, helped lead to a win. And I went through those things. Whether it was a swing thought or whatever it was.

And I sort of have done that, not literally done that again, but I've sort of taken stock in what I'm trying to do, what I've been doing, what do I need to do. And I can sort of feel that same sort of momentum change that I had in 1990.

So as the year 2010, some 20 years later, is it going to be the same kind of a summer? I don't know. But, yes, I feel capable of winning. Will I? That I don't know. But I'm hitting good golf shots, I'm doing what I am still capable of doing, I'm just -- the emphasis on the game probably has changed simply because the emphasis in my life has changed. Now I'm nearly 65, it's a lot different than when you're 25. You just have different things.

My brother's grandson is down here, and 20 years ago he wouldn't even be born. So you're talking about different things in your life that are important. Going to see your granddaughter, I didn't have one of those until nine months ago. So even though my daughter has got two boys, things change. And golf is part of that scenario, part of that landscape, but it's not the only thing in that landscape.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record Hale opened with 68s the first two rounds of the Regions Charity Classic two weeks ago.

HALE IRWIN: And then on Sunday, if you have to count a double bogey and a triple bogey in your score you tend not to shoot too low. It was a 72.

KELLY ELBIN: Not bad.

Q. You got here I guess a little earlier than most players. Is that due to the fact that it's a new course, is it due to maybe a reenergized Hale Irwin or is it due to CHECK coming back to Colorado or maybe a little bit of all three?

HALE IRWIN: Um-hum. I was here last Thursday and Friday. I came in Thursday morning and left Friday evening. Because I wanted to see the course before all of this. And I knew Monday would be a little hectic coming in and trying to get settled and that. And of course its wind just kind of blew any plans out of playing golf.

So I was very fortunate that I got two rounds in where I got see the course before the circus starts. Because I knew there would be family, I knew there would be friends, I knew there would be things that when you come back to a place you grew up and is very near and dear to you that things are just different. And that is the primary reason.

So I got my look in last week as well as the pro-am, I got nine holes in this morning and that's enough. I don't need to walk up-and-down these hills at this altitude and -- I've hit a shot out there thousands of times somewhere in the world. There's not a shot out there that I haven't played somewhere. So it's just a trying to remember where the, how to connect the dots.

Q. Ben Crenshaw was asked just a little while ago what kind of player, what was the composite player that he thought this course would favor. And it was a someone whose got a good strong all around game. And as he was describing it I couldn't help but think of you a little bit.

HALE IRWIN: A little bit.

Q. And watching the pro-am yesterday, it seems that any of a number of styles of play could be successful and could be snake bitten out there. Do you think that the course supports -- that this course broadens the field or narrows it?

HALE IRWIN: Any Major Championship I think narrows the field. Simply because there's just that more emphasis on exactness. Our tolerances tighten up a little bit. The anxiety level ratchets up just a little bit. So I think that it narrows

the field.

Now this golf course itself, who does it favor? Well if you're taking a guy that's hitting the ball very long, and at this altitude you'll have the long players proportionately that much longer than the rest of us. It really shortens that golf course for them.

But if you don't hit it in the fairway you hit it in the wrong spot or a spot on the green you negated that advantage.

So the advantage always goes to the guy that hits it long. The advantage always goes to the guy that's making every three pointer. It's always go to the guy that hits the 60 yard pass every time. So that's always there.

Now for the rest of us, you have to keep picking away at that. You can't let the long ball influence you. You have to keep it a steady game and I think it's going to probably favor the guy that hits a lot of fairways here, because you're going to have to have your iron game under control.

We don't know where those hole locations will be because we have no history where they might be we're all guessing and there's obvious places for them. But like the 11th hole, we're debating, is that flag going to go up on left. If it does where is the tee going to go, because if it's back there -- and then you start this debate and so you really got to basically just say, I can't worry about all that. I can't worry about Dan and Fred and the guys that can bomb it out there, I got to worry about me popcorning it out there and putting it on the green when I have opportunities.

But I think it encourages the overall game simply because the greens are not easy to putt. You have to have a lot of imagination around the greens. And so therefore it puts an exactness on your iron game, therefore puts some exactness on the driving, because you got to put it in the fairway.

Q. With your background here in Colorado how comfortable are you with playing at altitude and how do you kind of go through that in your head before you hit a shot?

HALE IRWIN: I'm probably not as far behind the eight ball as other players, because of having had some memories here. But mind you those memories are over 40 years ago. I've been on the TOUR 42 years now and much of that has been out of the state of Colorado.

So a number of the players that live in Utah and some of the guys that live here in Denver, Mark Wiebe, Bill Loeffler, Dale, they're used to playing at altitude. So it's not a mystery to

those of us that play regularly, have played regularly throughout our careers at altitude. Because you kind of have a formula. I know when I come here I have a percentage deduction that I use. And so I can convert those yardages. And it's pretty true. Because I played enough.

But these guys at the professional level, it's not like pot luck. They have it down. They're not going to be out there playing blind. So is there an advantage? No. The advantage will probably come to those of us that have done more walking instead of riding. Because when you come up eight or I mean 18 or No. 9, you kind of looking for the air bag there. Where is the oxygen? That's what's the most difficult part I think right now is for those that are not accustomed to walking and climbing these hills at altitude, that will be a challenge.

Q. How much of a different feel does this week have, given it's the first Major, does it, is that, is it any different for you or how do you, any different approach, any different thoughts?

HALE IRWIN: Oh, well, much of that was precipitated to kind of precede your answer or the -- that's why I came in Thursday, to kind of get some of this settled. My game settled. So I would be available for the off course demands, if you wish.

With my brother up in the area here and his family, my son up in Golden with his family, and my daughter's coming in from St. Louis with her family. And with a birthday next week and people wanting to kind of do a little preliminary celebration. And, oh, there's a golf tournament.

So that's why. So there is some, it's a good distraction, don't get me wrong. I enjoy it. But it is part of the formula that you have to build in. And would I trade it? No. I enjoy the heck out of it.

Q. How many people do you actually have here coming here to watch you play or to socialize?

HALE IRWIN: How many?

Q. Any clue?

HALE IRWIN: No, my brother is here today with a friend. And then Houston is here. There was another gentleman I've known out there for years and years and years. My attorney from

Boulder and his wife are coming in, they live in Boulder. So I couldn't tell you. Honestly, what I'm going to have to do is do this starting tomorrow (Indicating) is just look straight ahead, put the blinders on and then take them off when I finish.

Q. Is the ninth month old talking already?

HALE IRWIN: Oh, I'm talking to her, so I presume she's talking back, yeah.
(Laughter.) She's a cutie.

Q. So back to the altitude. So my father-in-law comes in from Jersey, loves it here --

HALE IRWIN: Is this a story?

Q. No, it's a question. He hits it farther due to the altitude. When you guys come back to altitude is there any part of you that's like the average regular golfer who loves to see your drive go 20, 30, 40 yards further than it normally does?

HALE IRWIN: Yeah, until I go play with the other guys and they go a little farther and then you get deflated real quickly.

I think the first day or two you, it takes a little bit of adjustment, but again I go back to the formula that I have is I use anywhere from a five to a 10 percent reduction in whatever that yardage is. Some players, and I use Dan Forsman because he hits the ball quite high and he hits it quite long. Because he keeps it in the air a long time he may use more than that. So every player has to kind of find their own percentage. If you're a lower trajectory player you're not going to have quite the carry. The air's thinner so the ball will drop. The higher you hit it the more it's going to stay up in the air and go.

So you have to find your own level. But these players are accustomed to it. I think those of that more recently played down the Broadmoor are a little bit more familiar with it. But those who come out from Jersey, or from the east and have never played at altitude, they're going to have a, they're going to have some adjustments. There are going to be some shots that you hit that go, wow, how did it go that far? Well it's because you're at a mile high.

Q. You referenced this a little at the beginning, but Colorado used to be a regular stop on the PGA TOUR. Do you feel it would be

beneficial or important for the PGA to have a regular stop back in Colorado?

HALE IRWIN: Well I will be selfish and say the PGA TOUR/Champions Tour should be here. Now whether the PGA of America goes, I doubt they're going to be here on a regular basis. But any tournament here would be fantastic. The International was a wonderful event. I think we should be here in this land. I think it's such a sports mecca, Colorado is. Winter, summer sports are terrific.

And they're well supported. It's documented. All you have to do is look at the number of championships won around here and I think golf should be part of that landscape. And I would do whatever I could to courage that. And in fact I'm sort of working in the background on that. So no announcements to be made, obviously, but we're very encouraged to try and solicit some interest in it. So we'll see.

Q. Let's do the one football/golf question. And I want to ask it this way: When you were playing could you imagine any football player calling clipping or holding on himself and why is there that code in golf where you would call it?

HALE IRWIN: Why is there a code?

Q. Yeah. And that dichotomy. Could you imagine somebody in football calling clipping?

HALE IRWIN: I don't think you have to go very far away and if you watch any of the NBA games it's kind of football on boards. That separates us from other sports. Simply because it's impossible to go out there and govern every shot. It's impossible for every referee or field judge to make every play on, so they don't see it.

So with the way we're spread out and the history of our game, the intent of the game, I would say we have done a more than excellent job in policing ourselves and keeping the integrity of the game intact. Sure there have been some instances. But for the most part it's a very straightforward, we follow the rules. It's more than that.

But you're right, I have yet to see a football player go to the ref and say, I'm sorry, but I was holding that guy, throw the flag. Oh, I just hit his elbow on the shot. I didn't mean to, but. No.

I think that's why the game we have is to

interesting because I think human nature wants to succeed. But we have to reign in that success over the integrity of the end result.

Q. And that attitude in other sports would be considered in my opinion naive.

HALE IRWIN: I can't hear you.

Q. That attitude in other sports other professional sports might be considered naive or Pollyanish.

HALE IRWIN: Fine. They think what they want. I've played both. I've played out there and I gouged and I've been gouged. I kicked and I've been kicked. But I haven't done it off the course.

But you'll find in almost every other athlete will migrate to golf some time in their life and they find out what it's like. Interesting if we could take those clowns in Washington and put them on the golf course and make them have to show their dirty laundry and not hide behind some committee then I think we would get some things done in this country. Put them out there with a couple of military people.

Q. Forgive me if this was asked. Is this going to be an endurance test? We have got the rarified air that a lot of guys aren't use to and you got the elevation changes and maybe the fighting the wind when they're walking and that. Will it favor the less senior seniors?

HALE IRWIN: Do I fall into that? The less senior seniors? Well, it will favor those that kind of keep their head on straight and have led a less than sinful life.

(Laughter.) I think those players that have kept themselves reasonably in condition, have walked more than they have ridden. It has to, physically, over the course of four days, favor those people.

Now will one of those players emerge? I don't know. Will it favor Fred Couples walking up-and-down these hills? How is that going to do on his back? I don't know, he did pretty well at Augusta. Tom Watson, his new hip? He's done pretty well too. So and Tom's not so young a senior anymore. I think that it's kind of doing away with all that because everybody is going to be here for three or four days they will start getting their air, start settling down, start knowing what they can do and it will become still the talent search. It basically comes down to who is playing the best.

KELLY ELBIN: Hale Irwin, thank you very much.

HALE IRWIN: Thank you.

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