

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: BERNHARD LANGER
Wednesday, June 10, 2015



DAVE SENKO: We would like to welcome Bernhard Langer, the 2014 Constellation SENIOR PLAYERS champion, into the media center. Bernard, maybe just get us started. You come in as defending champion and the importance of this event on our calendar during the year as far as being one of the five majors.

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, we have five majors and every one of them is important, especially for the Schwab Cup ranking. It was a great win for me last year just to edge out Jeff Sluman in the playoff and it's a feather in your cap when you win a major because you know you're playing against the best in the world and you're playing on a tough venue. So it's always extremely nice to beat the best and to beat them on a tough golf course.

DAVE SENKO: You have had a chance to play the course so far. What are your impressions?

BERNHARD LANGER: It looks in fantastic shape. It's a beautiful parkland course, quite challenging, some slopes on the fairways and some very demanding greens. I've only played it once, but just a number of the slopes on the greens caught my eye, my attention. You've got to be very careful and precise where you hit the ball with your second shot, it could roll off the green or you have an immensely difficult putt, first one, and may get a number of three putts if you're not careful.

Q. Bernhard, I'm assuming you've never played this course before this week, so when you come to a new venue, what are you trying to get out of your practice rounds? Are you making mental notes, are you writing stuff down in your yardage book to prepare you for play on Thursday?

BERNHARD LANGER: Both. I make certain notes in my book and arrows and things where I think I want to place the tee ball, and then from there, where do I go with certain pin positions. Obviously we don't know exactly where the pins will be, but we have an idea because they need four of them, they're not going to use the same one, so we try to prepare for that and make mental notes. You know, even off the tee sometimes you don't know where -- you can't see the fairway, so there's three or four tee shots where you don't really see anything. So you've got to memorize where you want to go, what kind of shape you might want to hit off the tee, is it better to hit a fade or a draw to keep it on the fairway.

The wind plays a big role, too. I played the practice round in very strong winds, so if that wind is gone or from a different direction, the golf course will play totally different and you have to be ready for that because it can happen over the next four days where it's not a south wind, where your tee ball was on Monday or Tuesday was here and the next days it could be 60 yards further that way or further this way according to the wind and the conditions. So you've got to be ready for that.

There's a few trees that are leaning in where the branches are interfering. If you're on the left side of the fairway or the right side of the fairway and there's a big tree, all of a sudden you're blocked out by the tree and you have to punch it underneath or hit a big slice or hook or stuff like that. So there's a lot to be taken in in one day and I'm going to have another good look this afternoon as I'm out there with my pro-am partners.

Q. How different and how important are practice rounds at courses that you haven't played than maybe a venue you've played before?

BERNHARD LANGER: Far more important, especially on a golf course like this where the greens are severe and the course can play very different according to the wind conditions. You really have to pay attention, I think. If you play a practice round on a course where you've already played 30 or 40 times, it's not that important. You're just acclimating yourself with the conditions, the kind of grass you have, the bunkers, the sand, speed of the greens, but you pretty much have your game plan set. Here, the game plan might change. I might have a game plan set for Thursday and all of a sudden I'm realizing, oh, that wasn't the right thing so need to do something different tomorrow, that kind of thing on certain holes.

Q. You've had a predictably or normally outstanding year statistically. I look at the stats every week and you're in the top two or three, number two in scoring and all the important stats. What's prevented you from winning?

BERNHARD LANGER: This year you're talking about? Just not quite there. I'm firing on three cylinders instead of four and I'm only 80 percent, 90 percent, not 100 at times. So it's a combination of hitting a couple of loose shots, maybe a couple of bad putts and, you know, maybe even getting frustrated here and there. Or just not thinking clearly or playing overly aggressive when you're not on top of your game can be costly because you're going for the perfect shot and you're not swinging well enough to pull it off and then you're getting a double bogey or something like that when you would have made a par if you had played a little smarter, that kind of thing. It's a combination of things.

Q. If it's not a physical thing, if it's more mental as you're kind of suggesting, how do you overcome something like that?

BERNHARD LANGER: Just by thinking it over and trying to figure out why did you do that, why did that shot happen. Some of it is my swing hasn't been quite where it was last year and I've made too many bad shots. Other times the putter might not have been quite there. I did have a couple of physical things, too, that were hurting, but I'm on the right track and I'm positive that things will improve the next few weeks and I'll get that W real soon.

Q. Bernhard, looking back say when you were 30, did you ever envision being your age now and being at the high level of play that you have maintained?

BERNHARD LANGER: I had no idea. I didn't know what would happen at 35 when I was

30, so no clue. When I set out as a golf pro, I had no idea where this would take me and that I would be playing professional golf at age 57. No, that was not in the stars, not really what I was thinking about or dreaming about because I really had no clue what to expect and how long this might take me and how far this would take me.

I mean, I had a severe back injury when I was 19 in the Air Force, I had a stress fracture and two bulging disks in my lower back and I've been battling that for 40 years. I didn't think I would be playing golf at that point, and here I am 40 years later without back surgery and I'm still playing at a high level of professional golf week after week. So no, things have taken an amazing turn for the better for me.

Q. Do you feel like yourself and your contemporaries are as popular on the Champions Tour as you were on the PGA or European tours?

BERNHARD LANGER: I believe so, yeah. I think there's a lot of golfers that are our age. You know, golf was pretty popular in the '70s, '80s, and when you look at the population, I think the majority of the golfers are our age group. They're somewhere between 45 and 70 and I believe they can relate to someone like me better than they can relate to a 22-year old who hits 330-yard drives and 200-yard 7-irons and stuff like that, but that's my opinion.

Q. I hadn't even considered the demographic, so thank you. You don't hit a 200-yard 7-iron?

BERNHARD LANGER: Not yet. I'm still pumping iron, hoping to get there, but I know it's going the other way.

Q. Have you been to Boston before?

BERNHARD LANGER: I've been here before and I'm trying to remember why and what tournament, but I can't. I haven't figured it out yet because we didn't have many tournaments in this area. So I've only been here once, I think and I haven't figured out which tournament it was.

Q. It was golf related?

BERNHARD LANGER: I was hoping you would tell me.

Q. I don't think you played in --

BERNHARD LANGER: In which one?

Q. Would have been the last Champions Tour event there was in '08.

BERNHARD LANGER: '08? It wouldn't have been '08.

Q. '07?

BERNHARD LANGER: That's when I turned, so no, I wasn't here.

DAVE SENKO: Ryder Cup?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, I didn't participate in that Ryder Cup. Mark James didn't want me on his team.

Q. Pleasant Valley perhaps?

BERNHARD LANGER: No.

Q. Deutsche Bank?

BERNHARD LANGER: No.

Q. Now we have to find out.

BERNHARD LANGER: Now I've got you all going. Don't have any sleepless nights over that.

Q. You talked about this golf course a little bit. The kind of game you play is very methodical and I think this is that kind of a golf course a little bit, isn't it? It should suit your game, do you think?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, if I play well I can play any golf course, and if I play bad I can't play any golf course. It's as simple as that, it really comes down to that. I've won tournaments on links courses, on parkland, any what golf course, tough ones, easy ones. If you play well, if you hit it where you're looking and you make putts, you can play well anywhere. And if you don't, it doesn't matter what you find out, you're going to struggle, so it really comes down to that.

But generally I like a course that is challenging where you have to think, where you have to not just give me the driver and whack it and do that every time, where you really have to sometimes shape shots and put the ball in a certain place to stay out of trouble, where you have to think a little more than just hit the ball.

Q. When you were approaching turning 50, what assumptions did you have about the Champions Tour and how have those assumptions kind of played out?

BERNHARD LANGER: I really didn't have many. I just remember Gary Player telling me when I was 48, 49 and he would still play a couple on the regular tour here and there, he would say, Oh, we would beat your butt out on that Champions Tour, we've got some of the best players in the world. I was just kind of grinning at him. But I didn't really know, again,

what to expect. I came out here thinking this could be bittersweet in a sense that I'm leaving the PGA TOUR and the European Tour, but it only took two or three weeks and I fell in love with this tour. So many positive things that are happening out here. And I've done the other thing long enough; I'm very, very happy to play the rest of my life on this tour. There's nothing better than that.

Q. What's the biggest difference between the two?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, there's a lot of differences. First of all, you can book your flights, you can schedule. Your whole life is slightly different. On the regular tour there's a cut every week and everybody misses cuts here and there. Now you have to decide do you go home for two days or have to change flights, have to cancel your hotel, got to do this, got to do that. You never quite know what to expect. Here you can pretty much plan your whole year. You're going to know where you are unless something drastic happens with your health.

I never enjoyed the 6:55 tee time in the morning on the regular tour or European Tour when the dew was really heavy and you're slogging it around out there when it's cold and wet.

I enjoy the two tee starts out here that we have on many occasions. I think it's a whole lot better for the golf tournament because everybody comes in later, all the volunteers. The hundreds of volunteers, they don't have to be there at 6:00 a.m., they can show up at 9:00 a.m. or something like that.

There's many things like that. I love the camaraderie. I think we play mostly very good golf courses. And I enjoy going home every once in a while on a Sunday night and come out on Wednesday or whatever, have that extra day or two at home. Those are just a few things.

DAVE SENKO: Any more questions? Thanks, Bernhard.

BERNHARD LANGER: Thank you.