

**HENRIK STENSON**  
**PGA TOUR CONFERENCE CALL**  
**May 16, 2017**



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**JOHN BUSH:** We would like to welcome everyone to today's conference call with 2016 Open Championship winner Henrik Stenson, who posted his first major championship win last year at Royal Troon.

Henrik, first of all, thank you for joining us today.

**HENRIK STENSON:** Thank you.

**JOHN BUSH:** If we can get you to look back at 2016 and your first major, if you can give us some recollections of that victory.

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, I've been going through that one a few times since. It was obviously a childhood dream, a boyhood dream and a career dream come true being The Open champion, and winning it in the way I managed to win it was very special also. I had a strong head-to-head battle with Phil over the last day and a half, two days, as you know, and yeah, to come out on top in that battle was great.

I played -- all in all, it's my finest performance, no question about it when you take everything into it. Yeah, just brings back nice memories talking about it. And still got the Claret Jug in my possession and I'm going to try hard not to have to give it back, even though I will have to give it back for a few days, I presume. I'm going to try my hardest to get it back on that Sunday at Birkdale.

**JOHN BUSH:** You mentioned that final round battle with Phil. Just take us back to that, 10 birdies, final round 63. What was so important about that round and what really worked for you that day?

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, shooting a 63 in the final round in a major, pretty much everything works. Even though I didn't get off to the best of starts, I held a one-shot lead going into the last round and I ended up bogeying the first hole and Phil almost holed out his second shot for a tap-in birdie. He took the lead, and then I just put on a really good display. I made 10 birdies from there on. A lot of solid iron shots and pretty much took all the opportunities I created. As focused and in the moment that I was the last four, five holes, I don't think I've ever been that on the golf course. So it really gave me the answer what it means to be in the zone. I didn't even realize I made 10 birdies when I saw the recording. It was actually Phil that looked up on the scorecard and said, "Really? 10 birdies in the final round?" So yeah, it's just my finest performance in terms of playing and also mentally, to stay focused on what's important. That's the shot in front of you and to execute the whole

round like that was really an achievement.

**JOHN BUSH:** And before we open it up to questions, one last request from me, Henrik. Your 13th Open Championship is coming up at Royal Birkdale. You finished tied for third there in 2008. If we can just get your comments on that venue.

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, it's one of my favorite open courses, for sure. I would say my top two has been Muirfield and Birkdale in terms of the courses, so obviously Troon is not going to be far behind. But it's a great golf course. It's a tough test. It was certainly a tough test in 2008 with the strong winds that we encountered back then.

I guess I would describe it as a fair links course. I think if you hit the fairways, you're going to get the ball on the fairway and it's pretty straightforward and pretty tough. So it's going to be a good venue for us and I'm happy to be back there to defend my title.

**JOHN BUSH:** Great. At this point we will open it up to questions from the media.

**Q. Just about every major champion talks about a sense of calmness they have in the throes of the final round, calm and you seems like it's a peculiar combination, but I'm wondering if you felt that as well and if you can describe the feeling?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** I was just so determined to play a strong round. I knew that this was up to date my best chance to win a major and certainly to win The Open, which being European and that's one of the first major golf events I watched on television when I started to play the game as an 11-year-old boy back in the day.

So I was just really, really determined to play a good round, and the best way for sure to block other things out is to be really focused on what you're doing. It was really that that I think -- it was one of the big things that day. I just gave it my best on every shot, and if you're doing that, you can't really be too occupied about other things. Yeah, I wasn't afraid to lose, that's for sure. I had come close with some good finishes in The Open Championship before and I was just going to give it my best round and I certainly did. So I think if you're really focused on something, then that's going to take away kind of the, you know, the other distractions that might occur.

**Q. Have you ever been afraid to lose?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, I think everyone has over their careers. There's been times when you feel like you don't want to fail, you don't want to play badly in a certain situation, and I was only there for one position. I had been second before, I had been third before and it didn't really matter to me if I finished second or third again, I was just after that first win and I think that kind of aggressive mindset as well certainly helps.

**Q. (Speaking Swedish.)**

**HENRIK STENSON:** I missed out on that.

**Q. That was my attempt to in Swedish say thank you for your time.**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Oh. Thanks, Doug.

**Q. Henrik, since you left Royal Troon with the Claret Jug, have you by any chance bumped into Phil and talked with him about what happened those last two days, and if so, what was that like? And how many times have you watched the replay, and if so, what goes through your mind when you watch it?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, I mean, I saw Phil there the following tournament, which was the PGA Championship, and you know, it takes two to tango. I wouldn't have shot 20 under and put a new championship record in the books if it wasn't for him pushing me all the way, either. So it was a great match and he was very gracious in defeat.

He's been on the winning side and on the losing side before, as we all have throughout the years. I mean, it's not something that I would sit down with him and relive those moments with Phil. I don't think he would be interested in that and I wouldn't even try and do that. But obviously I've seen him before, I've seen him after on a lot of occasions and we just have a lot of respect for each other and for each other's game. Phil's been very -- you know, one of the best players in the world for 25 years, so obviously it was a big thing for me to beat him on one to one. Like I said, he's been on the good end and on the bad end before and you just accept that.

I think it possibly could have been easier for him to accept the defeat given how well he played, also. I think he said that in his remarks afterwards, that it's the best he's ever played without winning. I think the times that you end up losing and you make a mistake, you three-putt the last hole or something like that, those are the ones that really hurt, but he played a great final round, which would have been good enough to win I guess 99 times out of 100 and this time it wasn't. So that's just the nature of the game and sports in general that sometimes you do your best, you play well and it's just not good enough.

**Q. Have you watched -- how many times have you watched it and what goes through your mind when you're watching it?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, I watched the highlights quite a few times in the following weeks and months, in particular with my seven-year-old son. He was very intrigued and he wanted to go and watch the replays quite a few times. I watched it with him.

Yeah, it's always a different experience to watch something when you're -- when it's actually myself on the screen. I don't know, for some reason I don't feel like I'm playing as well as -- as I actually did. I guess being a professional and a bit of a perfectionist, you always analyze things and oh, I could have done that better, I could have hit that shot closer and so forth. But, I mean, at the end of the day I made 10 birdies and shot 63, which is a

phenomenal score. So it couldn't have been -- I guess I'm a bit harsh if I start criticizing that final round. You know, it's a good one to have when you're not playing great and you're feeling a bit down with your game, it's a good one to take and put up on the big screen and watch again. So I'm sure I will do that in the years to come a few times.

**Q. Henrik, there's been a number of 63s that have been shot recently, not just yours and Phil's but we also saw one at Baltusrol and one at Whistling Straits. For the last seven years on average we've seen one each year whereas before that we saw one every two years. Is there any talk amongst all the pros that perhaps this might be the year that either at Quail, Birkdale or Erin Hills somebody might shoot 62 or lower?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** No, not really. I'm not sure if that's something that a lot of my colleagues think about or pay attention to. I mean, it's an interesting fact, like you said, that it used to be maybe every second year, now it seems to be maybe every year. That gives you an indication that low scores are becoming more and more, you know, an often occurrence. Absolutely, I'm sure, I mean sooner or later someone will shoot 62 or lower. It's just the championship golf courses are set up -- I mean it's the toughest test that we encounter most of the time and a lot of times it's par 70 or 71 as well. They're not normally set up to shoot 10, 12 under par, that's for sure.

It's not going to be easy, but it will happen at some point. When, where, I couldn't tell you. I think it's just one of those perhaps someone will think about it a bit more if you -- I didn't even think about it, but I know Phil thought about it when he had his putt, he knew that his putt on the 18th at the first round at Troon was for a 62, to shoot the lowest score in a major championship. So it's certainly on some players' minds, but to my knowledge it hasn't been a big talking point in the last couple years.

**Q. We've also seen 20 under get posted twice and we've seen another bunch of major records all fall. What do you think the reasons are that we've seen so many records either get broken or get tied?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, I think that's just the nature of sport. You always get -- the players get better every year. You move the positions forward and competition gets stronger. So at the same time then, the results are going to get better.

I think also the mindset is a bit more aggressive. The younger players that come out on Tour, they just go out there, they don't really think about it as much on who they're playing against and they just try and make as many birdies as possible, and you see it in the final rounds as well at a lot of tournaments. Back in the day, you know, if you're in the lead, a 69 might be good, but these days someone's always going to post a 64, 65 or something and come from behind and sneak past you if you're not pushing on in the last round.

So I think it's just the way it's heading. More and more players are shooting lower scores and as a result we're going to see more records broken. Possibly the equipment and that side of it has a little bit to do with it as well. The golf courses will play shorter than they used

to and as a result you're going to have shorter clubs into the greens and that's going to create a few more birdie chances. So I think it's a combination of a lot of things.

**Q. Have you been preparing for Erin Hills, and if so, what do you think?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, they only really opened it for practice yesterday, I believe, so I'm heading back to Europe on Friday so I couldn't really get that trip that I was hoping to do. I will just fly in a little bit earlier and hopefully that will be enough preparations. So I will have Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday to get familiar with the course and that should hopefully be enough. My caddie will be there a little bit earlier than me. I don't really know much about it, so we'll take that one as it comes really.

**Q. Henrik, what have been the best moments with the Claret Jug?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, I can't say there's been a bad moment. We've had some nice French bubbly drinks in it and some good talks and good evenings together. But I think the best evening would have had to be the eve of winning it, really. I had the Swedish -- the guy who's kind of Mr. Golf in Sweden, Swedish golf commentator, he did his, I think it was his 50th Open Championship that he was commentating. Obviously even he had started to doubt if we were ever going to see a Swedish male win a major championship. Managed to win it and he was there and invited him to a little after-party and he got to drink out of the Claret Jug and that was a special moment for sure. And then also sharing it with the family and friends. I've had my -- my daughter had some Coca-Cola and my son had some Sprite out of it, so there's been various drinks.

**Q. Good morning, Henrik. The question is, about coming in as a major champion, we know that there are a lot of demands that are placed on a major champion, on your time. Can you just describe the pros and cons, if there are any cons, of coming in as the defending champion to Royal Birkdale and how being the defending champion affects your preparation for this major championship?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Well, if I start to -- I mean, I'm going to go about it pretty much exactly the same way as I did last year and as I have done in the past. I will proceed to Birkdale before the Scottish Open and I'll most likely have a (inaudible) stroller on the first afternoon that I get there and have a look, you bring a wedge and a putter and just walk around, check up on the game plan that we had almost 10 years ago now and see if there's any changes and if that's still standing. And the next day I'll play 18 holes to kind of figure that out and see if I'm happy with that.

Then I will go and play the Scottish Open, which is good preparation. You get a chance to play all the links shots for that week. Then I'll head down and just play nine on Tuesday, nine on Wednesday because I've already done most of the work before so I can just go easy, do some light practice and, you know, you pick up the actual speed of the greens and so on just the days before the tournament and you're fresh and you're ready to go. So that's been a good recipe in the past and I will do the same for next year, for this year's

tournament. That will stay the same.

And in terms of time, it's just in general, I don't know if it's so much just that week, it might be a little bit more even though we're trying to get a few questions out of the way today and at some other times, I'm sure there will be a little bit extra that week and some more signing and all that. All good things, though. It's more in general after winning a major championship you get demand from media, sponsors, everyone around you really. It just kicks up a notch. And yeah, it's something to -- you've got to be better at saying no and turning things down really and still try and keep the focus on the game and everything else that's important. It is a challenge at times, but we've done pretty good so far.

**Q. A couple questions, Henrik. How do you go about when the jug is at home, how do you go about finding the right place to display it? Where is it?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Now it's been at the coffee table in the living room. It's been sitting there for a while. At our other place, because we moved houses here at the end of the year, so at the other one it was either in my office or on the kitchen counter. Yeah, everyone that comes into the house can have a look and I get to see it and family gets to see it every day. It's becoming a little bit of a family member for the year, and yeah, it's going to be tough to give it back. I know Zach said the same last year. He posted a picture with him and the family, like oh, it's time to hand it back. Yeah, I'm sure that's going to be some extra motivation to try to bring it home again.

**Q. Secondly, as long as you've been playing this game, which is going on I think probably your 18th year as a professional, as you get on in years -- I'm talking experience, not so much age -- what are the challenges of staying at a high level? You have spurts of greatness and spurts of just okay golf. How do you try to keep it at a high level, or do you have to give up that fight and just pick your right spots?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** No, I think it's -- I mean, you kind of have that base work that always needs to be done, that maintenance work. And then also trying to become better. I mean, the day you're feeling like you don't want to try and improve and be better as a player, I think all the youngsters are definitely going to swing by you and you're going to start going backwards pretty quickly.

To me, it's a couple of different parts. One is, I mean, I'm a competitor, I'm a competitive person. I like being in the heat of the battle and fighting it out for tournaments, so that's important. I think it's going to be tough the day where you feel like even though you're playing well, you can't put yourself in contention. I think that's going to be the day when you start thinking about, you know, how much longer you want to play. I've got to have that burst of adrenaline of being there on the back nine and feeling like I have a chance to win.

Then in terms of the game, it's, you know, I said that earlier, I have a bit of a little perfectionist on my shoulder. I always want to try to be better and hit better shots and execute things better, so that's always the challenge.

And development in itself. I enjoy practice. I know how well I can do things when I do it really good, and then I just either want to get back there or try and move it a little bit further. So yeah, like anything, you've got ups and downs, you've got times when other things are on your mind and that's kind of natural. So far I always manage to -- even though you're going through a bit of a spell where you're maybe not playing great, at some point you're going to pick it up and get that extra motivation and put that extra energy into it and then you get it all back. Nothing is a straight line, for sure.

**JOHN BUSH:** Henrik, we appreciate your time. Good luck the rest of this summer and we'll see you at Royal Birkdale.

**HENRIK STENSON:** All right, will do. Thanks guys.