

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: JAY HAAS
Wednesday, June 25, 2014

PHIL STAMBAUGH: (Interview in progress) Player in Champions Tour history with a thousand combined starts. You've had a remarkable run here with the first half of the year with 10 Top 10s in 11 starts and a bunch of Top 3s. You won this tournament in 2009 and you were just recently named as the Presidents Cup captain for next year. Just some thoughts, Jay, about the first half of the year. You're really playing good.

JAY HAAS: Yeah, it's been pretty amazing. I played okay last year, but didn't feel like I played my best golf. Didn't feel like it was because I was 60 years old or just turning 60, I just felt like I just wasn't playing very well. I won't say I worked any harder; I just feel like I'm swinging a little bit better. Got a few keys that have been working well for me and I feel pretty confident. Anytime I play well, I feel confident the following week and it's kind of snowballed and built on itself, I guess. I've been doing most everything well, driving the ball pretty well, my irons have been good, chipping and putting's been good. I've had numerous chances to win, I'm disappointed I haven't been able to pull that off yet, but just haven't made the putt or hit a good shot when I really needed to. Hopefully that will happen, but in the meantime I've been pleased with the start obviously and looking forward to the rest of the year starting here.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: You had a little bit of a break last week with a wedding in the family.

JAY HAAS: Right.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Do you come in a little more refreshed for this week?

JAY HAAS: Yeah, I think so, but at the same time for me personally, when I'm playing well I want to play. I'm anxious to get out there and everything. So missing a week wasn't tough, it was my brother-in-law got married and had a great time, a great weekend and everything. But yeah, I'm anxious to get going and hopefully continue what I've done in the early part of the year. This course, I love this golf course, but in two years I have not played very well here, so I'm anxious to see if I can turn that around this week. I don't know what it is, but every hole I get up and I think I'm going to hit a pretty good shot and it just doesn't happen. To me it's a pretty hard golf course. The greens are difficult, you have to put the ball in the correct spot in the fairway to get to the green, get access to the pins, things like that, and I haven't been able to do that. I'm champing at the bit to get at it this week. I'm somewhat refreshed. I just never know when I take a week off or miss a week or two what's going to happen as I show up. It could be good, could be bad, but I'm anxious to see what happens.

Q. Did you play a practice round yesterday?

JAY HAAS: I did not. The Presidents Cup team, which I was the assistant captain, we went to the White House yesterday, so it was a pretty full day getting over there and doing that. We got in late last night about 11:00. Nick Price, Mark McNulty and myself from the tournament here went over there.

Q. I wonder if you can just talk about how cool that was. Also, when you put yourself in position to win and you haven't, do you kind of kick yourself? Do you feel a little more pressure to try and finish it off? What goes through your mind?

JAY HAAS: Kind of a lot of those things. I don't necessarily feel more pressure because I feel like when I'm playing well I don't feel as much pressure. It's when I'm playing poorly that I feel the pressure when I choke, you know, and I don't feel like I've gotten my game in control and all that. It's a little frustrating to be close.

But at the same time I am close and I think I would look back on this year, the first half of the year, and say, wow, I take it as a positive not as a negative that I haven't won. I take it as a positive that I've had a lot of chances to win. And hopefully I have a number of chances the rest of the year.

The other part was about yesterday maybe? Yeah, that was a very amazing event to see the president, the vice president were there greeting us and went through the line. We had some speeches, had some pictures, just to go to the White House and to see his enthusiasm about the tournament, the Presidents Cup, and he's been the honorary chairman. He threw out a lot of barbs to the international team actually in his speech. I don't know how much they liked it. There was six of them of the international players there and all of the U.S. players were on site, so it was a pretty special afternoon, evening, and pretty proud to be involved with that.

Q. You had that stretch, you're still having that stretch of every week it's a runner-up or a third place. I forget how many there were in a row, but there were a lot of them. When you look back at that, are you shocked or amazed or surprised? What exactly goes through your mind when you think, wow, every week a second or a third?

JAY HAAS: I think as a golfer we all expect to play well when we come out to a tournament. Usually that doesn't happen week in and week out except for a handful of players. Bernhard's had an unbelievable run for the last three years, four years, I guess.

You know, I'm a little surprised in the sense that, as I've gotten older I think it gets more difficult and things like that. I finished, I don't know, in the 20s somewhere, low

20s on the money list last year after finishing maybe seventh the year before, so it was trending the wrong way. So I'm very appreciative of this trend to the good. I feel like when people ask me how much longer I'm going to play and I usually say when I go out and I play my best golf and I shoot 75 or 6, if I can't do it, if a 71 or 2 is just beyond the realm of possibility, then I don't want to do this anymore. At least that's what I say now, I don't think I will want to do that. At the end of the year I felt like there was still better golf. I didn't think that my game was steadily getting worse, I felt like I could do better than I did last year. I came out early in the year, I won't say I worked hard but I had good quality practice and came up with some certain swing thoughts, which in a thousand tournaments, I've had 10,000 different swing thoughts but very few of them last more than a week or a day. So it's been fun to have a couple thoughts that have lasted and stuck with me and that I trust and things that I've done before but just for some reason or another they're working right now.

Q. You must have had some idea about the Presidents Cup thing was going to happen.

JAY HAAS: Right.

Q. Now that it actually has happened, it's two weeks after the announcement, two or three weeks whatever, what are your thoughts now as opposed to when it first hit you? I remember what you were saying then was, wow, this is a real surprise.

JAY HAAS: Yeah, I guess I never -- I looked at who the captains were, I had Jack Nicklaus, I had Lanny Wadkins, I had Hal Sutton. You know, I had some world-class Hall of Fame players as captains and I don't fit that mold. And you look at the captains of the teams in the past, I guess I am the first one that has not won a major on the PGA TOUR, whether it be the Ryder Cup or the Presidents Cup. But at the same time it was something that I didn't aspire to. I didn't say, boy, someday I would really love to be the captain of one of these teams. But I've really enjoyed the last three terms of being the assistant captain with Fred, first at San Francisco at Harding Park and then in Australia and then last year at Muirfield Village. Just being with those guys and feeling a part of them and feeling like I know them pretty well, I think had I not been in that position for those last three terms, I don't think I would have been a good choice because of my age. In another year I'll be 61 years old and I look at the people who I think maybe a captain should be, somebody maybe a little more current. At least that was my mindset for a long time. I think the captain basically is the bus driver; you know, get them to the course on time. Not taking anything away from the past captains or anything like that, but I don't have any kind of inspirational speeches planned or anything. I think the guys obviously know how to play. If they play well that week, we'll win. If not, it will be a struggle. I think that Nick Price probably feels the same way. There's only so much you can do or say to get the guys ready. But I'm extremely excited about it, I think more so as it's gone on. I'm realizing how special it is.

Q. Kenny was in here talking about coming back to where he won his first major as a professional last year. You just mentioned the run Bernhard's been on. When Kenny gets hot, are there few guys out here that can sort of keep pace? Is he just one of those guys that when you see those red figures, do your eyes sort of light up and go, man, he's obviously --

JAY HAAS: I would think he would be like a real power pitcher that hit in the black every time with his pitches, it's going to be a long night for the batters. When Kenny gets driving the ball really well, he's tough to beat because he hits it so far. If he puts it in the fairway, he's got one, two, three clubs shorter than me coming into the greens, he's a tough match.

But I will say that there's a few guys out here now, you know, Bernhard, when he gets going and he drives the ball pretty long and straight, his irons are good, when he gets going, you can say well, how do you beat that guy. But Kenny is one of those handful of guys I would say that are difficult to hang with when he's on. There's just -- Peter Jacobsen and I were partners at the Legends a few weeks ago and he was playing -- Kenny was playing with Russ Cochran and they were hitting it so far by us on the long course, thank goodness we had the short course to kind of compensate. But it would be like trying to return, you know, some fast serve every time. He was just wailing away at these drivers and hitting them in the middle of the fairway. They shot 10-under and missed a bunch of them. So when he's on, he is very, very difficult to contend with.

Q. When you said the players were at the White House, you meant last --

JAY HAAS: The past Presidents Cup team, yes, from Muirfield Village. So it was the 12 players, the three captains from our side, Davis was there, Freddie and myself. Then there were six of the international team players along with Nick Price, Mark McNulty, Tony Johnstone, and Shigeki was there, too. Shigeki was a captain last year. So they had 10 of their people, we had 15 of ours. Ernie, Brendon de Jong, Marc Leishman, Jason Day, Graham DeLaet. Went through them last night, I'm missing one more. It was a good crowd, good participation.

Q. Jay, I know it's way too early to speculate but is there a possibility that one of the -- you might select maybe one of the Americans with a Korean background? Nick has KJ.

JAY HAAS: Right.

Q. Have you given anything like that a thought because there are some real good young ones that may not make the team, may need a captain's pick to get there, but is that something you would consider?

JAY HAAS: I didn't think of that, but thank you for that angle.

Q. You're welcome. Anytime. Do you need another assistant? I'm around.

JAY HAAS: I would think that between Fred and Davis and I -- I say Davis, he helped last year, he was an assistant last year and if he's not making the team or if he wants to do it, then he will be another assistant. You know, we'll talk about all different scenarios but that's one that I did not think of. But I would guess, you know, a Korean-American would be maybe just that, more American, I guess, and maybe not have the background and the language and things like that. But I don't know who that might be and who those guys were. If you could give me a list of guys, I would appreciate that.

Q. But just think, in Korea, in the singles you could match them up against Adam Scott, for example, and have the crowd on your side.

JAY HAAS: There you go.

Q. Like maybe in Canada with Mike Weir.

JAY HAAS: I can write these things down, thank you.

Q. I'll give you a list.

JAY HAAS: Give me a list, please.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Any other questions for Jay? Jay, good luck this week.

JAY HAAS: Thanks very much.