

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: LEE JANZEN
Thursday, August 20, 2015



DAVE SENKO: Well, Lee, thanks for joining us. I guess this is your first visit to the Boeing Classic. What are your initial impressions of the golf course? You had a chance to play it now some?

LEE JANZEN: Yes, played yesterday and today, so two times around it. I watched a little bit of it last year, but often you really can't tell exactly what the hole direction is or how to play the hole from the TV. So it's a Nicklaus design, which I've played many of his courses and it's very similar to a lot of what -- how he designs a course, the shot-making that he expects, the shot value I guess you would call it, driving on the proper side of the fairway, shaping your ball into the green, being able to hit the ball very high and stop it. On good weeks that is usually, I guess, a benefit to me because I like playing courses that are very hard, greens are firm where it takes a lot of hitting the ball the right distance and shaping the ball and working the ball and doing all sorts of things.

DAVE SENKO: It's been almost a year now that you've been playing on this tour. How would you assess how you've played your first year?

LEE JANZEN: Well, I know if I analyze my game after each round or each tournament, there have been quite a few tournaments that I was disappointed with my performance and it came down to execution. Two questions I always ask, you know, did I do what I wanted or did I not do what I wanted. So if I didn't, then I go work on making sure I do it the next time.

So I had a few good tournaments. I didn't set any goals starting out my rookie year. Certainly as you get close to 50 you think about winning. The first few years on the Champions Tour seems to be your best chance at winning, so I did my best to be ready when the Champions Tour started for me. But when you're transitioning from playing in the middle -- you know, very average golf on the regular tour to come out here, you don't just flick a switch and start shooting 65. So there was a process of getting used to a lot of things; life on the Champions Tour, pro-ams Wednesday and Thursday, three rounds, weeks off that are built into the schedule. There are a lot of things to get used to.

Other than that, the golf's the same inside the ropes and it really comes down to can I hit my next shot as good as I can. So I've had some weeks that I've played well, played great in spurts. Naples is probably about the only tournament I could say I played well all three days from start to finish other than a hole here or there, but I showed signs of that in some other tournaments. So that's basically what I'm working on is getting in the habit of shooting good, consistent scores every week.

Q. It's been 17 years since you've won, you got to Naples and you had a chance to get into the playoff. Is that not hard to remember how to do it, right?

LEE JANZEN: Yeah. The good news is I played well enough all the way up to that point

that week that that builds confidence there. You know, if you're going to draw on the past, you might as well draw on the good things you did, although it had been a lot of years of getting close and not executing and not doing what I wanted. I had plenty of chances to win over the years, but they were becoming less and less.

But sometimes momentum gets built on a week that isn't that great. The week before in Boca, even though I didn't finish very well, I hit the ball extremely well. More often than not, my mistakes just turn into catastrophes. The amount of shots that I left out there was more than normal, the amount of shots I lost. I took that as a positive, that if I could cut that in half going into Naples, I'd have a real chance at winning.

Q. I think you're the oldest guy to get through sectional qualifying.

LEE JANZEN: Yeah. Jimenez and Montgomerie were older than me in the tournament, but they didn't qualify.

Q. Obviously it's still very important for you to want to come back and do that?

LEE JANZEN: Yeah, I mean, that's the beauty of it, that anybody can qualify.

Q. You must be proud to beat all those young guys, that's not easy to do.

LEE JANZEN: Right. Well, if you're trying to say that just because I'm 50 now I'm not in as good of shape as those youngsters. Yeah, 36 holes isn't -- to me, walking 36 holes is not a big deal. We walk all the time. Turns out the last two years I played up there, I was at Baltusrol the week before and we played 36 holes on a couple days walking and it's a much longer, harder walk. So I think that's a good idea as far as the qualifier goes is playing 36 holes and walking maybe a week or so ahead of time a couple days and that gets you used to it.

Q. What did you think of Chambers Bay? Did you think the criticism was warranted?

LEE JANZEN: The greens weren't very good, and I think if the USGA would have just come out that week and said the greens are not up to our standards but we're going to do the best we can and provide a tough challenge for the players anyway, the players probably wouldn't have said a word. Unfortunately, they didn't do that and a couple weeks later they finally owned up to it.

I think a bigger concern was that spectating was very difficult unless you just went and sat in a spot and then you could only see a couple holes, you really couldn't see any golf at all, which is unfortunate just with the dramatic landscape.

Q. Did you go out there and look at the course before the Open?

LEE JANZEN: I did not, no.

Q. What do you think of this area? Do you like being out here?

LEE JANZEN: Oh, yeah, fantastic, the beauty looking out and seeing the mountains. I played the Fred Meyer Challenge and I don't think Portland is quite as beautiful as Seattle. They're not going to like that, are they? But I thought Portland was fantastic, too. You fly in and see the mountains. There's four of them, right? They're pretty fantastic, dramatic. Tallest mountains in Florida are Space Mountain, Thunder Mountain and Mount Everest, and they're only like 300 feet high.

Q. Like playing two different courses, right, Chambers Bay and here?

LEE JANZEN: I mean, as crazy as Chambers Bay looked and having to aim 30, 40 feet away from the hole to get it close, there seemed to always be a way to get it near the hole. You just had to figure out what way that was. Actually, some of the course was a lot of fun even though I was at a disadvantage with the yardage because there were some holes where the young guys who hit it a long way, not only do they hit it further than me but they could cut the corner, which gave them an extra 30, 40 yards closer to the green.

Q. You were playing with the amateur, right?

LEE JANZEN: Yeah. He hit a long way and he has a low launch. Knowing what I've learned with equipment, if he gets a driver that launches a little higher and gets a spin ratio to match it, he'll hit it even further.

Q. (Inaudible.)

LEE JANZEN: Alex stayed at my house between when he was a senior in high college and college a few years ago.

Q. Must have been a good pairing for you then?

LEE JANZEN: Yeah. I was hoping it would be a good pairing for him, but yeah, just so he would have somebody he's comfortable playing with. And he played well, very well. He's got a lot of talent and his learning curve is very high. There's a lot of things that he'll learn that are going to make it even better.

Q. The U.S. Open, you talk about the course, the greens and that, but do you find yourself going to (inaudible) to score on this course better than play with your regular selection of clubs?

LEE JANZEN: Yeah, you just had to figure out where to aim. The 11th hole with a big grass mound in the middle of the fairway, the big hitters could carry that so their fairway was 60 yards wide. I had to hit it between that grass mound and the left rough, so I had a 20-yard fairway. But if you hit a good drive, you're in it. Then I got it to roll down there and

had 3-iron in where they were hitting short irons in. But if all I had to do was hit it up to the right on that hill and it would turn around and roll back down. The only thing I couldn't do is hit it left of the pin.

So there was a way to play all the holes. The par 3 third I would say was a fairly demanding shot that you pretty much had -- that everybody was going to have to hit the same sort of shot. Everybody was going to have to hit a ball that was not drawing, that was going to land and check so it didn't get flying across some of the slope. So there was a couple of times where everybody was kind of forced to hit the same shot, but there was always a lot of options for everybody.

Q. (Inaudible). Do you think those were the highlights of your careers, the '90s?

LEE JANZEN: Well, yeah, since that was when I won all my tournaments, from '92 to '98. More than for lack of trying after that.

Q. (Inaudible)

LEE JANZEN: It was quite a few that feel that way. Jackson, Mississippi, in early 2000, I know I finished five-five and missed the playoff by a shot, and both guys went four-four. So that's usually a tournament I could say I should have won in my mind. Then there's other tournaments, you get close and a shot here or there. You know, the benefit of playing regularly with a schedule three rounds every week out here has helped my game. The competition is not the same, but the competition is very good. As far as these guys playing closer to their peak, I don't think there's another 50-year old set in any sport that does it better than the Champions Tour.

Q. It's a challenge again?

LEE JANZEN: Absolutely, and everybody's happy for each other to play well. It's a good thing because it makes everybody else better. By the end of playing on the regular tour, Brooks Koepka, who's going to be a great player for a long time, I played with him at the Wyndham a year ago on Sunday and he shot 64 and he could have shot 58. He missed six putts that were inside six feet. He hit his hybrid further than I can hit my driver. I don't know, I hit the ball 280, 285 now. In my prime 290 was my average. It's just silly how far some of the guys hit it.

In the mid '90s, the longest driver did not hit the ball so much further than the shortest driver that they were at least within 15, 20 yards probably of each other off the tee. Now, it's, you know, you can't design holes for some of the guys.

DAVE SENKO: Thank you, Lee.

LEE JANZEN: Sure.

