

**Toshiba Classic  
Newport Beach Country Club  
Newport Beach, CA**

**March 9, 2011**

**Pre-round leader quotes:**

**INTERVIEW OF IAN BAKER FINCH**

**DAVE SENKO:** Ian, thanks for joining us. Your first start on the Champions Tour; maybe just share some thoughts on that. You've obviously had a chance to talk to some players who played out here, maybe what they've told you about what to expect out here.

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** First of all, it's great to be here. Not many people wish their lives away and can't wait until they get to 50. But to get a chance to come out and play on the Champions Tour is going to be a great thrill for me, my first one. I haven't heard anything bad from anybody over the last three or four years when guys start talking about getting into their late 40's and what's it going to be like on the Champions Tour. Everyone always say, you will love it. It's like going to a family reunion. It's like a picnic every week with your old buddies. It's been that way.

I've only been here two days. From that perspective, I'm going to have a great time. It's good. My wife Jenny is here with me. She is catching up with a lot of the other wives that are here.

We are staying with friends in the area so we are getting to see the sites and some restaurants and just enjoying being in Newport Beach which I think is kind of what makes this tournament a little more special than a few of the others because people enjoy coming here, and the course, and the area, and catching up with old friends. So I'm experiencing that.

If I may go on a little bit, I'm also experiencing exactly what I thought I would with the apprehension of how am I going to play? I hope I don't make a fool of myself. I hope my golf, you know, is good enough that I can continue to enjoy myself and enjoy the experience.

I'm actually better now than I was the last two weeks. The last two weeks leading in, I had at least 5 different swing thoughts every day.

I went from shooting an average of 68 every time I played, to an average of 74 every time I played just in three or four weeks, to a point where about two days ago I said, right, I'm just going to go back to doing what I do, which is where I was four weeks ago, but I just wasted the last four weeks working on everyone else's swing thoughts instead of my own.

In fact, Gary McCord is calling me right now. He is one of the reasons why I have 36,000 swing thoughts. Leave me alone. I'm in a media conference. Say hello to the media guys here.

GARY MCCORD: You are at a media conference, isn't that so sad? Oh my, God. I'll let you have the pleasure, call me back and let me know what's going on.

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Everyone says hi, and they are so glad you are not here. (Laughter.)

GARY MCCORD: I'm dying to find out, so call me back.

IAN BAKER FINCH: Okay. See yeah.

That's been my life the last five years hence the inability to think clearly. Having to live with McCord, Kostis and Feherty for the last five years at CBS.

It's just exactly how I thought it would be. It's the reason why I stepped away from The TOUR 15 years ago. I got to a point where I couldn't trust myself, and I felt bad about myself, and I wasn't competing. So I said I need to go and try to do something else. And the same old pattern resurfaced over the last couple of weeks. I spoke to Jeff Purser and Dave, and I found out I was exempt and what have you, all of the need to try to improve aspects of my lack of mental ability, I guess, started to, you know, make me wonder whether it was the right decision.

Now that I am here I know it was. Anyway to shorten that, I knew exactly how I would be and now that I've made it here I'm more relaxed and ready to go ahead and play and compete and to have some fun.

Q. How do you beat back those thoughts that crept in?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Reading books and listening to sports psychologists, you should allow thoughts to pass through.

It's like don't think about the pink elephant in the room, right?

So you let the thoughts pass through and focus on what you do.

The reason the good players are really good is that they let those thoughts go, and they focus on what they're doing and their routine is sharp.

I know I don't have a sharp routine because I haven't played for 15 years, and I know that's really all I need to work on the next few days is just play the way I play and work on my routine so the

first tee Friday morning I just stick to my routine and hit my shot and go do what I do.

It's not a nervousness. It's more of maybe a fear of failure, or just apprehension. It troubles me so much that you feel bad about yourself. It's not an anger management thing. It's more of trying to make emotions be more positive rather than down.

But I think I will be fine. I love the golf course, so I think that's really going to allow me to free up a little bit.

I brought Pete Bender (phn), my caddy from The Open Championship. He is back here caddying for me. It's like seven or eight years on since we were together. Or 16 years on it's still the same. Nothing has changed.

Q. Do you have a chance to play the course then?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** I played yesterday. I had a practice round, loved it. Typical, to me, California seaside course, very similar to Sydney, Australia, lots of eucalyptus, poa annua greens, rolling, undulating terrain. Very similar to Sydney. It's a welcoming environment for me.

Q. What expectations do you have for this week? Have you put a number on?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** If I had to put a number on it I would like to think that I could finish in red figures. I would like to think that I can play well enough to play. I know they shoot low here. I don't know whether I'm in the right frame of mind to think about being aggressive on the course. I think if you're playing well, you could go really low here, if you knew where you were driving it.

If you are a sharp, you can reach the par-5s. So I can understand why guys shoot, I don't know, maybe three 67's or, three 66's. I think they go pretty low.

But for me, it's more first time out just going and playing and see how I go and hopefully be able to be comfortable enough to play like I know I can play.

I would love to be sitting here in front of you saying, I'm the rookie out here, and I'm going to show these guys how it's done. That's not my MO.

I've always been honest about what's going on and that's how I feel. But it's great to be out here. I went to the gym this morning. I had a stretch with Paul, who has been doing that since 1988. He was the first guy I worked with when I joined The TOUR in 89 over here. It's like old home week.

Q. What have you done to kind of get in the competitive mindset? What have you played? Are you playing money games with McCord?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Yes a little, but not really enough. I played when I turned 50, I went home to Australia and I did 4 events for television at the end of last year.

And I played the Australian Senior Open, that was the only time I played and I finished 15th. It was not a bad showing. It was a European Tour/Australian Tour co-sanctioned.

And the same 15 guys that used to finish Top 15 twenty years ago finished Top 15 in that. Wayne Grady, Sam Torentin (phn), Ian Woosnam, Sandy Lyle. Mike Clayton played well. Peter Senior, who is playing over here on the Champions Tour, won it comfortably. It was the game guys. And the guys that weren't quite making it back then, weren't quite making it. It's kind of funny to see actually. I loved it.

Q. Anybody call you this week and wish you luck?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Constantly, yes. Even McCord is calling me. But yes, lots of emails, lots of texts. All of my friends, they say, just loosen up, enjoy, have fun, you will be great. They know exactly I what I feeling right now. Holy shit, I shot a 78. It will be good fun. I know it will. I know everybody is behind me. I think I'm going to take the mental approach that people are just happy to see me out there playing again. Not necessarily expecting me to win or expecting me to play great, hey, Baker Finch is 50, he looks great. He still got that long loose swing. I think they will be happy to see me out there. I am going to take that approach.

Q. It's not as structured, as competitive as the regular TOUR, does that make it easier from your mindset thinking that it isn't the PGA TOUR? It's guys wishing me well. There is more camaraderie there?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** I haven't really thought of it that way. I know for the guys that are competitive out here, it's competitive. And they are very, very good players. I've been watching the guys on the range. I've been watching them for years during the broadcasting.

You only have to go to PGA TOUR.com or USA Today, or whatever publication that you go to the first thing Monday morning to see how your friends finished in the tournament and see the Top-20 or 30 names or 40 names, it a quality field. It's a quality TOUR out here. I think it will be wrong of me to think I can come out after a dozen years in the booth and compete with the guys that are doing it day in and day out.

Freddy Couples and John Cook nearly won two weeks ago on the regular TOUR events.

A couple of guys made the cut last week at Honda when the going was tough. Nick Price played pretty well. I think when Kenny Perry gets out here he will be really hard to beat. They are still hitting the ball 300 yards. It's competitive. You got to play well.

If you finish Top-10 here, it's just the same as finishing in the Top-10 on the PGA TOUR. It's not easy to finish in the Top-10.

A lot of people think you turn 50, it's going to be a cake walk. Trust me, I know it's not. But it is going to be fun.

Q. With the absence of competing on TOUR over the last few years you still have been doing corporate outings?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Yes.

Q. How many of those do you do?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** I played corporate events, charity events, those sorts of things. I don't know maybe 20 or 30 a year, pro-ams. But the most important competition is actually playing, putting the pencil on the card, shooting a score when it counts, when the cameras are on.

I might be on the tee with Billy Glasson and Tommy Armour on Friday, my fellow competitors there in a 3-some.

The group behind might be there watching as well. I don't know who it is. You might have Freddy Couples or Bernard Langer there. That's the real pressure when you are out there with your peers. You have to perform. There is no escaping it. You just got to go do it.

Q. I know part of this you are concerned about, is there also another part of teeing it up on Friday that excites you? Can you ever shadow the concerns you have?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Yes, sure. I will go to the range, work out the next couple of days and try to find something that I think I can stick to as far as a routine in a single swing thought.

I had hoped, leading in here, that I would have found it in the last two weeks, but I never stuck with anything longer than three or four holes. So I never got to find a routine in the last few weeks because there was always going to be something better, or that won't didn't work, throw that out.

But at the end of the two or three days, I sort have gone full cycle and I was back to the same thoughts 27 holes ago.

Now that I am here, more relaxed frame of mind, I'll find something and go with it. I've got my caddy there to keep me focussed. That's really the hardest part, is feeling like you fit are in, being able to focus, being able to trust it.

Once you hit two or three good ones and you are in a flow, it's easy then.

Q. No. 1 on Friday, if you hit one down the middle, you are good to go the rest of the day?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Should be. But it doesn't mean if I hit a bad one off the first that I am not ready to go.

You know, that first shot, when everyone is watching, Golf Channel will have their cameras on, that sort of stuff, it means a lot if I can just line up there and swing it like I swing it on the range. That's what I'm trying to find.

I'm trying to find a routine that allows me to step up to that shot and see the shot and hit it, rather than worrying about what's everyone think, or where is it's going to go.

I think that's kind of natural though. If I wasn't nervous and apprehension wasn't creeping in, that it meant not enough to me to not even want to come out and play.

I want to shoot a good score. I would like to finish in the top half of the field, that sort of thing. I know if I can allow myself, I can still play reasonably well. As they all can, gee.

Q. You know No. 1 here is a long iron or hybrid, 339 yards?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** A hybrid short of that right bunker and a 9-iron up the hill or something, yes.

Q. That's not a scary shot, right

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** No. But, you know, sometimes they are all scary.

Q. How many events are you going to play this year?

**IAN FINCH:** My plan at this stage is to play this one, The Legends. Then I work every week for CBS. And I think there is one in Korea and two in Texas in September or October. So I think I can play this one, Legends and three or four more. Yes. A handful. That's all I can do. I work 22 weeks for CBS, three weeks for TNT and four weeks in Australia.

So when these guys are out playing every week, having a good time, yakking it up with their buddies, I'm having a good time at CBS, but I'm working, not able to get out and play. It's not really work though.

Q. Are you going to President's Cup this year?

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** I will be there doing. I will be doing the telecast for the Australian network, channel 9. Looking forward to it. It's going to be great at Royal Melbourne again. I won't be in the team room doing stuff, assistant captain. I think Frank Nobile is doing that with Greg Norman.

DAVE SENKO: Thank you.

**IAN BAKER FINCH:** Thanks, guys.

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