

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: JEFF SLUMAN
Wednesday, June 10, 2015



PHIL STAMBAUGH: We have Jeff Sluman joining us this afternoon in the interview room. Jeff, the runner-up at the Constellation SENIOR PLAYERS last year, but you were the last winner on the Champions Tour in Boston in 2008. Maybe start off with a few memories about coming back to Boston on the heels of your win six years, seven years ago, and then talk about the golf course.

JEFF SLUMAN: Yeah, it's always a pleasure to be up in this area. I grew up in upstate New York on same type of turf and everything. But being up here, it's a fun, vibrant city. Just driving by Fenway yesterday on the way out here, you know, there's so much history in the city and all the colleges. Boston U's here, Harvard's over there, BC. Architecturally a wonderful city. So although I don't spend much time here because we haven't played many events, it's always been fun to come up here.

Like you said, it was 2008, right, last time at Nashawtuc and obviously you've got to have some great memories when you've won at a golf course. Played obviously very well that week. Loren was kind of in his heyday, he was playing great golf week in and week out and pretty sure everybody thought he was going to come out on top, maybe even including me, but you never know. I out-putted him a little on the back nine and played some good solid golf. Unfortunately that was the last year of the event but we're real happy to be back here.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Some thoughts on Belmont Country Club.

JEFF SLUMAN: Well, I don't think anybody's going to know the greens even by the end of the week, but certainly the winner's going to handle them better than probably most of the players. It's just an old-style golf course. You can tell they didn't have machinery to move the earth like they can now, but I think it's a wonderful piece of land. Green sites and everything up on top, very reminiscent of what Donald Ross has done on golf courses, you know, like this with the hills and that. Just a very fair golf course. You're going to get some bounces that you're going to believe only you are going to get, you know, and that.

But come Sunday I think without question this is the kind of golf course that you're not going to be able to just slash it around and dink and dunk and win this tournament. You're going to have to play some really incredible solid golf. You're going to have to be in control of your game, shot selection both ways and really be very patient. I think after a couple of weeks of golf courses that are similar, because French Lick was very hilly and last week at Des Moines was hilly, so you get a lot of the greens that are set into these hills like that, we're probably a little more capable at this point than seeing something like this after playing golf courses that are a little more traditional. But the greens are -- they break a lot more than I thought, that's all I can say. I was out there yesterday and then 18 holes this morning, and you think you're playing enough break and you're three feet low again. Sometimes you just can't believe how much it's going to break. I don't know how he does it. I certainly can't ask

Donald Ross, but a lot of the slopes, they don't look like there's a lot of slope. You get above it, you putt it, you think it's going to be all right, two feet, three feet, and it's 10 feet by. So you're going to see a lot of guys early in the week kind of in those situations maybe running them significantly by the hole. I certainly did it last week at Des Moines with a few of the putts. So you're just going to have to be very cautious, careful and probably honestly communicate with your caddie quite a bit in that regard to make sure that you're kind of on the same page and don't just say, well, this one's going to be flat and he's got it in his book as being downhill, stuff like that.

Q. Jeff, you talked a little bit about the tournament when you had Nashawtuc back in '08. Was there at all a little bit of a bittersweet feeling knowing you won it there and the last event that was going to be held there and the Champions Tour was such a great event there for a long time?

JEFF SLUMAN: Yeah, you hope they didn't cancel it because I won. (Laughter.) It's just kind of one of those things. I believe they had a potential sponsor lined up and then the world as we knew it, especially in the financial district in the area in 2008, kind of imploded obviously, so we haven't been able to find anybody to come back here. But it's bittersweet, you always like to come back to a golf course where you've won and you would be the defending champion and have a chance to win it again. You just always would like to come back, yeah.

Q. Just as a follow-up maybe about the round today and getting around this course, would you describe the greens as being deceptively tough?

JEFF SLUMAN: I wouldn't even say deceptively tough, I would just say they're very difficult to read. Deceptive amount of break, but they're really, really difficult because you're hitting a lot of shots, a lot of them are up here so you really can't see the whole green and so you should be at least constantly asking your caddie where's the slope here because there's a lot of, you know, fall-offs, false fronts, fall-offs on the side and stuff like that. So you really do have to know where they are; you can't just assume I can't see it so it's going to be flat up there.

Q. Near miss last year in this event. Can you go back to that on your thoughts on how close you came and the putt on the first extra hole that was right there in front of you, looked like you were going to make it?

JEFF SLUMAN: Well, I thought I made it. Bernhard thought I made it. He was coming over to shake my hand.

Q. It stopped just short, right?

JEFF SLUMAN: No, it broke all the way across the hole and went by an inch or two. But I played wonderful golf all week. Pretty sure I hit 69 greens in regulation, which is not a bad deal. That will usually work, get you near the top. Three greens I missed, I got up and

down. I think I made five bogeys or something like that and they were all three-putts.

Really obviously liked that golf course, the old Seth Raynor, but you know, I felt like I played as good as I could. Bernhard made a seemingly, I only saw it once on television, 40, 45-footer across the green on the 71st hole to get into a tie with me. He's tough, you've got to beat him. You can't get into a playoff with him and obviously think that par is going to win. And you can't think that he's not going to birdie 17 or 18. In some regards, after he birdied 17, I said, well, he's probably going to birdie 18 and win it outright. In that respect when he didn't, I felt like jeez, I kind of caught a break here because just the way he's been playing, you would think that a par 5 on the last hole, somehow he's going to make 4.

Q. How's your game been this year?

JEFF SLUMAN: It's been very good but not excellent yet. I feel like I'm doing almost everything right but, you know, last week I had six three-putts. You're not going to beat anybody with six three-putts in 54 holes. I had, I don't know, three, four Top 10s. I'm really close but I've just got to get a little better and clean things up and make those three-footers that I missed a few. But tee to green I think the way I've been playing this year, this should be a good golf course for me. So if I can be a little less roller-coastery on the greens, maybe I'll have an opportunity on Sunday here.