

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: BERNHARD LANGER
August 16, 2017



CHRIS RICHARDS: We are joined this morning by Bernhard Langer. Thank you for joining us.

BERNHARD LANGER: You're welcome.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You're familiar with returning to golf courses in cities where you've won before, but what's it like to come back to here where the community embraces this tournament and the players so much?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, this is a very unique golf event. It has so much history over the years. As you say, the community, Dick's Sporting Goods, they've just embraced this event for so many years now. They come out in great numbers. It's established. People know it's this time of the year and they love it, and they come out for the golf and they come out for the concert and just enjoy the opportunity that they normally don't get in this area.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You're in the middle of another fantastic season. We're starting to hit the home stretch of the season. Have you started to think about what it's going to take to win the Charles Schwab Cup for the fourth year in a row?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, that's very simple, you've got to play well in the very last tournament. That's what it comes down to. The first 25 tournaments is just kind of jockeying for position, but in the end you have to play very well the very last tournament.

As dominant as I was last year, if Montgomerie had won the Schwab Cup and I would have finished third or something, he would have still won the Schwab Cup as such, I mean the Schwab tournament. That's just how it is now with the playoff system.

CHRIS RICHARDS: I'll open it up to questions.

Q. Bernhard, play is a big key and putting is a big key in having a success on this tour, and your putting, just talking to some of the players, they pinpoint your putting as a big key as to why you've been having so much success. Do you feel that same way?

BERNHARD LANGER: Putting is always important, always has been, always will be on any tour. Let's say we make 30 putts on average and my scoring average is 70, so that's, you know, a good chunk of the score.

Is it just my putting? No, I wouldn't agree with that. You've got to look at other statistics. Last few years I've been first or second in greens-in-regulation and fairways hit, and ups and downs and all sorts of different statistics. I was up there in putting, I was somewhere up

there, too, but it takes more than just good putting.

I'll give you an example: Ben Crenshaw has been and always is one of the greatest putters but he's never won one tournament on this tour in all the years he's played. So that just shows that putting alone doesn't do it.

Q. What would you say in response to maybe the controversy or criticism that you received regarding the style in which you putt?

BERNHARD LANGER: You know, I play within the rules and that's all I can say to that. I made sure I understood the rule. I read through it, I talked to the rules officials on the PGA TOUR, PGA TOUR Champions, the USGA and the R&A, and I've played all over the world that way for the last year and a half and I never had any complaints with any of the officials or any of the people that are in charge.

Q. Given that you've won three straight Charles Schwab Cups, you've won this tournament before, do you find there's any added pressure on you to go out and perform either here or week in, week out knowing that everybody's kind of chasing you and kind of going for that upset?

BERNHARD LANGER: Not really. There's always pressure. There's no added pressure as such. As I get older, I'll be 60 next Sunday in Seattle next week, so some players will expect me to drop maybe a little bit in my form in the next few years. But I'm trying to prevent that and just be the Energizer Bunny and continue to get better or stay at a very high level.

But there's no extra pressure. I have high expectations of myself when I tee it up. I put the work in, I try to prepare well, and so whatever the outside pressure is, it doesn't make a big difference to me.

Q. You've had obviously success here. Have you gone out on the course, played it, and what do you think of the course right now and what's it going to take to come away with a victory this weekend for yourself?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I did play yesterday, 18 holes. The course is in phenomenal shape. Really, really good. Greens are great, the fairways are good. The rough is maybe a little thicker than it has been at times, must have had some rain here the last few months and it grew.

But what it takes here is you've got to drive the ball well, you've got to hit the fairways so you can hit more greens and control the spin of the ball and the distance and set yourself up for opportunities. If you drive it crooked, you're going to really struggle because it's a tree-lined golf course, quite narrow, most of the tee shots. There's a premium on driving.

Q. The success you've had out here, how much do you think it has to do with

conditioning, keeping yourself fit? I mean clearly you don't look like you're going to be 60 next week, but how big is that to what you've been able to do?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's hard to put into percentages. I think it helps, but is it 60, 70 percent? No, I don't think so. It's a small percentage. There's other guys out here that are fitter than me that work out harder, that are in great condition, and there's other guys that are not at all or very little.

That's the unique thing about golf. It's not a sprint, it's not a football game or a soccer game or even tennis. We don't have to necessarily be in great physical shape, even though I do think it helps a great deal. I think it helps your stamina to be able to focus and concentrate for five hours in a row, to be able to walk hilly courses in hot conditions at times, and to just have more energy and less aches and pains. It's definitely an advantage, some weeks more than others, but it's not the number one thing why I've played so well.

Q. You've had an illustrious career. Is there any piece of advice or anything you've learned over the years that's kind of stuck out with you?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, there's always things that you learn. You're supposed to learn something every day, but as I look back on 42 years in professional golf, I've had some good advice, I've had some good people in my life that told me the right thing at the right time. But in terms of golf advice, I would say stick to the fundamentals, that's the most important part. Sometimes we get lost in the technique. There's so many intricacies and so many details to what you could do and should do, but is it all that important? No, the fundamentals are the most important.

I think one key part of my success in my life has been my faith in God and that gets overlooked many times and people can't relate to it some, but I know it is. It's very, very important to me and has made sure my priorities are right and kept my life balanced.

Q. Bernhard, if you could put yourself in your shoes 30 years ago, your golf shoes 30 years ago, could you ever imagine the success that you are having currently on the PGA TOUR Champions?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, no way. No, I had no idea what I got myself into as an 18-year-old joining the European Tour at the time and had really no expectations and no clue what life would be and how it would turn out.

To be still playing at 60 and competitively playing and playing successfully, something I couldn't even have dreamt of, no. It's just been beyond my dreams and I'm very grateful and very blessed to still be doing this at this level.

Q. With the scheduling last year with the Olympics, I know we missed you here last year, the fans missed you. Are you glad to be back and what did you miss about not being at Endicott last year?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's always great to be back. There's so many familiar faces, people that have volunteered for many years, whether it's the transportation committee or some of the volunteers on the golf course or the people that run the tournament do a great job. John Karedes and his whole team, the sponsor with Dick's. I know some of the people there that are in charge of this. It's just, as I said, a very unique event in terms of that.

The golf course is very interesting, too. It's very different to some of the courses we play. It's familiar and it's straightforward, it's right there in front of you, there's no trickery about it and all that makes up for a great event.

Q. Nobody's ever won this tournament twice. What would it take for you to be the first to do that?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it's about time that will be changed then. Somebody's got to win it twice, right? What it will take is just some of my best golf. As I said earlier, I would have to drive it straight, hit good irons, and my putter's got to be on, too. You've got to have all aspects of the game in shape because we have 80 guys teeing it up and there will be two or three or 10 of them that are at the top of their game and somebody will make it look very easy even though it's not. We saw Kevin Sutherland, what did he shoot, 59 or something? It could have even been a 57. The golf course is not that easy, but when you're on your game, you could make it look that way.

Q. A lot of big European names are here this week, guys you've played with on Ryder Cups. Have you noticed an uptick in European players participating in the PGA TOUR Champions over the years?

BERNHARD LANGER: Definitely. I think the word has gotten around that this is a phenomenal tour. They had their own Senior Tour they call it, but they only have around 15, 17 tournaments. They're all bunched up in a span of three or four months in the summer. The guys want to play more and they want to play against the best.

This is definitely the best tour over 50 years old anywhere in the world. We have better courses, better setups, more prize money, and television, so they're going to come here. The better players come here who will have success. The other ones, it may not be worth it for them. But you can see Montgomerie's been here, Woosie, Sandy Lyle's played for a number of years, and then now we have Broadhurst and Jimenez, there's Olazabal. There's all sorts of guys that have made a big commitment to the PGA TOUR Champions.

Q. Nice to see some familiar faces?

BERNHARD LANGER: Obviously it is, yeah. Obviously many of us know each other for 30, 40 years and it's great to hang out with them again.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Thank you, Bernhard.