

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 14, 2019



JOEY SINDELAR

MAUREEN RADZAVICZ: We welcome Joe Sindelar here in the media center at the Dick's Sporting Goods Open. It's not very often in golf that you get to play a home game, but that's what you've got this week, Joey. Can you just take us through your thoughts about being back in Endicott?

JOEY SINDELAR: Yeah, thanks, Maureen. Hello, everybody. My thoughts are these, smack in the middle of baseball season that they get half home games, you're right, and we get one maybe, maybe two if you live in two places. So really, really fun to be home. You've heard me talk about that a lot and it's not empty. You know, even the lead-up weeks for me that are not here at the golf course as I'm practicing at home or whatever, everyone's so excited to come down here. And they cheer for me loud and clear, but they also want to see the other awesome golfers that they've watched for, you know, so much of their golf lives. As they would often say, this is the group of people that they grew up watching and learning and getting little tidbits from. That's part of the reason why this is such a big event for me and for my friends. So fun, fun week.

MAUREEN RADZAVICZ: And you had about a month off, I guess, or so?

JOEY SINDELAR: I've had way too long off. I just had a -- I suppose the easiest, I had an injury that I would probably call it a rib pull, shoulder blade, rib, and it just got deep and there was some bone bruising. And really the last good event I played was in Birmingham where I could play. Over at Oak Hill for the Senior PGA is when the injury happened, which also involved U.S. Open qualifying week, not that I would have for sure made it anyway, but could barely do that and didn't get to play the Open. So stumbled through and missed the cut, shot a couple of horrible scores at Oak Hill just trying to get through.

I missed Japan, missed Des Moines, missed all those. Tried to play again at Akron at the Senior PLAYERS, which was, you know, such a big thrill to be back there where so many of us went through there. And having gone to school at Ohio State, playing at that golf course, Firestone at Akron when you're a Buckeye is big, big stuff.

So kind of limped through that and then off for another month, so it's been seven or eight weeks at least since I've done anything meaningful on a golf course. So I'm going to have to figure out which end of the tee is the sharp end that goes in the ground. I don't know, these are the things you forget.

Q. They're calling this the best field yet. Now that it's finalized, what can you say about the competition?

JOEY SINDELAR: Well, yeah, it's awesome. As you turn 50 and if you've kept current, they point at you and say, you know, you're too young to be out here, you're a rookie. And those are the ones with the biggest smash factor mostly, they're the strongest, they generally hurt the least and they're getting better and better.

This tour has opened a lot of eyes. A lot of people think of it as, oh, it's a place to go, but then you come out here and you experience it and it's just the most awesome blend of competition and fun together. We love it. I think when I came out -- the level of competition in my 11 years out here has changed so dramatically. I would say when I first came out here you would think that there were -- if a 50-year-old that felt like they were any good came out here, there were probably 20 people to beat out of the 78. That number's not even -- it's easily double that and probably triple that now.

And we're getting more guys who did not have career money who don't have automatic status. Look at the Scott Parel and the Doug Garwoods and Mike Goodes, and I'm blanking out on seven or eight more that are really, really, really good golfers who just didn't stay on the regular tour long enough to have the career money to be automatic out here. There's about 10 of those guys that can smack you around the golf course pretty quickly. So it's awesome.

And the fun part is, it's like, you know, you say to Bernhard, you know, "Bernie, thanks for coming."

"What are you talking about? This is an awesome event."

They love coming here. This tournament has morphed into a really premier event out here and it makes me have a really big smile to be a very small part of that.

Q. Joey, yesterday the NYSGA announced that you'll be inducted into their Hall of Fame. How special is that for you in your home state, and also, does it make it even more special that you'll be inducted in Elmira?

JOEY SINDELAR: Yeah, thank you. That was a really, really fun phone call and set of emails when I learned that a few months ago.

You know, I say it whenever I get to visit a sponsor group or dinner or whatever we do, or clinic, and the question comes up, I will promise you that particularly -- this is a long answer to your question, but at the place on the conveyor belt we all are, the life conveyor belt, most of us, the kids are gone and we react differently and the music's a little sweeter at this end, coming up to the end of what we're doing.

But I will promise you that when we're laughing, invariably -- in the locker room with the guys when we're laughing and telling stories, it goes back -- you know, it's not just what happened on the tour, it's how silly was college golf or how cool was it. What about our amateur golf?

And we've got a handful of us from here that you know the names from New York state, Slu and Mike Hulbert, Wayne Levi, we'll laugh about that. But the California guys telling their stories. I think a lot of people think that that was just a place that we've forgotten when in fact those are just really awesome memories for us. This last couple of months has made my mind explode and remember the faces, that Slu won it at this place and Mike Hulbert won the State Am at this place and I won at Vestal Hills. It's very vivid, so that was big, big stuff. Thank you.

Q. Speaking of Mike Hulbert, I caught up with him yesterday and I was asking him what it's like for him to be back here playing with you, because it's been a while since you guys have played with each other, but you grew up playing alongside each other. So how excited are you to play against him again?

JOEY SINDELAR: Incredibly. He walked into the locker room as I was -- at the end of the day yesterday and it was like, you know, I couldn't walk away, didn't want to walk away. There's just so much to talk about. Michael lives in Orlando now and has for a long, long time. So when he was playing a lot and when I'm not injured, we would see each other quite often.

Now it's been a while, so we've got a lot to catch up on. The families and stories and -- the same thing, the old stories, the new stories. There's a lot of stuff going on. So this would be huge. If we could somehow shoot scores that were similar and get to play together, that would be A-plus in our minds.

Q. Joey, Jack Nicklaus is going to be here later today. Do you have any memories of him maybe when you were an up-and-coming golfer?

JOEY SINDELAR: Well, sure. You know, it was Arnie, Jack and Gary when I was learning the game and that was the big three. Dad would take Arnold and I would always take Jack, not knowing that I was going to end up being a Buckeye. Then of course when the decisions were all made and I went to Ohio State, he rules the universe for us. It's been just a blast to get to know him through the years. His wife, Barbara, is just a very special person. The boys, the parts of the family I know the best, Jackie I knew best then because he tried to play a little bit, and now Gary being out here and Gary had a really nice career at Ohio State, almost beat Phil Mickelson in Atlanta. So this is all -- this is really cool stuff.

And besides all the Buckeye connections, you know, northern golfers. There's so many southern golfers that have ruled the world for so long because just more fertile ground, I think, growing up, longer golf season, all that stuff. But Ohio being a northern kind of a golf place, we always had a lot in common and our paths crossed a lot.

And Jack was always incredibly generous. Got to fly on his plane once or twice to go from one tournament to the next to do an outing or something. Are you kidding? I'm still talking about that at 61 and that was probably 35 years ago. Great stuff. I can't wait for him to be here and for everybody to experience the things he's going to have to say.

Q. You said that you kind of savor things a little bit more, enjoy things a little bit more on this end of things. Coming back here to the Southern Tier, do you kind of cherish that a little bit more, take it in a little bit more now that you're kind of, like you said, on the end of things? Do you kind of take it in a little bit more when you're out there, fans and all the reactions that you get?

JOEY SINDELAR: Well, yes. I mean, the pressures are entirely different now anyway from the regular tour. The regular tour, those who raised kids, it's like, you know, when they're zero to -- Maureen knows, when they're zero to 7, it's like, "Where ya going? Why can't you stay home?"

And then my experience was once they got old enough to understand, it was, "Go get 'em, Dad." So it was that whole thing. But it was all that missing of stuff is kind of, you know, that's gone. That's a different place in life. For some, it's the grandkids now that they want to be back for. I don't have that yet. So huge.

So the flashlight's shining from a different place now and it's really cool, less pressurized. This is not no money we're playing for out here and it's not -- it is fabulous competition. I mean, the golf Kevin Sutherland played here a couple years ago. What, did he three-putt the last hole for 59 or something? And he's good for a 10 under about once every two months. He does in a year what I've done in a career for low rounds. It's shocking how good the players are.

So yeah, but it's home for a million reasons, although for me, this event and golf in this -- the kind of golf that this is, which to me would include the Canadian Open right across the lake in Toronto or Milwaukee, bentgrass, or Hartford to the east. These places are the reason that I didn't go to the British Open much all the years that I was exempt because you kind of almost had to miss three weeks to do the British and these were the events and I wasn't going to do it.