

## Q & A WITH MATT LAUER

The *Palm Beach Daily News* caught up with Lauer, 50, before tee-off Saturday. Here's what he had to say about Hospice, his father and golf:

### What can you say about the importance of Hospice?

It's something that I think too many people don't know enough about. Even if they know what Hospice means, they probably don't pay attention to it. And the fact of the matter is, perhaps more important over these last 11 years than raising the amount of money we've raised, is the fact that I think we've raised some awareness — that we've got people talking about an organization and the concept that is really going to be important to their lives at some point. And it's more important that they learn more about it now than when they're in crisis. And I think that's something we've accomplished over the years.

### This event is in memory of your father. Can you describe what kind of man he was?

He was an extraordinary guy, (but) not extraordinary in terms of larger-than-life. He wasn't a guy that when he walked into a room, the room stopped. I guess the best way to describe him is he was incredibly steady and reliable and loving. I think he was one of the great fathers you could ever have in the way that he gave us the foundation for going through life and succeeding and loving our children. He was a wonderful person to have in my life.

### Why a golf tournament?

My dad had a passion for golf. I have pictures of my father playing golf with his father. So this is something that his father had a passion for and passed on to my dad, and when I was old enough, maybe eight or nine years old, my dad started to play with me. And kind of adding to that, my parents

had gotten divorced around that time, so those five hours on the golf course for me, seeing my dad on weekends, were very special. I wouldn't see him during the week, and the two of us would spend this time together on the golf course and picked up the passion for it. And we played together throughout the rest of his life. That, and fishing, were the two things we did a lot of together. So when he moved down here to retire, when he was 65, I used to come down here all the time, and we would play around here. So it's just a really meaningful thing for me.

### So how's your golf game now?

At moments it's great, but right now, to be quite honest, my golf game is very much dependent on the fact that I have three young children, a wife, and so I don't get the time to put into it as much as I used to. I still enjoy it as much. I love it. Even if I'm playing poorly, I love it. But there was a time I could play competitively and that time is, unfortunately, no longer here.

### Is there anybody on the course today that you are nervous about?

No. These are all friends. The people who are here today, for the very most part, are just people who care about this organization, Hospice. They've either had some personal experience with it or have had a friend who's involved with it. So the people I'm playing with today are dear friends. Raymond Floyd comes down for this — unfortunately, he can't play today — and Bryant Gumbel is here, who is my best friend. And the other person I'm playing with is a guy I've been friendly with for 25 years. So my particular group is a close-knit group of friends.

### With the economy being where it is, were

### you apprehensive about the response to this year's tournament?

Sure. I think charities and nonprofits and community organizations all around the country are going through a very difficult time. And you have to understand that some people simply who have helped and participated in the past maybe can't afford to do it this year. Although, we try not to price this out of most people's reach. But, yeah, there's no question about it. The unfortunate thing is that the need for Hospice doesn't change in a bad economy. There's as much demand for the programs and the people as there ever is. So you kind of have to just grit your teeth and hope that when we show up here, the people come in and support us. And I think if you look at the numbers, we're probably down a little bit, but I think everybody is, and considering the economy, we're doing really well.

### There's word you're going to be interviewing Tom Cruise on *The Today Show* Monday, three years after your famous discussion about psychiatry. What are your expectations for this interview?

It's the first time he's going to be in, live, in three years since that interview. But I've spoken to him, I've seen him since, and there's absolutely no animosity between the two of us. There really never was. The interview was heated, but I remain friendly with him, I admire him, I admire his commitment to what he believes in. So I think we're going to subtly make reference to what happened in the past and then talk about, just a little bit, not the subject but the phenomenon that it became. And then move on and talk about what he's doing now. So I'm not anticipating, I don't want people to think this is *Rocky II*. Because that's not what I'm going after. I really just want to welcome him back and make reference to it and then chart the course to move on.

— MEGAN V. WINSLOW



J. Robert Lauer  
Matt Lauer's father.