*Faldo/Tillman: (15:11:02) “Ernie going about his day in his normal Ernie way. His normal Big Easy fashion.”*

*Nance: “Big Ernie taking dead aim.”*

*Els: “There's a lot of connotations, yeah. [LAUGH] the Big Easy, you know. I mean it sounds lazy, but that's kind of the opposite of what I've been for a long time, but I've got an easy personality maybe, at times. [LAUGH].*

*Liezl: “Only his swing, [LAUGH] the size and the swing. [LAUGH] Then, not so easy. [LAUGH]*

*PGA TOUR Presents animation...Title page*

*Nats: “Have you seen my ball?”*

*Nats: “How far is that, 30 yards?”*

*Nats: “All right guys, thank you”*

**JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE BEACH FOR ERNIE ELS…**

**THIS TIME IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA TO PROMOTE THE UPCOMING 2019 PRESIDENTS CUP AT THE ROYAL MELBOURNE GOLF CLUB.**

*Nats “C’mon guys”*

**ERNIE HAS BEEN APPOINTED INTERNATIONAL TEAM CAPTAIN…**

*Nats: “Good. There it is!”*

**A ROLE HE CONSIDERS A TRUE HONOR.**

Monday (02:12:53) Els sot; “I’m still growing into this position as captain. // I just want to make the experience worthwhile for the player. // and I want the players to have an amazing time as long, as we grow as people through the week.”

**JUST ANOTHER, DIFFERENT DAY FOR NOT JUST ANOTHER GUY…**

**ON A DIFFFERENT CONTINENT, 10,000 KILOMETERS AWAY FROM HOME.**

**EVERY YEAR, FAMILY AND FRIENDS GATHER IN THE TINY TOWN OF GEORGE, IN THE REMOTE AREA OF WEST CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA FOR SOME GOLF, FUN, FOOD AN DRINK.**

Liezl Els sot: (02:33:49) “It's very special for everyone here. And the unity in the country that's slowly coming together again after all the strife, it's really being celebrated this weekend. And everyone has a lot of hope and positivity for what's lying ahead as a country, and that makes it even more special.

**THE ANNUAL ERNIE ELS INVITATIONAL. A CELEBRATION, INDEED…TO HONOR THE ACHEIVEMENTS OF ONE OF THE COUNTRY’S GREATEST LEGENDS: THE HOST AND FOUNDER OF THE FANCOURT FOUNDATION.**

Duncan Cruickshank sot: (08:59:33) “The Ernie Els and Fancourt Foundation started in 1999. Ernie started the foundation to help kids from families of limited resources. // (09:00:17) And what the foundation was trying to create was educated young leaders as well as great golfers and that's been the theme throughout the time that I've seen it grow.”

**NOW IN ITS 20TH YEAR, THE FOUNDATION HAS PRODUCED SUCH PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS AS LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN, CHARL SCHWARTZEL AND BRANDEN GRACE.**

Branden Grace sot: (02:43:50) “It's always nice for a guy like him to see maybe someone like myself coming through the foundation. And you know they do a lot of things for kids. They really open some doors for you. (02:44:26) and they’ve helped me big time as well.”

**AND THEY COME… BECAUSE OF ERNIE.**

Duncan Cruickshank sot: (09:03:21) “Any time Ernie pitches up, the crowds come, he is like the Arnold Palmer of South African Golf. // (09:03:37) His impact on this country, on sport in this country, on golf in this country, is incredible // (09:04:39) he's known as the Big Easy. // (09:05:03) and so, as a hero to kids and adults, he's an easy guy to follow.”

**“THE BIG EASY”. PERHAPS NO MONIKER FITS A PERSON MORE. YET, QUITE IRONIC THAN A MAN LABELLED SO, WHATEVER THE INTERPRETATION, WOULD HAIL FROM A PLACE AND TIME SO SMALL…AND HARD.**

Liezl sot: (02:33:19) “This country's been through so many ups and downs. // (02:34:55) and we've always fought really hard to make a point of saying, please keep politics out of sport, because sport can overcome so many bridges. // (02:34:52) Sport, we all feel, is such a unifier // (02:35:09) Through the good and the bad of the country, somehow sport has kept the country together.”

Player sot: (01:14:47) “Our great father Nelson Mandela said so aptly, sport can change the world. It can give people hope. People that are in despair, it can change it. // You can go ahead to unbelievable heights and attain incredible success.”

**CASE IN POINT: ONE THEODORE ERNEST ELS. A HALL-OF-FAME CAREER THAT INCLUDES MORE THAN 70 PROFESSIONAL TITLES ACROSS THE GLOBE, INCLUDING FOUR MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS AND EIGHT PRESIDENT CUP APPEARANCES, AND HE’LL CAPTAIN THE INTERNATIONAL SQUAD IN 2019.**

**NOT BAD FOR A KID THAT GREW UP AMIDST THE TURMOIL OF APARTHIED TO RISE INTO ONE OF THE COUNTRY’S GREATEST HUMANITATIANS.**

Ernie Els sot: (02:37:26) “I had a great childhood, played a lot of sport, like a lot of people here in South Africa. // (02:37:54) the golf bug got me when I was kinda just starting with high school.

Nico Van Rensburg sot: (02:18:17) “He was just a phenomenal player from the beginning. You know, A lot of people got talent, but he’s got that extra talent and ability that’s very rare to find.”

Ernie Els sot: (02:38:56) “I won a little tournament in Johannesburg, and the winner got to go play in the Junior World in San Diego, California, won the tournament playing with Phil, there in his hometown. When I came back home that was a big deal.“

Nico Van Rensburg sot: (02:21:50) “I think that just kickstarted Ernie, he won three tournaments around South Africa. // And then he went overseas and when he won the US Open it was just boom.”

*Annc: “And Ernie Els…Ernie Els…Ernie Els…is the champion.”*

Johann Rupert sot; (03:05:53) “The pros that played with him right in the beginning realized how special he was, because he literally could up and down out of a drain pipe.”

Liezl Els sot; (02:47:36) “His drive was there. You could see it in his eyes. // (02:47:57) I never had a doubt that he would make it He's just always //had a self-belief that made you have no doubt about where he was going.”

*Annc: “That’s the sign of a champion right there.”*

Neels Els sot: (02:37:29) “It's just a determination to try and be good, or number one, or whatever. He was always going for that. // I pushed him and I said, ‘look, you can if you want to’.”

*Annc: (psa 01:00:52) ”Ernie Els does it with a flourish!”*

**EARLY SUCCESS WAS, INDEED, BIG. BUT, BY NO MEANS DID IT COME EASY.**

Johann Rupert: (03:06:21) “Greg is a very old friend, Greg Norman, and after his first time with Ernie, said ‘he's gonna be top ten for as long as he wants to. But then he said, // (03:06:36) ‘Golf's a game of plateaus. And you ca n get with a certain amount of work and talent to a certain plateau. If you wanna go higher, you need to work harder.’”

Stuart Makin sot: (02:22:12) “There's a fire that burns within Ernie that people maybe don't appreciate. //I've never met a player, and I work with a number them, who works harder than him. “

Liezl Els sot; (02:49:11) “He's never had a problem with going out and practicing. It's always brought him so much joy. // I'm sweating blood out in the sun, and he's out there for hours, ‘Oooh, it was so great.’ I'm like, seriously, it was 110 degrees out there.”

**ALL OF THE HARD WORK PAID OFF. BY THE END OF 2003, ERNIE HAD AMASSED MORE THAN 40 PROFESSIONAL TITLES AROUND THE WORLD.**

*Nats: “Congratulations… Thank you.”*

Ernie Els sot: (02:53:36) “I was the guy for a while. // (02:53:49) And then things changed a little bit because of this great player.”

Neels sot: (02:37:50) “When Tiger came onto the scene, suddenly there was huge… competition.”

*Annc:* *(18/11 01:02:24) “Dead center. Ernie Els is hot. Tiger Woods on fire!”*

Nico Van Rensburg sot; (02:30:08) “Ernie always wanted to play against Tiger. And that's the person I think also carried Ernie, Tiger was just this unbelievable person.”

*Annc;* *(18/11 01:02:36) “Tiger is back on top of the world.”*

Johann Rupert sot: (03:13:09) “Ernie should've won, at least 10 majors. // (03:13:56) then there may have been great boxers in the Muhammad Ali era that you never heard about. // (03:14:05) I don't know how many times Ernie came second to Tiger.”

*Annc: (15:46:23) “It really isn’t fair. When you have Ernie Els out here looking back at him, shrugging his shoulders saying, ‘How am I supposed to beat you?’ What does that tell you?”*

Stuart Makin sot: (02:31:23) “he was in the top ten for 12 or 13 years unbroken, better than Tiger, better than anyone else. // He didn't always get it done, but he was always there competing.”

Liezl Els sot: (02:50:24) “If you're not upset at not winning, then you're never gonna win. // Yes, there was some grumbling. Not every loss came as easy. //but he made it somehow.”

*Annc: (18/11 01:02:59) “Whataya think about that? Unbelievable!”*

Ernie Els sot: (02:53:56) Yeah, I mean, lotta close calls, but uhm, // (02:54:15) I just ran into a guy a little bit better than me, and that's that. (02:53:34) I mean, what a player.”

**OF THE MANY HEAD-TO-HEAD MATCHES BETWEEN THE TWO TITANS, NONE WOULD HAVE MORE IMPACT, NOR SIGNIFICANCE, THAN THE SHOWDOWN IN ERNIE’S HOME COUNTRY DURING THE 2003 PRESIDENTS CUP.**

Ernie Els sot: (02:55:20) “All the attention was on this event. // to bring that kind of talent into this country from a golfing point of view was unbelievable. // And then, Tiger, being Tiger// myself coming from an Afrikaans background through the apartheid days where we grew up the 80s, and then through the change with President Mandela making a Democracy here. Us meeting up.”

*Nats: (01:02:18) “You can shake hands now.”*

Ernie Els sot: “And then the whole thing coming down to the two of us. I mean you couldn't script it better.

**THE THREE-DAY MATCHES ENDED IN A TIE. A PLAYOFF WAS TO DECIDE THE VICTOR. EARLIER IN THE WEEK, CAPTIANS GARY PLAYER AND JACK NICKLAUS HAD PICKED THEIR RESPECTIVE PLAYERS TO REPRESENT THEIR TEAMS.**

Jack: (01:08:22) “It says Tiger.” Gary: “Ernie Els.”

**WITH DARKNESS UPON THEM, THE TOP TWO PLAYERS IN THE WORLD BATTLED FOR THREE HOLES.**

Ernie Els sot: (02:55:45) “I was like, there's no way he's making this putt. [LAUGH] Then he plays a foot of break in the dark and the ball goes right in the middle of the hole.”

*Annc: “Ah ha ha. Tiger knew it. He started running to the hole.”*

Ernie Els sot: (02:56:13) “You know, If I don't make that putt and we lost on that green. I mean, that dagger would have been still in my chest.”

*Annc: “Not so Fast. That’s as it should be.”*

Tiger sot: (01:15:23) “That was some of the most amazing golf and the most amazing pressure I've ever been a part of. And to do it with Ernie // (01;15:20) I don't think either one of us would ever want to do that again.”

Ernie Els sot: (02:56:06) “That was probably one of the biggest putts of my whole life. I mean take the majors and everything. // (02:56:19) But I made the putt and then it was called off, and it was a tie.”

*Nats; “Our Guys feel, that In the spirit of the game, rather than retaining the cup, we share the cup. I thinks that’s marvelous.”*

Nico Van Rensburg sot: (02:30:27) “When they said it's a draw it was just too dark to keep on. That's the kind of thing we'll never forget.”

Liezl sot: (02:36:00) “it was pivotal for so many people. It was so important for South Africa as a country, and, again, //it's that unifier// our sport brings everyone together. // we unified as a country again behind Ernie when it came down to the crunch.”

Duncan Cruickshank sot; (09:16:15) “Golf has a proud history in this country // being one of the first sports to be properly unified before apartheid ended. But it has a proud history of integration, and I guess that was the culmination of it, seeing how it all worked and how it works.”

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT MAGICAL WEEK AT FANCOURT STILL LINGERS TO HIS DAY, NOT ONLY IN THE TINY TOWN OF GEORGE, BUT WOLRDWIDE.**

Nico Van Rensburg sot: (02:32:04) “You can ask any kid on the street who’s the most popular sportsman in South Africa // Ernie’s by far the first. // (02:32:40) I think more people know Ernie Els is than who the president of South Africa is, believe me.”

*Nats: (02:13:03) “What’s your names, you’re Gonna be on TV. I’m Menachem. I’m Mariah. Leo. Where you from” Cape Town. OK, Cape Town, you see guys!”*

**ERNIE’S POPULARITY ONLY GREW AS HIS SUCCESS CONTINUED.**

**BUT EVEN EASYSTREET HAS ITS BUMPS, AND SOMETIMES, LIFE’S HARDSHIPS CAN GET IN THE WAY.**

**WHEN ERNIE AND LIEZL’S YOUNG SON BEN WAS DIAGNOSED WITH AUTISM, TROPHIES, IT SEEMED, WERE NO LONGER A PRIORITY.**

Liezl sot: (02:43:57) “We just looked at one another like, what has just hit us? // (02:44:13) I was really scared.”

Johann Rupert: (03:11:44) “they became concerned that he wouldn't talk. // (03:12:03) but the moment the realization set in, he started doing something about it.”

Liezl sot: (02:44:39) “It was a tough moment there for a while, I was still an ostrich head in the sand. And he was, no, this has to come out, we need to start talking about this.”

Ernie Els Presser: (01:05:18) “Our boy is six, his name is Ben // you know, we’re a young family ourselves and uh//we just felt that it’s a good time to make it more public and come out and try and make other people deal with raising kids with autism.”

Liezl sot: (02:45:21) “It was good, it pushed us into starting a lot of wonderful stuff.”

Ernie Els sot: (02:47:57) “The whole fallout, should I say, was incredible. // I was like, Man! I think we touched something here. And then the next thing was Liezl, my wife, she really felt that we needed to get a proper facility. // and build it ourselves.”

**IN AUGUST OF 2015, THE ERNIE ELS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE OPENS IT DOORS TO THE FIRST SECTION OF A 26 ACRE STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY.**

Liezl sot: (02:45:28) “Building that facility in Florida has been such an incredible journey to us. It’s given back to us as well over the years, and I hope we can continue to give back to those families.

Ernie Els sot: (02:48:29) “And then it just started morphing into what it became. And now // people recognize us as the family with autism and we're doing something about it.”

**SO THEY GATHER ONCE A YEAR….IN THIS TINY PLACE ON THE SOUTHERN TIP OF AFRICA…IN CELEBRATION… OF THE BIG MAN THAT LET 14 LITTLE CLUBS SPREAD THE WORD.**

Liezl sot: (02:46:27) “None of that would have been possible without getting the name Els out there through golf. Nobody would have given. this would have taken us 20 times longer to get to this point if it wasn't for Ernie and for what golf has brought to him through the years. What he's worked for, has helped him gain this through it”

Ernie Els sot: (02:49:48) “Golf has given me the platform // and we'll see what people say. I'm not doing it to please anybody. I'm trying to do something that will help people going forward.”

Branden Grace sot: (02:46:18) “The golf is something obviously that made him famous and made him who he is, but he’s more, I think, amazing off the golf course, and you can't really say that about a lot of people.”

Nico Van Rensburg sot: (02:28:22) “At the end of the day, his legacy will go on for a very long time. He said remember one thing, ‘When you finish a golf day or talk. Remember to tell people I wanted to make the world aware of autism. I don't really wanna be remembered as a golfer.’ And I think because of that way, the world actually wants more of Ernie, because he's giving back both sides.”

Johann Rupert sot: (03:14:14) “There are many golfers that are respected and then there are some that are loved. And Ernie's loved. I think his legacy will be his humanity and how beloved he is.”

Gary Player sot: (01:26:58) “Ernie has represented South Africa in the best possible manner that an athlete could do. People loved him, and he loved people, and such unbelievable talent. What better thing can you do then to leave a legacy and I think that's what Ernie did.”