

FEBRUARY 12, 2010

INTERVIEW WITH RONNIE BLACK

SPEAKER: Well, Ronnie, thanks for joining us.

RONNIE BLACK: Always appreciate it.

SPEAKER: Pretty strong 69 considering the elements out there.

RONNIE BLACK: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Maybe before we get started, maybe just talk about the conditions.

RONNIE BLACK: I had an advantage because I got out early obviously, when the wind was probably only blowing 15 or 20 miles an hour. What is the number that it's at right now, do we know, like 45, 40?

SPEAKER: Close to 40.

RONNIE BLACK: Close to 40? I played seven or eight holes with just 15 or 20 miles an hour winds, so the first three groups obviously had the best tee time. Actually, now that they're pulled off the golf course, maybe the wind will die down later in the afternoon and they can have an advantage.

SPEAKER: It's supposed to get worse.

RONNIE BLACK: It's supposed to get worse?

SPEAKER: Rain.

RONNIE BLACK: So maybe they'll finish today?

SPEAKER: Well, there's rain headed this way,

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too.

RONNIE BLACK: Well, if it rains, it will slow the greens down and maybe they can go back out.

SPEAKER: That's what our weather guy's saying.

RONNIE BLACK: I played in a tournament on the

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PGA Tour in Las Vegas where they stopped play because the ball was blowing off the green, but that's the only time I remember. I didn't play at Pebble Beach in the U.S. Open when it happened.

SPEAKER: Okay. Do you want to go through your birdies real quick? You had four --

RONNIE BLACK: Well, I'll have to have some help probably.

SPEAKER: The first one was on number 3, the par 5.

RONNIE BLACK: It's just two good shots just short of the green, chipped it up close. Actually, I hit that lousy chip and made a 12-foot putt.

SPEAKER: And then number 4 or number 5, the par 4?

RONNIE BLACK: Number 5, I hit a really nice drive and hit a really good second shot right below the hole and made about a 10-foot putt.

SPEAKER: Do you remember your second?

RONNIE BLACK: I had wedge in there. They

moved the tee up one because it was a little tough wind, they moved the tee up one so it played a little short.

SPEAKER: And then the par 5 again?

RONNIE BLACK: The par 5 again, I chipped it -- I hit a nice drive and hit a hybrid right by the green and chipped it about two and a half, three feet.

SPEAKER: And then number 8?

RONNIE BLACK: Number 8 was a birdie?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

RONNIE BLACK: I hit another really nice drive and pitched it about six, seven feet.

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SPEAKER: And then a bogey at 11.

RONNIE BLACK: Actually, I made -- I don't know if it's number 9 or number 10, I can't remember the holes, I think it's number 10, I drove it in the water. I hit it in the water, hit 3 wood and hit it in the water anyway. It was from not having enough practice rounds. I played in the pro-am, I didn't play a practice round, so I kind of hit the wrong club off the tee. Then I hit a really nice second shot and maybe about a 15-, 18-footer for par. So that was the high point of the round probably. Felt like an eagle actually, but it was just a par.

SPEAKER: And then 11.

RONNIE BLACK: 11, I hit two nice shots and

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that was kind of the hole that made everybody stop. The wind was so fast from front to back, it was very surprising. I was trying to lag it up there and it went four, four-and-a-half feet past and I missed -- I hit a really good short putt, it just didn't go in. That was my first bogey. It was very depressing to have that bogey after making par out of the water the hole before.

SPEAKER: And you birdied number 11, par 5.

RONNIE BLACK: Yeah, that was when the wind was really howling at that point and I hit a 9 iron to about 15 feet, pin height right, and made a very nice putt. It was a tough wind and it was just a really crisply-hit putt.

SPEAKER: And then number 15, the par 3.

RONNIE BLACK: Number 15 I made the best swing of the day and my 4 iron just kind of didn't -- it went so straight through the wind. I played a little bit of

wind and it just went off the edge of the green and I putted it again. It was downwind and it just wouldn't stop, it went about four feet, four-and-a-half feet by. That was not a very good putt. All the other putts that I missed, I actually hit pretty good putts, but that one, I hit a bad put. I three-putted from the edge of the fringe from not very far for my only bogey, so I shouldn't have had a bogey today after getting up and  
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down from the water.

SPEAKER: Questions?

SPEAKER: Ronnie, this course is a newer course (inaudible.) Just kind of your impression of the course minus the wind relative to some of the other stops on tour?

RONNIE BLACK: Some of the tightest fairways that we play, that I've ever played. The golf course, the second shots into the greens are very nice. The course is in nice condition. I like this Paspalum grass to play off of, it's good.

SPEAKER: So the tight lines don't scare you?

RONNIE BLACK: Yeah, it does. These are probably the tightest fairways I've ever played. Hitting shots downwind on the driving range with a sand wedge, you've got to hit it, you've got to clip it. So yeah, it is a definite thing you have to be paying attention to. It's going to reward the guys that are hitting it crisp, hitting it solid.

SPEAKER: Do you find it a nice change of pace to some of the easier venues you guys play, a little more of a challenge?

RONNIE BLACK: Actually, I think given benign

or normal conditions, you'll see some very low scores here. All the par 5s are reachable. There's not a lot of trouble off the tees. You can always bail out somewhere. So if we had benign wind weather conditions, especially if it doesn't rain where there's a little run, you'll see some 63s and 64s, I believe.

SPEAKER: What's going through your mind when you see the wind come up and know where you're sitting at?

RONNIE BLACK: I'm trying to stay in the moment, I don't want to get too far out in front, but I'm realizing how difficult it is and how the wind's only probably going to get harder. If the wind's blowing really tough at 10:00, chances are at 2:00 it's really going to be howling. So I knew that I had a good round going, I knew that I was going to be fairly close to the leader. I will be surprised if 69 holds up unless the wind just stays this bad.

SPEAKER: I heard you talking on The Golf Channel about experience playing in --

RONNIE BLACK: Yeah, I played a lot in the wind. I live in Tucson now, I've lived in Arizona for a long time and so I don't get a lot of practice there. The wind blows very, very little out there, but it blows everywhere when we travel. The wind blows a lot where we play. We play in Florida a lot, the Dominican. I've been playing the PGA Tour in Puerto Rico for the last couple years and the wind's blowing every bit this hard there. So it's better for me, the harder the wind blows, the better it is for me.

SPEAKER: The key to dealing with the wind, the

right mechanics or the right mentality?

RONNIE BLACK: A little bit of both. Got to hit it solid, got to understand how to do it, you've got to be able to release the club. You've got to be able to, you know, know which way your ball's going, right to left, you know, draws and fades.

SPEAKER: Minus the wind, what's the most challenging hole you faced out here today?

RONNIE BLACK: Out here today minus the wind? I don't want to minus the wind, you can't minus the wind. The two par 3s on the back side right into the wind were pretty difficult. Number 11 is very difficult because of the split fairway. I haven't played it enough to know, I didn't know where I could fit my driver. I couldn't see well enough, so I laid up with a hybrid and had a 9 iron, and the pin position was so tough because it was kind of down grain, downwind and that was kind of a tough hole because of the wind. But I think the par 3s are probably the toughest holes out here.

SPEAKER: What's the mental side of dealing with wind like this?

RONNIE BLACK: Hitting the ball solid, play one shot at a time and understanding your game and you're going to have to hit a couple chip shots, you're going to have to get up and down a couple times, and you're going to have to make some five- and six-footers. In this wind, unless you're just really, really sharp, you're going to have to hole a couple par putts.

SPEAKER: Assuming these conditions maintain for the weekend, where are you thinking the score is

will take to win this event?

RONNIE BLACK: You know, I think if the wind keeps blowing this much, they'll have to slow the greens down a little bit. If they slow the greens down a little bit, then the scores will be able to still shoot under par.

SPEAKER: What about when the wind's blowing and it's gusting and you have to commit yourself to hit a shot and not back off?

RONNIE BLACK: I backed off a couple times today. I do a lot better when I don't, but the wind level changed dramatically a couple times when I was standing over the ball. I didn't have much choice but to back off.

SPEAKER: For the guys that have to go back out there --

RONNIE BLACK: I hope they do.

SPEAKER: Your thoughts, though, on being in here already and not having to worry about, am I going to go back out there, am I going to have to play again?

RONNIE BLACK: Yeah, when they blew it, I thought because of a rain storm coming. So I'm thinking, if a rain storm comes and it will probably make the greens softer and the wind will die down and this last shot I'm going to hit is going to be a lot easier shot. But I just thought it would be such an advantage to get the round over with and get the score in, and I'm really glad that I went ahead and finished.

SPEAKER: What's it like as a player having to deal with delays? You guys do it --

RONNIE BLACK: Yeah.

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SPEAKER: What do you have to do to mentally  
keep it going out there?

RONNIE BLACK: Well, you know, we've done this  
so long. I mean, we're the old guys and we've done this  
so long, so many times, it's really kind of old hat and  
I know how to hit an 8 iron. I don't have to -- just  
because I go sit in the locker room for a little while,  
I'm still not going to forget how to hit that 8 iron.  
So it's not that big a deal, just commit to your shots  
and hit it. Guys who are playing well are going to play  
well through this.

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SPEAKER: Are you guys okay?

RONNIE BLACK: Come on, you've got to get more  
questions than that, I don't get here that often.

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