

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
July 14, 2021



JIM HERMAN

HALEY PETERSON: We would like to welcome Jim Herman to the media room here at the Barbasol Championship, our defending champion.

Jim, welcome back. What is it like to be back on the grounds where you won two years ago?

JIM HERMAN: Yeah, a little weird with the delay of one year, but still the defending champ and it's great to be back. Looking forward to getting out there this week and defending the crown. This is my second time defending in my career, so hope to do a little better than the first time. Missed the cut back in Houston defending there. Yeah, great to be back.

HALEY PETERSON: What do you remember from the win in 2019, especially that final round?

JIM HERMAN: Sure. You know, I remember the heat, so obviously it was hot here two years ago, and this weather is a little unpredictable right now. We've got the storms rolling through the last couple days, but I think we had a nice morning in the pro-am. It was nice to get back out on the golf course, first time since two years ago.

The course is a little different in terms of softness. Felt like I was getting the ball a little further down two years ago, I had a little longer clubs in today. In general, it's just great to be back out here, great to be back here in Lexington and defending at Barbasol.

HALEY PETERSON: And like you mentioned, nice weather today with the pro-am. Some expected rain here in the upcoming week, but how's the course looking? What do you expect with the rains coming?

JIM HERMAN: Sure. Well, I think we're going to have some low scores again. I don't know if it will be 26 under like two years ago, but you're going to just have to go low. The course is in good shape, but wet. Greens are putting really well, but they're soft. We're going to be throwing darts all week. If the fans like birdies, we're going to be making them this week.

HALEY PETERSON: Your past three finishes or starts this season have been your best, you strung together three Top 30 finishes. How's your game coming into this week?

JIM HERMAN: Feeling pretty good. The spring wasn't that great, felt like I had a little hang over after Augusta. I had a foot problem linger into early May and then felt pretty good heading into Memorial, pretty good finish there. Got real close at Hartford, I think I was in second at some point on the weekend, on Saturday. Just putter kind of cooled off, just a decent finish. And then John Deere last week was some good form. Making some birdies,

driver's working pretty well and just who's going to get the hot putter. My putter was pretty good, I was seventh in strokes gained and just going to build on that.

HALEY PETERSON: You have the opportunity to defend two titles this season. Does that put any added pressure coming in or is it kind of, you've been there, know what it takes?

JIM HERMAN: Well, it's very unique. Obviously first time in my career defending two tournaments. However, it worked out with the year off from Barbasol last year. Yes, with Wyndham coming up in about three, four weeks, a lot of positive energy in my camp. All my friends and family, a lot of people looking forward to this event coming down from Cincinnati here in Lexington. Then look forward to Memphis, playing Memphis in a couple weeks, and then getting back out to defending at Wyndham. Great tournament there, had a great weekend at Wyndham last year. Winning three times obviously it's been way exceeding my overall expectations, but it's been a pleasure being the champion three times in three great events.

Q. Hey, Jim, welcome back. COVID affected all of us in certain ways and different golfers responded differently to kind of the year of trials and tribulations. I was just wondering, how did that affect your perspective on not just your golf game, but in just your approach to life in general?

JIM HERMAN: Yeah, obviously last March, that was -- it affected the whole world obviously, and the PGA TOUR was affected. We just didn't know what was going to happen, if we were going to even be back for the summer events. Just getting everyone safe, keeping everyone safe and then coming up with that plan that they came up with last summer to get us back out in the restart was fantastic and Jay and everyone at the headquarters did a tremendous job.

Players, everyone looked at it a little differently. I got right back out at the first event and I think we were all itching to get out and play, but everyone's expectations were different. Having the win at Barbasol and knowing that I had some security for a couple years, I definitely -- it was just probably going through the motions a little bit last summer. You go through the motions out here, you're going to get passed and you're not going to be playing very well, so I didn't have many great finishes.

Then I don't know what switched at Wyndham at the end of the summer. I got kind of embarrassed myself personally, in my own emotions was embarrassing finishing last at the PGA Championship the week prior. Just I knew the only way to get in the Playoffs was to have a first or second and I think I just knew that the end was in sight for this first year that we had battling through COVID. I don't know what happened, I just got a hot putter and that's where I guess the 61-63 weekend at Wyndham came from.

We're all dealing with it. The Tour did a great job rolling out the vaccinations and I think the players were -- we've done our part. I think we're over 70 percent vaccinated and I think we're all just trying to do our own little part to keep everyone safe and get things back to as

normal as they're ever going to be. I think we're just all very pleased to be playing again. And having the fans and the galleries, it's nice to see again.

Q. Is there a heightened sense of motivation when you're the defending champ to do it again, to go back-to-back, or when you come back to place, is it like a reset?

JIM HERMAN: Well, I wish you could start off with a little head start. If they'd give that to you, I'd definitely take it.

No, it's hard to get back into that mode where you were on that Sunday. We hit all these golf balls, we do all the practice to put ourselves in this position where we're in the final groups on the weekend. There's a lot that goes into it and just to say that you could just walk into a course where you've won that following year and assume you're going to be in the mix is very naive of myself or anyone else.

Just trying to have some carryover of my form from the last couple weeks and see if -- draw from the emotion and the positive vibes that I did have from two years ago here and see if we can build on that.

No, we're all starting out square. Just need to, like I said earlier, you're going to have to make some birdies. Maybe that's a good thing, you've just got to put the pedal down and get moving from hole number one.

Q. You mentioned missing the cut at Houston as the defending champ. I wondered if being the defending champ had something to do with that or was it just coincidental?

JIM HERMAN: Well, I've had some good finishes at Houston along with that win, so I would say just that added pressure of the media attention that's drawn to you, the featured pairing, I would say being the past champion definitely had a little to do with it. I didn't play poorly. As we all know, you can't just play average and make weekends out here.

I think there definitely was a little bit of just that little bit of nerves or extra you want to do so well defending and put yourself in the position on the weekend that sometimes you don't always play as free as you'd like.

Q. And if I could, it looks like the weather, like you said, is a little iffy this weekend. How if any way might weather affect things?

JIM HERMAN: Well, we've all dealt with weather delays, but the people that deal with it the best are the ones that stay calm, and I'm pretty good at that. Yeah, we always have delays. There's very few events, especially in the summer months, where we don't have some kind of threat. It's not going to be perfect out there. I'm sure we're going to be playing lift, clean and place in the fairways and the greens are going to get a little spiked up, but you've just got to deal with it and move on. Take the good breaks when you get them and if you get a bad one, shrug it off.

HALEY PETERSON: I believe that's all the questions we have, so we thank you for taking the time for joining us and we wish you the best of luck this week.

JIM HERMAN: Thank you. Yeah, look forward to getting out there starting tomorrow afternoon. Hopefully the weather stays promising and we'll see what we can do to get out there and defend.