

World Golf Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony

Monday, April 20 2020

Tim Finchem

Greg McLaughlin

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, and good morning to everyone joining us today. My name is Brittany Wynne, and I'm a senior communications manager at the World Golf Hall of Fame. Thank you for your participation today as we honor former PGA TOUR Commissioner Tim Finchem for being selected as part of the Class of 2021. Before we open it up for questions, I would like to first introduce the CEO of World Golf Foundation Greg McLaughlin.

GREG McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Brittany. Good afternoon, and thank all of you for joining our Hall of Fame teleconference with 2021 inductee Tim Finchem. On behalf of the Hall of Fame, we hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy as they work through the coronavirus, and hoping for an end very soon, as well.

Tim will join the 2021 class that will include Marion Hollins and Tiger Woods. Tiger was announced on the 11th of March representing the male competitor category. Tim was selected in the contributor category, as was Marion. Tim as an administrator, and Marion as a golf architect.

Tim joins an illustrious group of other administrators that included Judy Bell, Deane Beman, Sir Michael Bonallack, William Campbell, Joe Dye, Clifford Roberts, 2019 inductee Billy Payne, and Ken Schofield. We'll be announcing a female competitor category on Wednesday morning, and there will be a media conference at 1:00 that afternoon. Some details will be made available on Wednesday during that release.

I'd like to thank the 26 individuals that comprise the nominating committee as well as the 20 individuals that attended the actual selection committee meeting that was held at the TPC Sawgrass on Wednesday of this year at THE PLAYERS Championship. Each of the four inductees received at least 75 percent or more of the votes by the selection committee.

Lastly, the date and location of the 2021 ceremony has not been finalized yet. As soon as that is made available, we'll be sure to release it to the media.

Turning your attention to today's media conference, Tim, on behalf of the Hall of Fame and its board and members, congratulations on your selection and certainly this well-deserved honor. You were notified on March 11th. That's been some 44 days ago. And now it's been made public. Quite a unique situation as far as that goes, but we would just love to have you maybe share your initial thoughts and then we'll open it up for questions.

TIM FINCHEM: Well, thank you. Yeah, March 11th, I think interesting with what's going on in our country right now and actually around the world and the challenges we have, I'm sure not many people spent much time thinking about the World Golf Hall of Fame during that period, and I'm certainly in that category, because we had so many, many challenges.

But I am delighted and candidly humbled by the recognition. As I think you know, I've been heavily involved in the Hall of Fame and with the other golf organizations for a good number of years, and one of the great things about that is being able to meet, get to know the inductees who perhaps I didn't know from other aspects of my job over the years, and it's a tremendous list of people.

To be included in that group is very powerful, and I want to certainly thank those that thought that I was deserving of it. I kind of in many ways don't feel like I am deserving because I just had so much fun being in the job for so long. It was absolutely captivating for me year after year after year.

I'm delighted to be here today and hoping to answer hopefully any questions that folks on the line have.

Q. What is the single one thing, one thing, that you're most proud of in your 22 years? And secondly, I wonder if you could share the first time you recall ever meeting Tiger face-to-face.

TIM FINCHEM: Regarding the first question, I thought during that period that I was pleased with the progress that was made overall with the PGA TOUR in all aspects of it. But for that to happen, there had to be a way to harness the enthusiasm and excitement of the players, sponsors in a way that could allow the TOUR to continue to grow and prosper. There were real challenges in making that happen, and one of the most

rewarding things, to answer your question, probably the most rewarding thing, was the extent to which, as we developed new directions and concepts, the extent to which players -- the vast majority of players, vast majority of our sponsors, our television partners, et cetera, and the other golf organizations, which developing more working relationships with the other golf organizations was always a priority, and as those things moved forward, looking back, I'm proud of the way our team went about it and certainly proud of the results.

With respect to Tiger, I was in Alabama -- I'm trying to recall all this. We were doing some work on perhaps playing some tournaments with a couple of sponsors in Alabama. There was a dinner function -- it's a little vague for me. It goes back a ways. And it was just coincidental, but there was a golf tournament the week I was up there for those meetings, and it was an NCAA tournament, and Tiger was there representing Stanford. That's when we were introduced.

I think the next time I was introduced to him or I spent time with him was after he came out on the TOUR. But that's how I first met him.

Q. You mentioned during your opening that obviously there's been a lot of challenges. I'm just wondering, considering the challenges that Jay Monahan has now, can you tell me if you in your own mind think you had anything close to the similar challenge as what's going on now with the virus?

TIM FINCHEM: It's very different than what our challenges were. I can't tell you how many people in the last three weeks or months have come up to me and said, would you like to be commissioner now. The answer is yes, because that's what you like to do, and I loved doing it. But no, Jay, has a unique -- is dealing with a unique set of circumstances. And when I say that, and I think what clearly makes it unique and makes it difficult is that it's just all new territory. It's all new -- trying to figure out how you can play sports competitions, and this applies to any of the major sports to some extent, and analyze the options that you have and the information that you need to get to make good decisions and the outreach you have to perform to make sure that the constituencies that you have are knowledgeable about kind of the directions you're going. It's a whole other workload level, and to my way of looking at it, very tricky.

I think Jay thus far has done a fabulous job. He is, as you know, a superb communicator, and he is going about it with his team in a way that is spectacular in my view.

I think if you tried to compare it, I just don't think the challenges that we had are in the same ballpark of what he's dealing with.

Q. I know maybe one of your biggest challenges was after the financial crisis, and actually Jay talked about that, as well, the ability to switch around and try to deal with what was your sponsors and potential sponsors. Could you just talk about how hard that can be just in a place where you obviously have guideposts versus the situation Jay has where he has no guideposts?

TIM FINCHEM: Yeah. Well, we get a lot of credit for what happened during that period with the downturn and after 9/11. It wasn't really -- it wasn't really all that difficult in the sense that we were successful in coming up with a strategy. The key was that -- the thrust we had was we want to come out of this better off than when we went into it; how do we get there. One of the things we found during that period was that when you get into that serious of a recession, a lot of companies start to cut back. You're seeing it now, actually. 22 million people are unemployed right now, new unemployed. But companies want to cut back. In doing the cutbacks, they don't want to fire people if they can avoid it. Sometimes it's not possible. But during my tenure, I watched companies get much more sophisticated in analyzing the value that they get from, in our case, the involvement with the PGA TOUR. It would be the same with MLB or NFL.

But the analysis, the quality of the analysis that they did was night and day from what it had been in years prior, and that was to our advantage because when a company analyzed and really got into the weeds on the value they were getting, the PGA TOUR came across very positively. The combination of being able to generate value for sponsor guests and affiliate relationships was an obvious one, if you take the time to analyze it carefully.

I think our team did a great job in saying, okay, take us and compare it to every other sport. You're going to do some sports programming. You're going to do some sports marketing. Compare us to every other sport. And when they did that, we came out ahead, and we were able to salvage a lot of what was going down, going south as we got into it. So that was very helpful.

To what's going on now, though, as I said earlier, it's much more -- it's a different set of thinking that you have to get into, and again, I think Jay is doing a fabulous job with it.

Q. Of all the things that you pushed through in your 22 years, FedExCup, World Golf Championships, obviously the First Tee, was there

one thing that was the toughest sell for you but still turned out to be successful? Out of all those initiatives and all those things that you tried, because I know you often said if you're not moving forward you're standing still, but of all those things was there anything in particular that you called upon all your skills as a negotiator, debater? What was the toughest thing to get across or past all the constituencies that you dealt with?

TIM FINCHEM: Yeah, I don't think any one thing stands out. I think generally when you make change, change creates problems and questions with constituencies. When you change the schedule, change the kind of tournaments you have, change the size of the fields, create, expend resources into building tours overseas, all those things generate pushback when you bring them forward initially, and you have to educate the folks that need to learn about and agree, and you have to bring them on. I think it's fairly consistent human nature set of challenges that come with that. I don't think there's any one thing. Our job, and certainly Jay has taken it to another level already, is constantly analyze where are the weaknesses, constantly analyze where are the possibilities, think big, take it to the next level, and if you follow that course and you've got smart people to work with, you can make things happen, and that certainly was the case with us.

Q. I know that you talk to Jay from time to time. I'm wondering how much, if any, he's leaned on you over the course of the last six, eight weeks just to get your thoughts on the pulse of what's happening.

TIM FINCHEM: He hasn't leaned on me much at all. I mean, early on we had a couple conversations about what was happening. From time to time he'll share with me what direction he's going. But given what I said earlier, given the load that he's dealing with, when you're kind of forced -- it's kind of difficult to avoid working in the dark a little bit when you have so many variables sitting out there. He's got to spend an enormous percentage of his time in those areas, and he's got a great team. Some of that team was inherited from the time I was doing the job, but it's a terrific team which he has strengthened considerably even in these last three years, and that makes all the difference in the world. It doesn't make his job -- I wouldn't suggest it makes his job any easier. It makes the ability to deal with issues more realistic, and certainly that's the course he's followed.

He lived about 100 yards from me, so if he wanted to talk to me about something, he knows I'm available. But he's got to steer the ship. He's got a million things going on, and I'm quite aware of that.

I am frustrated by but excited about trying to get my

golf game together, so I don't go around looking for things to do, except for the First Tee, which I spend a fair amount of time on these days.

Q. The First Tee is one of your good initiatives, one of many. I'm wondering just as a brief follow-up, unrelated, \$2 billion in charity was raised under your tenure. Just wondering how much of a source of pride that is? Obviously you're not doing that in a vacuum with the tournaments and so forth raising that money, but where does that fall in the satisfaction category for you?

TIM FINCHEM: Well, I would say near the top. I think we learned a lesson years back that if you -- and let me just take you to the example of Byron Nelson tournament down in Texas, which was for years the leading generator for charity year after year. And then some other tournaments really started to take a look at that and really start working on being in that range.

It's interesting what develops there, and it's true right here with THE PLAYERS Championship; when you hit at THE PLAYERS the \$3 million number or a \$4 million number or a \$6 million number, an \$8 million number, that gets the attention of the community, and when you have the attention of the community, it gives you more flexibility to do more stuff, get more stuff done, raise more money and continue to grow.

One of the things that Deane, my predecessor, worked on for years and really set the basis for was taking that up the chart. And once we got going up the chart, then it just multiplies on itself.

Going from \$30 or \$40 million a year to \$200 million a year and on, the more focus it gets, the more the message to the community that, hey, we're not here to take your money, we're here to help your charities and help people, whether it be First Tee, whether it be hospitals, whether it be -- whatever the set of charitable beneficiaries are. And the more they understand that, the more they come forward and want to help out, companies, local businesses, and that's been -- just to watch that grow in that direction the way it has, it's just terrific to watch.

And here again, Jay has gone ahead and taken it to other levels already and is on a path. I told Jay when he took the job that he was committing to at least 20 years. We all expect him to have at least 20 years, and I hope that is the case, but what will now occur under his leadership and is occurring is going to be, in my view, mindblowing. To me it's also a great symbol to the other sports, and I think we'll see more of the other sports continue to grow in those areas, as well.

Q. If you go back to early days, '94 when you

started, was there any player that you got nervous talking to?

TIM FINCHEM: '94? No, I can't ever remember being nervous. I might be annoyed with a couple. We had a couple issues come up. But overall, I have to say that the players, starting when I got involved well before '94, were great to work with and very few difficulties overall. You had your occasional issues, but our sport is blessed by having such a high percentage -- the other thing about your question is today -- over the last, let's say, 20 years, 10 years even, the maturity of young players coming to the TOUR is significantly enhanced over years and years ago. Their sophistication in knowing the business of the TOUR -- and I think it comes from their education in golf as youngsters. They just continue to morph. And then in '96 with Golf Channel coming on board, with Tiger coming on board and drawing people, I think it created a real enthusiasm for these young guys to really understand.

And when they understand, then they participate in a very positive way. And that's a very high percentage today.

But I don't recall a particular thing that I was worried with, although obviously had some disagreements from time to time.

Q. Going back to Tiger for a minute, I recall Davis and a bunch of other players talking about what it was like at Firestone during the U.S. Amateur when Tiger was making his big run, of players kind of in the locker room watching TV, maybe thinking, when is he going to get out here. Do you recall any of that? Do you recall being around --

TIM FINCHEM: Very well, because he was playing a U.S. Amateur here, I think, that year. So I go up to Akron on the Sunday, and we give out the trophy and everything, and then I go in to the locker room, and all the TOUR players are gathered around the television, and they're watching Tiger Woods play in the Amateur. I've never seen TOUR players interested in watching any other golf on a day they were finishing a tournament in time to get out of town. It was amazing to me that this kid generated that level of focus.

I mean, it was the beginning of sort of understanding the Tiger Woods phenomenon, which later on -- I mean, three years later, he wins the Masters, and in those days, they had a dinner -- Augusta National had a dinner for members, and there were five or six of us who weren't members were invited to come to this dinner to celebrate the champion.

So we go in and we sit down for dinner, I look up, there's like 90 green coats lined up all through the tables, lined up with their menu cards to get Tiger

Woods to sign -- to get his signature. It was a phenomenon. And ever since then, it's been the same thing. You constantly see it.

I mean, a few weeks ago, a few months ago, watching the U.S. Open tennis, and the winner of the semis is -- what's that player's name from Spain?

Q. Rafa?

TIM FINCHEM: Yeah, he's being interviewed after winning the semis, and he's talking about Tiger being in the stadium watching the tennis. This is what he wanted to talk about.

One more comment on Tiger. There was some magazine that ranked me in the top 10 or 20 powerful people in sports one year. Obviously a lousy magazine. But people called me to say, what do you think. Well, I'm not -- you know, the person that's the most powerful person in sports is Tiger Woods, and they said, what do you mean by that. I said, well, I'll give you an example. If I wanted to convey something, we're building a tournament in Tokyo or something, I wanted to convey some information, I'd have to spend a week getting people charged up figuring out some communications, who are the people we have to go to to get this message across, this, that and the other. Tiger Woods doesn't have to do any of that. Tiger Woods, all he has to do is issue a little statement, and his name is on it, Tiger Woods, everybody in the world knows about it. And to me, that's real power. That is real power.

I don't know how you would compare him as an athlete with anybody from any sport in terms of how people -- ever since back in that point you raised, '94, when he came on the scene, '96, '97. I've just never seen it in sports. It was incredible.

Q. Well, along those lines, it's almost fitting that you guys go into Hall of Fame together next year, but I'd be curious, have you ever thought, and if you haven't, could you do it now, how your job would have been different if he'd have played tennis instead of golf?

TIM FINCHEM: Yeah. Well, it would have been a much more difficult job. I was watching last night that series on Michael Jordan, which by the way if you haven't seen it, I'd recommend it to you. But it was interesting that they were -- it was very, very well done, and it talked about how Michael Jordan standing out the way he did took that franchise to a whole other level, which he did. And Tiger coming on the scene and generating the interest he generated took our sport to another level.

Yeah, there's no question in my mind that his -- and it

continues on to today, clearly, without question. His impact is ongoing. It's just unique and great, and as a sport we were blessed that he didn't like tennis that much. (Laughs.)

Q. Who are you going to have present you, and what mementos will you leave to the Hall of Fame?

TIM FINCHEM: I don't know who's going to -- I actually haven't spent much time on it because of all this other stuff that affects all families today, wherever you live. So I haven't thought about that too much.

What was the second part of your question?

Q. What mementos will you leave to the Hall of Fame?

TIM FINCHEM: Well, I've got some good ones. I've got probably photographs and photographs. I've got a great one. And I'm not going to tell you what it is. But I will put it in the Hall of Fame and challenge you to go read it.

I'll tell you what it is without telling you what it says. It's a letter to me from Arnold Palmer, and it's one of the coolest things that I have in my office. That will be definitely -- and it's fun, too. But that'll definitely be part of what I leave down there. And then there will be other stuff. It'll be light.

They're not putting me in the Hall of Fame because I played golf great, so we don't have to worry about that part of it. It'll be more about people that I've dealt with.

I'll give you one example. So I always think about -- not always, but on a regular basis, it just occurs to me how lucky I was to come along at a time that allowed me to get to know Gene Sarazen, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, and then 100 other players. I mean, that to me is just -- I was just lucky, I guess. Every one of those people, just phenomenal people, and very interesting people.

Q. What's your fondest memory of the Hall of Fame's opening in 1998?

TIM FINCHEM: Well, I think just the sense that it was real and that it was impactful. You know, Hall of Fame was open, but we had Hall-of-Famers who had gone into -- previously PGA of America had Hall of Fame for a while and then we offered to take it off our hands and make it bigger, which they were great partners in doing. But that day, it just felt like this makes sense; this is going to work, this is meaningful. The players who are going to get recognized, administrators who are going to get recognized are going to really enjoy it for the rest of their lives. It got to you pretty good, and so did all of the inductions since.

Q. You mentioned administrators there. Do you think administrators should be honored in the Hall of Fame, and if so, why?

TIM FINCHEM: I'm not going to comment on that now, but when I speak at the induction, I will comment on it. I'm not trying to be cagey, but I'd just prefer to do it that way.