



Words **Garrett Johnston** (follow on twitter @johnstongarrett), Photos **Getty Images**

FRANKLY SPEAKING



Imagine if you will a warm, sunny, summer day outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

It's the end of a week full of severe rain which saturated one of America's oldest and most storied golf courses and Saturday's third round at the United States Open is about to air on national network television in the United States from Merion Golf Club.

Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy will play together that afternoon, an ideal grouping for America's national championship.

The historic eighteenth fairway at Merion is where the famous picture of Ben Hogan was taken during the 1950 US Open, with the clubhouse and tall American flag in the background. As the US audience waits for television coverage to begin, Auckland-native Frank Nobile prepares to go on the air for NBC in the half-hour pre-game show.

He is perched dozens of feet above the right rough along 18 on a massive outdoor set with an open backside, allowing for the perfect view of the

finishing green and iconic clubhouse behind Nobile and his fellow broadcasters.

To his right is the Golf Channel's other principal analyst and former tour pro Brandel Chamblee, and the host of the show Golf Channel's Rich Lerner.

Chamblee is a statistically equipped conversationalist with an innate ability to eloquently convey his often-edgy, yet pertinent opinions. His long, greying brown hair and warm smile are trademarks of the Texan who is a good complement to Nobile, who speaks with much gravity during these historic weeks at major championships.

Lerner is a wordsmith and a witty mind that will pen and voice the week's video essays and features as well as facilitate the conversation between himself, Chamblee, and Nobile. He is a tall, lean man who speaks in measured tones.

A number of other Golf Channel broadcasters and analysts also contribute greatly to the "Live From" shows, often from secondary sets and locations or



(L-R) Rich Lerner, Brandel Chamblee, Frank Nobile and Nick Faldo on the Golf Channel set prior to the start of The 39th Ryder Cup at Medinah Country Club.

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from that main set at earlier points in the coverage.

On this day, Nobile is entrusted to analyze the best player in the world's performance and outlook in one of the biggest events of the year.

The show begins after some intense moments of final preparation. Early on, Nobile speaks over the highlights of Tiger Woods' elbow injury from throughout the week. He also explains to the massive audience that the course plays longer than its modest 6,996 yards.

This is truly one of the high-water marks of Nobile and the Golf Channel's year in golf. For Nobile to be such a central fabric of these major productions shows just how much the Golf Channel reveres his abilities as an analyst.

Just ten years ago it was Nobile who was being analysed for his performance inside the ropes, but the 15-time worldwide winner, who used to dream of playing rugby for the almighty All-Blacks, is now a permanent fixture in the broadcasting booth for Golf Channel and NBC. >>



Frank Nobile

Steve Sands (L) and Frank Nobile on the Golf Channel set during the 139th Open Championship on the Old Course, St Andrews, Scotland.



The transition into television for this three-time Presidents Cup player, and two-time vice captain, was not a work of art in Nobile's self-deprecating eyes.

"People that knew me when I played golf I think they would know my personality as the last person that was ever going to get into (TV)," Nobile said.

But Nobile simply loves the game, the competition, and the elements that come with it.

Oh and he's just very stubborn about it all.

"I was stubborn just like I was as a player and I think that helped," Nobile said of his transition to Golf Channel analyst in 2003.

What also helped the unique changeover in Nobile's mind was his pessimistic Kiwi nature.

"You never think you're good enough until it's too late, typical Kiwi pessimism" Nobile said. "But it makes you better too and work harder I believe."

Indeed Nobile's work-ethic is viewed by many as top-notch.

"Frank brings a tremendous work ethic to the table, that's first and foremost," Golf Channel News Director Matt Hegarty said.

And to go along with this commitment Nobile's empathy for others, including the members of Golf Channel's crew earns him respect among the ranks in the world of golf television.

He engages and converses with every member of the television crew, and there are hundreds of them.

In Hegarty's mind, there is no one person too small for Nobile to chat with.

"He takes his relationships with (tour) players and what he learns from them and translates it to the viewers as well as anybody in the business," Hegarty said.

As a result the emphasis in his analysis is player-focused, both from being one in the past and his strong rapport with those playing now.

"It's more about the competitive element," Nobile said of his style of analysed golf for television. "That ability to think that you can still win even though you're down by five or six, that part isn't talked about enough in our sport."

So Nobile takes up the challenge of presenting that vital perspective of player psychology in his coverage of numerous PGA Tour events from the 18th hole tower - during his major championship preview segments called "Tee to Green" shot on-site weeks before a major, when he hosts "Golf's Greatest Rounds" which highlights from previous major tournaments, and during the network's in-depth "Live From" coverage of the major golf events.

As a result he has become an integral part of the team delivering compelling, in-depth golf content throughout the Golf Channel's "Live From" weeks. His humble attitude has also made him popular with his peers, but you'll have to wait until next month to find out more about that. **NZGM**

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