

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: BERNHARD LANGER
Thursday, August 14, 2014



PHIL STAMBAUGH: Okay, Bernhard, thanks for joining us this morning actually still. Coming back to the Dick's Sporting Goods Open, you've had a fantastic year with four victories, two majors, 13 shots at the Senior Open was a fantastic performance, so you're coming in with a lot of confidence and leading the Schwab Cub by 355 points. Just some thoughts about coming back to Endicott for this event.

BERNHARD LANGER: It's always great to come back to the Dick's Sporting Goods Open. It's a great test of golf, beautiful venue and the people here are trying very hard to make this an excellent event. In Dick's we have a wonderful sponsor putting on all sorts of things like the big show tomorrow night year after year, making this a very attractive event for not just the professionals but also the amateurs.

In regards to my season so far, it's been phenomenal, really good from the very start. I've been only one time out of the top 10, and as you said, four wins and lots of seconds and thirds. It's not easy to be that consistent and at the top week after week, so I'm very blessed and a lot of fun playing so well.

Q. For those of us who will never experience it, what does it feel like to be so automatic these days, to be in such a groove?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it's a wonderful feeling, it really is and it doesn't happen very often amongst golfers because we have, you know, 80 or 150 competitors, we play on different grasses, different venues, different time zones, all sorts of things, and it doesn't take a whole lot to be just off by a few shots. Nowadays if you're just a little bit off, you finish 20th or 30th or even worse, so it's very unusual and I'm really enjoying this run. As I usually say, winning breeds confidence and confidence breeds winning. It's a nice cycle to be in and it's just as bad when you're at the other spectrum of the cycle when you're missing cuts and you're not playing well and you lose your confidence and one thing leads to another and the cycle goes downward.

It's been a fantastic ride. It's almost like when things don't go so well, you expect them to pick up any hope. Like if I go four, five six holes without whatever, making a birdie or even over par or something, when you're thinking bad, you think oh, well, here we go, I'm going to shoot five or six over. When you're thinking well and feeling good about your game and yourself, even when things don't go well for a little stretch, you're thinking, well, it's going to happen any minute now and it often does.

Q. I'm inclined to ask you if you feel comfortable on this golf course, but I guess I'll ask you is there any golf course these days you do not feel

comfortable on?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, that's a great question. I always answer it this way: When you play well, you should be feeling good on any golf course because if you're a world class player, you ought to be able to hit all the shots, you ought to be able to hit fades or draws or whatever it takes. Certainly there's some courses where some players always do well and some where some players don't do well but I believe if I'm on top of my game, I can play good anywhere.

This golf course in particular, probably you need to drive it very straight. It's maybe the narrowest fairway we play all year next to the U.S. Open. Very tight fairways for the most part, lots of trees, fairways bunkers and other things so you have to drive it well, otherwise you're not going to be in the running. You have to hit most of the fairways to have an opportunity to attack some of the flags, and if you hit in the trees there's a good chance you're not going to hit the green and then you struggle to make par or even worse. There's some water in play. It's a very good test of golf but I think the driver is the key club next to the putter obviously.

Q. Colin said he's hoping to finish as close behind you as he can for second place. How much fun is that being able to compete against your friend in these kinds of tournaments?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, he's being very nice but Colin is a great champion himself. He won two majors this year and he can outplay any of us when he's on. Depends on who's at the top of the game, who gets the breaks. Sometimes you hit a tree and the ball goes back to the fairway, or what happened to me at the U.S. Senior Open, I hit the flagstick on the ninth green and instead of going in or being close, it came off the green and I made bogey. So you can have those certain turnarounds or breaks, whether it's good or bad, that can really make or break your round at times. Got to consider all that into it.

There's a lot of good players here and I haven't won here yet, so I'm eager to go out here and hopefully do well. I've had a bit of a break, went to New York and visited my oldest son there, didn't touch a club for five days in a row, so hopefully I'm not rusty. But my practice sessions haven't been too bad and I get another day of golf in this afternoon and hopefully I'll be ready tomorrow.

Q. Can you just talk a little bit about the opportunity that the Champions Tour presents to all of you guys out here to be able to continue your careers but still compete at such a high level against quality players?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, it is a fantastic opportunity, no doubt about it. When I first came out at age 50, I thought this could be bittersweet because I was still playing well enough to compete on the regular tour for a number of years. I didn't lose my exempt status, I was still exempt on the European Tour and U.S. Tour, I could have

played anywhere. It only took two events out here and I knew this is where I want to be the rest of my professional golfing life, not knowing how many years there would be but this is where I want to be. It's a lot of fun, it's great competition, you're playing with and against some of the legends in the game. We get to be amongst guys that are our age and we know their kids and the wives, you know, similar interests. There's all sorts of common things that we share. I've done the other thing for many, many years. I've been on the European Tour, I've been around the world many, many times, I've played anywhere you can possibly play. Played the U.S. Tour and all over the place and I want to take it a little bit easier and focus on one spot and the Champions Tour is that spot and I'm very happy to be here.

Q. You spoke of cycles and four years ago in 2010 you won two majors and the Schwab Cup. How do you bring that cycle to that high level again? What's the formula?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, I'm not sure there is really a formula as such. I think people focus a lot on the Schwab Cup. What some of you might not notice is that I won the money list five out of the six years that I've been out here and I could have won the Schwab Cup all those five years as well. The one year I didn't win the money list I had surgery on my thumb and I didn't play for a number of months, several months, and I was playing hurt so I just didn't have a good season because of my injury. But the other five years I was certainly in contention. I could have won one or two majors every one of those seasons. I could have won the Schwab Cup three or four out of those five years. So it's just sometimes those small breaks, it could be one shot here or there at a time that makes all the difference. Out here on the Champions Tour, especially for the Schwab Cup, there's a very high focus on the majors with the double points and the Schwab tournament at the end of the year, which gets double points, so that throws everything in that direction. Like Monty won the U.S. Senior Open, the prize money was increased that year, this year by a lot, so he's got like, what, 1260, 80 points, something like that, which is a lot more than any other even major on our tour or any other tournament. You have to win five or six tournaments at times to get to that point level.

Q. Along those lines, as you look at the rest of the year, how do you think it's going to play out? Is there a strategy? Is it kind of like match play with you and Monty? Do you add tournaments? He mentioned he's going to play six events. What's your strategy for the rest of the year to win the Schwab Cup?

BERNHARD LANGER: I really don't change my strategy a great deal. I had a certain plan set out at the beginning of the year to play a number of events. I'm not going to play -- we're on a four-in-a-row stretch. I don't do four in a row, I usually don't do three in a row anymore. I've done that when I was younger.

So there will be one or two weeks where I'm taking off but I'll be playing most of them coming in, but that was the plan from the very beginning. The goal is to hopefully

increase my lead by the time the Schwab Cup comes around so there's not as much pressure on me and it can't be snatched away from me like it was, what, two years ago I guess when Tom Lehman won. I was going in with a 200 or 300 point lead but he won 880 points or something, so Tom won the Schwab Cup and the Schwab trophy year-long thing because he did extremely well throughout the year but very well the last tournament.

Q. Finally, with golf back in the Olympics after a hundred years, what would it feel like to you to play in the Olympics relative to like the Ryder Cup or the --

BERNHARD LANGER: I've never been to the Olympics. I've been in the Ryder Cup. I think it would be an unbelievable experience to represent your country and your flag and be in the Olympics. I've enjoyed watching the Olympics on TV and it would be phenomenal for me to be part of that but chances are pretty slim. I don't even know what they go by. I guess it's world rankings and I don't have any world ranking points out here, so I don't think there's a lot of hope for me to be part of that but I certainly would love the opportunity.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Okay, Bernhard. Good luck this week.

BERNHARD LANGER: Thank you.