

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: JOE DURANT
Thursday, June 26, 2014

DAVE SENKO: We would like to welcome Joe Durant, opening with a 6-under 64, current leader. You started a week ago with a 64 in the first round at the Travelers Championship.

Joe, with that, looks like seven birdies and just the one blemish on 12, maybe just talk a little bit about your day.

JOE DURANT: The course was a little wet obviously. We had the ball in hand, which was a good thing. The greens were very soft, very receptive, so you're going to see a lot of good scores today. I hit a lot of fairways and greens and I think that was the key to shooting the number I shot today.

DAVE SENKO: Birdies, start at No. 2.

JOE DURANT: Hit the par 5 in two with a 3-iron, two-putted from about 30 feet. Three was probably, if you can have a turning point on the third hole of a tournament, that was probably it. I hit it in the right greenside bunker and holed it from the bunker, which I hit a terrible iron shot but made a great bunker shot and made the deuce there.

DAVE SENKO: How far was that?

JOE DURANT: Probably 15-yard bunker shot, something like that.

DAVE SENKO: Then back-to-back six and seven.

JOE DURANT: Six is the par 3, I hit a good 5-iron in there about eight feet and made that. Seven, I drove it to the front of the green, two-putted from 30 feet, 40 feet, but I made a good second putt. My first putt was eight feet away from the hole, made a good second putt.

DAVE SENKO: And then 12.

JOE DURANT: 12, I plugged it in the right fairway bunker, couldn't get it out, you know. Got it to the left side of the bunker and still couldn't get to the green. I mean, I had to get up and down from 60 yards for five there, so I made a good five. Came back with a nice birdie on the next hole, hit a 7-iron to about 18 feet or so and made that.

16, I hit driver, 7-iron to about 12 feet, made that.

18, driver, 3-wood to about 60 yards, hit my wedge shot I guess about a 12-footer, made that.

DAVE SENKO: How far was your putt on 16 again?

JOE DURANT: 16 was about 12 to 15 feet, somewhere in there.

DAVE SENKO: Okay. Questions?

Q. Joe, how was the rough? Did you manage to stay out of it or were there any times where it kind of grabbed you?

JOE DURANT: Fortunately I think I hit every fairway but No. 12, so I didn't have to tangle with it too much. Steve Jones and Rick Fehr were in my group and a couple times they put it in there. It's not that it's the thickest rough but it's very wet and dense. So it's not the deepest, I should say, but it's very dense rough. It's a penalty if you get in there, you're at the mercy of the lie obviously. It can be tough in spots.

Q. Joe, I guess you're still in the early stages of your Champions Tour career I guess and you're still playing a little bit on the PGA TOUR. How are your expectations different like when you're out here as opposed to at the Travelers or when you're playing out there?

JOE DURANT: I don't know if I necessarily have different expectations, I'm just trying to show up and be competitive and play my way into contention. I had a really good first round last week, I hardly missed a shot and then I backed it up with a very mediocre second day. I think I'm putting a little more pressure on myself in the regular tour events than I am out here. I think I'm coming out here and just enjoying playing. Out there I'm still trying to keep my job and it's kind of been reflected in some of my play out there. I've had some really good rounds and I've had some not so good rounds. I really know I need to string four good ones together out there to keep my card out there.

Q. I think this is your fifth event out here. How are you deciding when to play out here and when to play out there?

JOE DURANT: Really, it's worked out great and I knew when I looked at the schedule this year that it was going to work out like this. The majors out here were going to be weeks where I was probably not going to play the regular tour, and there were a couple other weeks like Atlanta that I wanted to get off to a start there, played Des Moines a couple weeks ago. So it's worked out nicely. But I'm going to play the next four tour events that I can get in. Other than the U.S. Senior Open, this will be my last senior event until the end of August probably.

Q. Then you played in the Open at '07 at Oakmont?

JOE DURANT: I did, yes.

Q. How do you compare this course to that? I know it's pretty close to here.

JOE DURANT: Oakmont was so dry and fast that year it was really difficult. For two days -- I missed the cut by a shot. For two days I remember I hit the ball really well, but I mean the greens just gave me fits. I struggled both days on the greens and missed, like I said, by a shot.

Q. You played real well in Atlanta, I remember that, you were in here in Atlanta. You talked about putting more pressure on yourself on the regular tour. Is that a good thing or a bad thing when you come out here? Do you need to put more pressure on yourself out here to maybe score better?

JOE DURANT: I think I'm putting way too much pressure on myself out there. I think I'm still putting pressure on myself no matter where I play because I want to play well, but out there it's getting to be overkill. I'm trying so hard to make magic happen in one week and it's just not working out very well. I played very well last week at Hartford but the two rounds in the middle killed me and I finished 30th. It easily could have been a Top 10 week if I had just managed my game a little better Friday and Saturday.

Q. How much pressure, if that's the right word, are you putting on yourself when you come out here? You said it's not as much. What exactly is the mindset?

JOE DURANT: I'm just coming out and enjoying being out here, enjoying being with the guys and I'm just looking at this as a reward for having a good tour career and I just want to have fun when I come out here and play. I need to adopt that same attitude on the other one and I might do a little better.

Q. Joe, (inaudible) talked last week about the fact that (inaudible) a hole you can be pretty aggressive on going but course management is going to be important especially with some of these putting surfaces. What was the key for you today? I know you talked about that 60-footer and saving bogey. Where in your round do you think were some of the keys?

JOE DURANT: The fairways are fairly wide here, and as soft as they are, they're not playing near as tight as they typically would. If it was firm and fast, it's a very difficult driving course because a lot of fairways have slope to them. Being that they're soft, they're much more generous but you still need to put it in the fairway here.

From there, it's not the longest course we play so you can attack, especially as soft

as the greens are. Obviously that can change in a couple of days if the sun bakes things out a little bit. You know, I had a lot of good numbers today into holes. I had a lot of good full shots where I can be aggressive. I think some of the hardest shots are the little wedges where you don't put too much spin on them and jerk them, you know, far away from the hole, especially when they're close to the ridges and whatnot.

Q. Joe, on 3, what yardage off the tee, what did you hit there?

JOE DURANT: I hit a 5-iron. I think we had I guess it was about 185, 190, somewhere in that range and I flared it to the right bunker over there.

Q. Joe, do you consider yourself a guy -- I know you've posted some of these numbers -- who can go low? Are you comfortable going low?

JOE DURANT: You know, I think we all can, we all have to at some stage of our career. I've never shied away from it, I guess. It all comes down to making the putts. If you make the putts, the game's real easy. If you're burning edges, it's not that easy.

Q. When you get a lead out there, I mean, coming into the next day is your mind somewhere else than it would be if you were behind, let's say? Are you confident or are you just trying to go out there like it's your first day every day?

JOE DURANT: You know, it's so early, I mean I would be surprised if someone didn't better 64 today honestly. You just have to go play. It's going to take a lot of birdies this week with the conditions as they are right now, just got to keep the hammer down.

Q. It seems to me that on this tour you get a chance to play great old golf courses like Fox Chapel that maybe you don't as often anymore on the regular tour, although there's a lot of them. Do you enjoy this kind of golf, do you enjoy coming to courses like this?

JOE DURANT: After I played three holes Tuesday, I was in love with this place. We just don't play courses like this that much anymore and it's such a treat to play a golf course like this. I feel bad for some of the guys on the regular tour that we don't get to see this that much anymore. We play a lot of the stadium courses, which aren't bad courses, don't get me wrong, but to play traditional courses like a Seth Raynor like this, it's a treat and looking forward to playing it three more days.

Q. That's why I asked, because it seems like the Champions Tour, you guys get courses like this more frequently. You play the stadium courses, too. But you talk about the young guys, what would you say to them about not having the opportunity to play courses like this?

JOE DURANT: I think sometimes, I know it can be taxing, but during certain weeks when maybe you're not in the pro-am on Wednesday and you're in a city like this if there's a tour event, take the time to try to sneak away and play one like this just to appreciate the different architecture and appreciate what the guys had to work with back in the day when they built golf courses like this. This has some of the most beautiful bunkering I've ever seen. And the green complexes, they have a lot of undulation but if you put it in the right area, you can make putts on these greens. Some of the complexes now, you could be in the right area of the green and still not have much of a chance. So it's a real treat. I would challenge the guys to go play some of the these golf courses.

DAVE SENKO: Thanks, Joe.

JOE DURANT: Thanks.