



PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: JAY HAAS
Wednesday, October 29, 2014

DAVE SENKO: We would like to welcome Jay Haas, currently third on the money list and recently won, at age 60, won the Greater Hickory Kia Classic, which at the time kind of put a, you know, great year for you. As you know, winners at the age of 60 are rare, but maybe just talk about your year. It's been a terrific year. I think you've doubled your earnings from a year ago --

JAY HAAS: Right.

DAVE SENKO: -- and number of Top 10s. And impressive, just one round over par this year. That's never been done before on this tour.

JAY HAAS: Well, it's been a pretty satisfying year certainly for me. After last year, you know, at 59 I didn't play that great. I played pretty well toward the end of the year, which kind of helped me toward this year, but overall I just felt like I didn't play as well as I was capable of playing. It would be a different story last year if I felt, well, 59, I'm getting older, it's just kind of the way it is. But I felt like there was better golf for me out there. I won't say that I went into some huge workout program. I didn't eat differently. I just played better this year. A couple swing thoughts that seemed to click, but I've had 10,000 swing thoughts over the years and most, 9,900-whatever had not worked, but a few of them this year did and just gave me some confidence early on.

I putted very well most of the year and it's been unbelievably gratifying, satisfying. I don't know what word you would want to use, but it's been -- I don't know that I could have thought that I would have played this consistently, this well for as many tournaments as I did. I think I probably realistically had probably three or four nice chances to win, and for some reason or another prior to Hickory I wasn't able to pull through on those. That was somewhat frustrating, but it was also, I felt good about my chances because I was getting more chances. It wasn't just finish third and shoot 66 the last day and sneak into third place. I was kind of right there a lot of times. Peter Jacobsen and I came really close to winning the team tournament and I played well prior to that. That was probably a really good chance for both of us to win there. It's been a ton of fun, and to be third on that list and to have been third for quite a while, I don't think anybody was going to catch Bernhard this year. It's just been incredible what he's done. And Monty also, what a great year they've had. So to be third is pretty special.

DAVE SENKO: Jay, two years ago you shot your low round on the Champions Tour, 60, here. What are your recollections of that?

JAY HAAS: I played extremely well all week here and it was funny because it was one of those days where I wasn't even sure how many under I was. I think I was 3-under on the front nine, which is a great front nine for me, but there were a lot of guys that shot 2-, 3-, 4-under on that front nine. But then I birdied 10, 11, 12, 13, and had about an eight- or 10-footer on 14 and I'm thinking to myself, you know, who knows what can happen. Par's 70 and I started thinking about shooting something crazy. I missed that putt and then I hit it pretty close at 15 and -- for eagle, missed about an eight-footer there for eagle, so I had a little bit of a letdown, but then birdied 17 and 18.

I guess at the end it was just one of those magical days. I played with Fred Couples, we had a ball and he has a knack of relaxing everybody, I think, that he plays with. We were talking about it wasn't like, wow, you're playing great today, Jay. He would never say anything like that. He would be great in the dugout in a no-hitter, he would just have everybody at ease whether he was saying anything or not saying anything, his body language and all that. It was fun doing it with him.

Today as I was going around, I'm thinking, how in the hell did I shoot 60 on this course? This is not that easy out here. I do think the course was playing a little faster off the tee two years ago. It seems to be playing a little bit longer this year but the greens are firmer. I don't see at this point right now the scores being as good maybe as they were a couple years ago. I love being back here. This course is in immaculate shape and glad to be in this event.

Q. You were talking about all the swing thoughts. (Inaudible) How long do you spend with something before you put it away?

JAY HAAS: That's a good question. I think for me, I can try a swing thought and then I try to put myself in the position of being on the 18th hole at Pebble Beach with a one-shot lead. Can this swing thought hold up in that situation, can I get it in the fairway, can I get the next one up there between the ditches and make a par to win the tournament? That's kind of what I think about when I try certain things. If they're not totally comfortable, they might be on the wide open driving range, my pull hook or high to the right or something, you can just get another ball and hit another one, no big deal, but usually those go away pretty quickly.

I think when I take a swing thought to the course and then hit a quality shot under pressure, and one shot in particular this year that kind of confirmed that I was doing a lot of the right things was on the 17th hole at Boca early in the year, our second tournament of the year. I needed what I thought was a birdie-eagle finish or at least birdie-birdie, might have an outside chance to get into a playoff. I had a 5-iron, pin was way in the back right, wind was kind of left-to-right into me. It's a pretty hard hole and I hit the most beautiful 5-iron shot about six feet behind the hole. I missed the putt, but just the fact that I was able to hit that shot in that situation. You know, I know

it's not the U.S. Open, all that stuff, but this is what I got right now, this is the shot I need to hit right now to have a chance and I did. So that was really, that was a big shot for me and I've used that a lot this year, the thought of being able to hit that shot under pressure.

Some swing thoughts, to answer your question, some last days, some last minutes, but I think over the years I know that if this thing doesn't feel pretty comfortable right away, it's gone.

Q. So when you're on the range practicing before you get ready to play, how many swing thoughts have you -- you're not playing with that many. How many are you double checking before you go?

JAY HAAS: Hopefully no more than one or two. You know, if I've got seven or eight, then I'm in big trouble. A lot of my swing thoughts are set up, aim, ball position, things like that. But then I'll put myself with a 5-iron or with a 3-wood or a 7-iron and think about a shot that I have to hit that day on a par 3 or a tough par 4 or something like that and hit some of those shots. If they're consistently going out there the way I'm imagining I need to hit them, then I'm good with that.

Q. Jay, you had an episode with the back issue at the Senior Open. Can you update us on that?

JAY HAAS: Somebody asked me technically speaking what's the matter, and I said 60. Today I felt a little stiff and not real flexible and not real powerful out there today, but I didn't give it a good warmup, I didn't spend a lot of time in the trailer this morning before my round and didn't hit a lot of balls and things like that. I'm certainly playable. I've played pretty well in the past two months or so and I feel good during tournament rounds. I don't feel like I'm hurting so badly that I can't swing or anything like that, but I wish it felt better. All the years of Fred complaining about his back -- he didn't really complain a lot, it's just an issue, you hear about it, I know what he's going through and I don't think mine hurts nearly as bad as his has for a long time. But it's not fun. As I'm sure a lot of people have had back issues. It's just golf's probably the worst thing we could possibly do for it. But it's okay. I think I'm tired of hearing myself say that it doesn't feel good.

Q. With this being the last event of the year, when did you start ratcheting up the Presidents Cup preparations or how far along are you along those lines?

JAY HAAS: I'm looking at it. We talked about it at lunch today and I'm looking at the Top 10 and then I'm looking at the next 10 and some of the guys who maybe will move into there and things like that. I'm going to try to -- probably won't get to any events anymore this year, but I'm going to try to get to some early season events. Certainly I'll be at Doral, I'll be at the Masters, I'll be at the PLAYERS Championship, and the team I think will start to take shape by then.

I want to meet some of these guys and be around them. I've met most of them, but I want to be around them and just get them comfortable with me. I met Chris Kirk at the TOUR Championship this fall and what a nice kid he is. So he's looking really strong for the team if he has a good year this year. So I just want to -- I want those guys to know me as well. I think I have a little bit of an in being the assistant captain the last three times with Fred, and then having Bill out there that can kind of lead me to the guys a little bit and know that he's 32 and some of these guys are his age or younger, things like that.

But yeah, I'm looking at it already. I'm looking at it, thinking about it. I'm sure we'll go over there with some quality players. And hopefully, like I said, I'm just giving the speeches this year and Fred's doing the same thing he always did, so it will be a fun time. I'm actually going over there Sunday night. I'll be there Tuesday morning for a press day Tuesday and Wednesday in South Korea, so I'm glad I don't have to play after that.

Q. Jay, what does it say about Bernhard's season that you played at such a consistently high level and Monty's had such a great season and he still ran away with the points?

JAY HAAS: What does that say? Well, you said Monty but you meant Bernhard?

Q. No, what does it say about Bernhard's season that you guys played at such a high level and he ran away with it?

JAY HAAS: I don't know that you can have enough superlatives on what he accomplished this year and how well he played in the past, well, his whole career but certainly the past two and three years out here. He's just relentless. I didn't play in Cary, the SAS tournament, a few weeks ago and I did turn on the TV on Friday and I saw he was 1-over on the back nine. He and Monty and Nick were playing together and they were all kind of indifferent, even or 1-over, something like that. I guess he shot 1-over that day.

The next time I turned it on was Sunday morning and Bernhard was in second place. He never gives up, he never throws in the towel. Not that anybody does out here, but you get kind of halfway here and think it's not my week. I don't think he ever thinks that. His work ethic is wonderful when he's out here. He's very, very single minded what he's going to do and what he wants to accomplish. But he is as consistent as anyone, never afraid. He putts very well.

Somebody said what's he going to do in 2016 when he has to not have the long putter. Well, he can still have a long putter, he just can't anchor it, but I guarantee he's already figured it out. He's been working on it and he will not miss a beat, I don't think.

He looks the same as he did 20 years ago. Physically he's probably a half a pound lighter or heavier. You kind of pat him on the arm, nice playing, and it's like hitting this table here. He's in great shape. It says that he's the sheriff and somebody needs to come in and be pretty darn special to knock him out of that role.

Q. On an unrelated topic, you brought up Freddie's demeanor and how great he would be in a no-hitter situation. There's a lot of people pushing for him to be the next Ryder Cup captain. How would he be in that role especially at this time with the U.S. problems?

JAY HAAS: I could only speak to how the players responded to him in the last three Presidents Cups. I don't know what it is, it's hard to put your finger on it. He just has a knack at relaxing the guys.

Somebody asked what were some of Freddie's speeches like or, you know, and they were zero. In fact one time somebody said, Fred, give us something tomorrow or something, and he kind of hemmed and hawed and he goes, Jaybird, what do you have to say? I didn't know I was on the mark here.

But I think that he just, he's way more into it than he lets on and that we see. He knows the details. I'll say something about, What about so-and-so and so-and-so? He'll say, You're going to have this guy do this? He's already figured the scenario out. He's very, very astute when it comes to matching the guys up, I think.

I don't know. I think he would be a great choice. I think the players again have responded to him in the past. I think he's still current enough. You watch him play at the Masters and he whips most of them down there, at least for a while until he gets tired of walking the hills or something. It's hard to put your finger on it for me, but the guys just seem to -- what is a good leader, what qualities do they have. It's kind of an intangible that I think Fred has it.

DAVE SENKO: Thank you, Jay.

JAY HAAS: Thank you.