

Ernie Els

*What went right with your game, and what went right with the golf course to put you in this position?*

It's all about managing your game, managing your game through the golf course. I've played it quite a few times now, and I enjoy it. The greens were a little bit softer so I felt like if you're really on your game you can get a good score, and I felt like I did that. I didn't hit too many close shots, but I made some good putts, then on the par-5s I was able to get up and down for birdie so it was a good day.

*You're looking for your first major on the PGA Tour Champions, you're in great position, you look like your game is firing on all cylinders, what do you work on for the rest of the day to maintain throughout the weekend?*

Well it's a pretty nice walk out there for us old guys, so I'll do my thing. I've got some new shafts on my irons that I put on last week, I'm getting used to that so I'll hit a couple of shots. Then I'll just chill out and relax, and then go back and get ready for tomorrow.

*Another solid round, you made a big jump today, what was working for you out there?*

I just managed myself around the course well. I hit some shorter clubs off the tee to make sure I got it in the fairway, then the greens are putting beautifully and I made some putts, so it was a nice day to stay in it. I felt like guys were going to shoot low today because of the rain we had last night so I wanted to get it somewhere in the 60s and that's what we did.

*You already have one win this season at the Hoag Classic, you're looking for your first major on The Champions Tour so what does that look like going into the weekend with the confidence you have headed into it?*

I've got a kind of a new set in my bag, my clubs have new shafts and I'm getting used to them but it feels good. I've been playing a lot of golf lately so I know where my game is. I just want to get out there and do as best as I can, I'm in contention, and that is all you can ask for.

*Why did you change your shafts now?*

I've been thinking about it for a while, and then two weeks ago I started working on it and getting them into the bag, that's fully fledged, every club is changed now. It's a little lighter shaft, I've been playing 140-range shafts and I went down to a little lighter shaft, I'm getting older.

*This is only your second time at the Regions Tradition, right?*

Third. I've played here well in the past, I've finished top-10s but (Steve) Stricker kind of ran away with it the two times I was here.

*Does it still feel new to you because there are so many unique holes?*

Yeah it's a really good golf course. It's a really good walk, too. They've really got the course in great shape this year, it's the best I've seen it since I've been here. That's all you can really ask

for. The course really fits my eye, as you hear a lot of people say, on a lot of holes. I don't have to put the power on everything out there, you can play positional golf also.

*Did the rain overnight change the golf course?*

Yeah, definitely. The fairways are a little bit more receptive, and the greens are also. It was nice to have an early tee time this morning. The course is in great shape, it's good golf so we're going to keep going low over the weekend.