

**PODS Championship
Innisbrook Golf Resort
Copperhead Course
Tampa Bay, Fl**

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Pre-tournament quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL AZINGER

DOUG MILNE: Paul, thanks for joining us for a few minutes here at the PODS Championship.

We met with you, and sat down the last time at the FBR Open last month. It's a month closer, just a couple of opening comments as we get close to the second week of September

PAUL AZINGER: I'm real happy. There seems to be a little change here on the list. I think we are going to see more changes. We are just getting started. The Majors are double the money.

And I have been talking to Julius about this, it would be hard to make the team and not win a tournament this year, I think. That's a good thing. I'm not saying it can't happen. I'm saying it would be difficult for it to happen because of the way the system is.

So the big question mark is going to be the Majors and how much influence the Majors are going to have. The four Majors are double the money. So I think that's going to be the big change.

I'm excited we are getting a little turnover on this list, and I think that so far so good. The players are still talking about Ryder Cup. I have players talk to me all the time about Ryder Cup, so I'm happy.

Q. Is that the big reason behind you wanting to make the change then the previous years, the guys from the year before would often kind of be entrenched there, a guy might have a great year the year prior and sort of be entrenched and hard to be moved out sometimes?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes, I wanted to try to formulate something that would get hotter players on the team. And I just feel like money is the barometer for everything that we do, so I felt like money was the way to do it, and what we've done is convert money to points.

Every \$1,000 is one point. And I really like the idea that last

year didn't really count much.

Zach Johnson, he is 5th and he deserves to be. He won The Masters. He is the Master's champion.

So I like the way that it's breaking down so far. We will see in the end. I'm really curious to see how it all plays out once the Majors get going and we get double points.

Q. You said you are excited that there has been a little bit of turnover. Inherent in that, I guess would be taking some new faces. I know you talked to Jackie and threw Glover and Mahan into the mix, I'm wondering what your thoughts are as far as maybe even some new blood into the mix since the results with the old guys have not been to good?

PAUL AZINGER: Well, I'm not saying that I'm happy that there is change over, that there is new names in there.

I'm saying, I'm happy there is a lot of shuffling going on.

If it's the same guys, then I think they are the right guys because I just really think it would be difficult to make this team and not have a really good year. It's impossible to make this team and not have a really good year to be honest with you.

If it's the same guys, I'm more than happy. I'm not looking for different faces. But if different faces show up, then that's going to be great.

I think the big question really is going to be after the 8 guys are established, who am I going to pick. Am I going to pick the same guys, or am I going to pick other guys? That's going to really be the question. I'm going to pick guys that are hot.

Q. You don't have an inkling on that right now?

PAUL AZINGER: I think if some guy wins 3 tournaments in a row on the Nationwide Tour, and his last tournament is the week before the week I pick, I probably will pick him. I probably will pick him, because I'm pretty sure that dude is hot. Plus he has his card. Because if he wins three in a row he gets his card. Or wins three times, he gets his card. But if he wins three in a row coming in, I'm looking for anybody that I think is blazing hot.

Q. Do you ever spend much time looking at the other team, at their list? If you do, who do you see as their Peter Baker this year?

PAUL AZINGER: I haven't spend any time looking at their list. Right now I can't look at it because it's blurry. I really don't care. I think it's too early for that list. I don't think their list is firmly established yet. I don't see any value in it. I have looked for Colin Montgomerie's name. I don't see it.

Q. 24 down on the right hand column?

PAUL AZINGER: I got it. I haven't looked at that list at all. I would love to see Monty on the team.

Q. Boo Weekley. We are trying to get the ball rolling for that guy. We think it would be fun, and he might create an

international incident. Just pair him with Monty and see what happens.

PAUL AZINGER: I like Boo Weekley a lot. I like the fact he is a great ball striker. I really am going to reserve comment on individual players because I don't think it's fair. I already stated that my hope is to get hot players. I don't care what their name is or where they come from. I care that they come from the United States, I guess. I don't care if they come from the Nationwide Tour, I might not care if they come from the Senior Tour. Keep that in mind.

Q. That being said, and yes you said it, it comes down to that last captain's pick, and you got a player that's pretty hot, or you got a player who you think is going to bring a chemical aspect to that team as far as like say an Azinger once upon a time did, is that going to swing a vote maybe away from somebody just because of a personality or an individual?

PAUL AZINGER: A personality might matter to me a little bit. We'll see. Personalities are important. Personalities are what create chemistry.

Woody Austin's personality at these last team matches was, you know -- I mean somebody in the media said, he was as much as a mascot as he was anything else, plus he played great. You know, personalities are important. I think if I can find personalities that are playing really well, that's a great benefit.

Q. The players that we've talked to about you, there seems like there is two schools of thought about what they are expecting. They are either expecting to screw around light hearted Paul Azinger who could have fun and cut up.

Or the Gila monster, bulldog Paul Azinger.

Some guys think that you are going to get the hard ass; Lombardi or LaSorda, they don't know which guy they're going to get.

PAUL AZINGER: They might see both. I have no idea. I have no experience being a captain like that. I had assistant captain's experience at the President's Cup when Hale was captain and made the team. So I have a little bit of that. Heck, I have no idea what my personality is going to be like at those matches. I may cellophane everybody's toilet seats before the matches start, I don't know.

Q. Which team?

PAUL AZINGER: I don't know. I'm just going to be myself. I think my emotions, or style, or whatever it is, is just going to be depending on the makeup of the team and the situation.

I'm the captain, not the coach. You can't rule with an iron fist like you've been coaching these guys for two years. That's not the case. Some of them I'm going to be getting to know.

I just really hope that the system we have in place is going to get the right guys there. That's all I'm really hoping for. I don't really have a theme in mind or anything like that. I'm going to

figure out who wants to play with who and let's go get them.

Q. If the system gets you what you think is the hot team, the Top-8 guys, and you get your four best picks, and we still get pounded, what's the next step?

PAUL AZINGER: Really, I don't know that there is a next step. You could probably tweak the system if you want, but I don't think golf has any issues whatsoever.

These guys proved at President's Cup they are capable of playing great in team competition. You have to give Europe a lot of credit. Those guys rise to the occasion and play fantastic during the matches, for whatever reason. They're representing their TOUR, maybe that's what it is. And they make every putt they look like at. Why do they do that? I don't know. I would like you to ask them. Maybe somebody will give the secret away, but I really don't know. But to suggest there is a problem with the way golf is played in America, the way the Americans play, I don't think is necessarily the case. They just played really, really well.

We've been able to boast the Top-3 players in the world. There is occasions when guys will rise to the occasion to elevate their game to take on the best players.

Dick Budridge (phn) was asking me this earlier about when I was on the Ryder Cup team in '81, '91 and '93, six of those players are probably Hall of Fame players from the European team.

We beat them twice and we tied the other time.

We rose to the occasion. So I think they look at us and they rise to the occasion.

Q. Were you the underdogs back then?

PAUL AZINGER: Probably. Look at their teams; Faldo, Woosnam, Seve, Jose, Langer, Lyle, those are monster teams. Those guys are all going to the Hall of Fame. We rose up and beat them. We beat them with Ken Green, Calcavecchia, myself, John Cook, and Chip Beck. So it happens. Golf is interesting in that respect. And I think that those guys on the other side, to suggest that there is a problem with us is not fair to them. They played great.

Q. I think maybe in Phoenix you said that you were a little surprised at how involved this has been, having this job, is that true?

PAUL AZINGER: It's not that difficult. Really in the end, just to do a monthly press conference is a little more involved. It's not a quick day necessarily. The Phoenix, it was brutal, because it was Super Bowl week and went to Super Bowl row and all of that.

But getting the clothes right, golf bag, the food and making decisions, who gets to go where in the team room, where the family members are, just stupid stuff that you don't think about. Trust me, it's not overwhelming in any way. Not at all. I think it will become a little more challenging the weeks leading up.

But, you know, I don't want to speculate on this or that, so I'm not going to be trapped in any way. I always love talking to the

press. I'm not overwhelmed by anything.

Q. Paul, the teams you played on, how much did the captains come to the players and say, who do you want to play with? Are you going to maybe do more of that or less than that or all of that?

PAUL AZINGER: Maybe just common sense, who wants to play with who. I guess it was pretty obvious I was going to play with Chip Beck in all three Ryder Cups for the most part. I didn't have a lot of people asking me that stuff.

'94, when I was there with Hale, that was the very first thing I did, I went to every player and I said, who don't you want to play with and who do you want to play with? Who you don't want to play with is just as important as who you want to play with. To me that's just common sense captaining. That's one of the very first things you are going to do.

Q. Back in '87, when you were eligible for the team you hadn't taken that business course (Inaudible)? Did you have any idea that you would be the captain of the team?

PAUL AZINGER: No, that's the last thing that crossed my mind. I wasn't 100% sure what the Ryder Cup was at that time.

I was pretty amazed my first Ryder Cup, the intensity of it. Almost the rock star status we got when we went to Europe. The greeting when we came off the Concord.

Some time you don't know what you are missing until you've been there. I had no idea what I was missing in '87. I was Player-of-the-Year that year and didn't make the team. So I didn't know what I was missing.

But the PGA recognized that, and now a guy from the Nationwide Tour can actually play on the team, I think. Is that right? I think that's great.

But being the captain is a huge honor to be the captain. I also didn't realize only 25 guys have ever been captain. That is kind of cool.

Q. Speaking of just the honor of being a captain. You are a pro military guy, your family has military background. You are politically involved. Is there some special significance in that part in being an American captain?

PAUL AZINGER: Just representing your country, I think, is a huge honor. It's about as good as it gets. Dying for your country is a huge honor as well. I never had to go to any wars or anything like that. So I just think it's a huge honor.

That was one of the great things in '89, in the great realization, when you are there, and they are playing the national anthem, and they are raising the flag, it's the first realization that you are actually representing your country. So I was real proud of that. I'm not involved politically. I have some political opinions, but I'm not involved politically. (Laughter.)

Q. You mentioned a minute ago wanting to see Monty on their team,

why is that?

PAUL AZINGER: I just like him. I just like his intensity. I just like him. I just think that he is another dynamic that is added to the event. I hope he makes the team. I just like him. I've always liked that guy.

Q. Do you think Faldo will pick him if he doesn't make it?

PAUL AZINGER: I don't know. Maybe. I don't want to speak for Nick Faldo yet. I'll wait. I will put words in his mouth later.

Q. If he doesn't pick him, you will.

PAUL AZINGER: It's pretty hard to overlook him.

Q. The thing in Louisville, you seem to have fun with that aspect, giggling him a little bit, and the fact that you guys were on TV together and were rivals to some degree on the course, is that the back and forth when it's been going on?

PAUL AZINGER: It's a nice dynamic I think to the matches that he and I can banter and be fairly cordial to each other.

I think I was more competitive with him than he was with me. The rivalry was from me to him, not from him to me. He is more like, I didn't know you existed.

Whereas I was like, all I want to do was beat Nick Faldo. So I think it's just an interesting dynamic. We get along famously now.

Q. Where does that stem from, the '87 British Open or the year he made the hole-in-one where you came back on him?

PAUL AZINGER: Just everything for me. '87 British. And Ryder Cup, I played him in '89. Chip and I, we shot 11-under against he and Woosnam, who had never been beaten, and they were 9-under. It was a great best ball match. Just stuff.

I butted heads with him a couple of other times, I think. He lost by a shot at the PGA that I won. Just stuff. I just always knew where he was and knew he was there. I just never pulled for him, really.

Q. I think when you reviewed on television in '95, when you reviewed the match that you played in '93, your line was, look at that, I had cancer, and he still couldn't beat me?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes. I was just joking. What I just said jokingly, I never really pulled for him. That could be written to sound pretty bad. Yes, it was just a flippantly joking remark. Just the same type of deal.

Q. It came out that way.

PAUL AZINGER: My shoulder hurt really bad that day, I remember that. But I was still playing decently. I had a horrible Ryder Cup. My record was terrible that week. I actually hit the ball great that week. I could never just formulate any kind of momentum to win a match. I don't think I won a match that year. I think I had two ties.

But I remember that day, and the night before. I remember the night before being probably about as nervous as I have ever been, even trying to win a Major tournament just because I knew it could come down to us. We were the last match out on Sunday with I think is a scary spot to be.

And in '91 it came down to the last match. So I just remember telling the team that night before, just don't let my match count boys. I meant that with all of my heart. (Laughter.)

All day long, and really up until the 16th green I felt like it was coming down to he and I. I will never forget from the first hole until I found out it wasn't coming down to us, I was really nervous. Normally when you get going, you are nervous and it goes away. But the idea it was coming down to me, was really bugging me. I was just uncomfortable with that. I remember that intensely.

I remember him talking me into giving him about a four-and-a-half-footer, five-footer on 16 because he told us that we had won.

He said, that's it, you won. It's over. Is this good? I laughed, I said I don't think so. He said, well, it's over, you've won.

I remember looking at the official. I said, is it over? He said, yes, it's over. I said, pick it up then. Davis Love came running over to me said we haven't won yet, we've only tied, which meant we retained the cup. So it really, really bothered me that he talked me into giving him that putt.

Q. Who was the official?

PAUL AZINGER: I don't remember.

Q. One of ours?

PAUL AZINGER: No.

(Laughter).

Q. What happened on 17 and 18, do you remember that?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes, I remember I birdied 18. I went to one down, I think. I think I gave him that to go one down, or to stay one down. I don't remember that exactly. But I remember I birdied the last hole.

Q. To halve it?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes, I remember standing over a 10 or 12-footer on the last hole thinking he was going to give it to me, because at that point, it was over and we had won because Raymond Floyd closed out Jose. And I can remember, after he missed his. I remember walking around thinking, just give him time, he is probably not thinking about it. He's probably not thinking about it. He just doesn't realize he should be giving me this.

And I waited and I waited and I looked at him. He is on the side of the green. He is like in this daze. It's like he went somewhere else. It wasn't malicious. You just don't think about it. It just never crossed his mind. I said I can't believe he is

making me putt this. Thank God I made it.

Q. You said your shoulder was hurting you all day?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes, it was killing me.

Q. Was that the first sign, do you think?

PAUL AZINGER: No, the first sign was this June at the U.S. Open, and I had MRI's done, and I had bone scans done, and I knew I had a serious problem even before I won the PGA that year because Frank Jobe, the orthopaedic surgeon that discovered all of this, actually recommended that I be biopsied the Tuesday after the PGA. He got all of the bone scan stuff. Then he called me Friday night when I was playing well and said --

Q. Friday night at Inverness?

PAUL AZINGER: At Inverness. He said I think you should be biopsied Tuesday. And I said, I ain't doing that. I got the Skins game coming up. And I got the Ryder Cup coming up.

Q. In that order?

PAUL AZINGER: Whatever. I knew all of this stuff was coming. Then I won the tournament. Then he called me Sunday night and congratulated me and said, I guess we could put it off. How bad can you be.

It worked out great that I did put it off because in the end they found the cancer in there. Maybe they wouldn't have found it if I would have done it right away. They let it fester.

Q. They caught it fairly earlier?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes. That was my first question when they said you got cancer was, well, have I made a huge mistake by not doing it right away? He said no, not at all.

Q. When did you actually end up having that surgery, November?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes, I had it right after the Skins game. I was totally miserable there. My back went out and my shoulder was killing me. I tried to withdraw. I begged Chuck Gerber to let me withdraw and put Chi Chi in there or somebody and he just wouldn't do it.

Q. Tell him you had shin splints that would have worked.

PAUL AZINGER: I wish. I begged Chuck Gerber. To this day every time I see Chuck Gerber he comes up and apologizes to me. You guys know Chuck pretty well. He is the best.

DOUG MILNE: Do you still have a copy of that song they scored after you, do you remember that, a man named Zinger.

PAUL AZINGER: That was Gary Chapman. That was cool. That seems like a long time ago. Any way, I don't know what the question was.

Q. You were telling stories and it was a good one.

PAUL AZINGER: Okay, I'm done telling.

Q. Where is your game at these days?

PAUL AZINGER: I played four rounds of golf since Phoenix Open. I haven't really practiced much. I don't know why. My desire to play well is still there but my commitment to get it done isn't. I don't know why. I think I'm going to start taking up cigar smoking and stuff. I'm ready to start drinking out of a bamboo cup with a pink umbrella on it.

Q. Champions TOUR now?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes.

Q. You got your daughter getting married in June, does that complicate your summer?

PAUL AZINGER: June 14th she is getting married. I would say a little bit. I mean she is doing it. My wife is taking care of most of that. It's a girl thing. She is going to Birmingham this weekend actually for a shower up there. That's where my daughter goes to school.

Q. How many times have you been to Valhalla and how many times do you plan to go back just to look at things and touch things?

PAUL AZINGER: Once it warms up, I'll probably go check it out. I'm sure Julius will figure out something. I'm going to the Kentucky Derby. Make sure I fraternize with the superintendent. I think it's important, once the makeup of the team is pretty much established to try to work with the superintendent, to get any kind of advantage as possible. I don't know if it is possible. Europe seems to be able to do it. When we play the Belfry, the fairways are eight yards wide at 295 yards. It forces all of our long hitters to hit it to a certain area, where their guys are hitting their drivers and our long hitters are hitting 3-woods, or long irons to that same area. So it's pretty much neutralized our power in the past. If we have a powerful team, I will see if there is a way to get an edge. That's what I'm looking for. I don't know if it's going to play out that way or not. Mark Wilson is willing to work with me. So that's good.

Q. That's the super?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes.

Q. Considering the volatility of the points when do you think the team will crystalize?

PAUL AZINGER: With the PGA Championship being double points, I don't think it will really -- we got to wait until 3 Majors are played before you can start to look. Double points the last tournament, anything can happen. Plus we get to play 3 events after that, which is good. That was another big thing. Ordinarily, you make the pick the Monday after the PGA, which is five or six weeks before the Ryder Cup. I don't think that was

smart. It hoses that guy from the Nationwide Tour.

Q. So right now is there such a short list, long list or no list?

PAUL AZINGER: No list. Everybody in that locker room is my buddy right now. I have no list. I really don't. It would be anybody.

Q. Who has been the biggest suck up so far?

PAUL AZINGER: Bubba Watson. I hate to name names.

Q. Well you just did?

PAUL AZINGER: Bubba Watson.

(Laughter) I'm teasing. He has been great. He has come to the house. We hang out. He is a good friend.

Q. A lot more Christmas cards?

PAUL AZINGER: Really.

Q. Some of the young guys that may be in contention, a couple guys from the list like Malinger, Steve Marino and Dustin Johnson, have you talked to these guys, do you know their games?

PAUL AZINGER: I know Steve Marino's game. I've played with him. Malinger I know his name from having played well. I don't know Dustin Johnson at all.

I think it's really not that important to be honest with you for me to know anybody. I believe that I could probably not come back out until the matches start and it would be just fine. I really don't think that you need to have a hands-on captaincy and know the players.

The point list is going to speak for itself. All I got to do is pay attention. They don't need to know me, and I don't need to know them. They are all big boys and they are all professionals, and they all want the same thing I want. I don't think it needs to be a stated goal. And I think they know what they are doing. I think they will be prepared when they get there. I just want guys that want to be there and be prepared when they show up.

Q. Do you think it's important to get some new blood on this team?

PAUL AZINGER: **New** blood is fine if it shows up. But, Gary, I can't say anything other than that. If I feel like really it's the same guys that have been getting beaten in the past 4 out of 5 Ryder Cups, and those guys all show back up. I think they showed back up because they played great to get there.

I think if it's all the same guys, I think they will want it really bad. I know that they don't like the results. I will take whoever it is. Everybody wants to change the outcome. They got a taste of it. Tasting defeat the way they tasted it, is just a bad feeling.

Q. There has been a couple of guys the last few cup teams that were so determined to make that team, that they actually played worse.

Does that portend negatively when you get to the matches?

PAUL AZINGER: Yes, I've told several players actually that I want to be on the team, that I know want it badly, to not try too hard, just don't try too hard. You got a long way to go. I walked up to a couple of guys in Phoenix, and I just said, do me a favor this week, and the rest of the year, I know you want to be there, but just relax and play. Even after the 8 guys that are established, if you play good the couple of weeks after that, I could still pick you. You are the kind of guy I'm looking for, you know, type stuff. So I know maybe it will counter what I said to you just a minute ago, but the reality is, I think you can be hands-on with guys that you just know want it really, really badly. I want guys to relax and play golf. If you try too hard, it's counterproductive. No doubt. We all try too hard.

Q. I guess if you are trying too hard in August, is there a chance he will try too hard on Friday?

PAUL AZINGER: I see what you are saying. I think it's a whole different dynamic once the matches start. Once you have gotten there, I think the dynamic completely changes.

DOUG MILNE: Paul, we appreciate your time.

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