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BERNHARD LANGER



MODERATOR: We are now joined by World Golf Hall of Fame member and 47-time PGA TOUR Champions winner Bernhard Langer here at the Portugal Invitational.

Just some opening remarks on being here this week.

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, first of all, it's great to be back in Portugal. It's a wonderful place to play golf. Blue skies every day in the summer and great golf courses. I think Ernie Els has done a great job with the Vilamoura Club and we're thrilled to be hopefully coming here for at least four, five years and hopefully more.

Q. Ernie, we talked the other day about this being full circle for you. Could you go into that a little bit?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah. I was a teaching pro from 15 through 18 years of age and then when I was 18 I decided to become a playing pro. The Portuguese Open was my very first tournament exactly 50 years ago.

It's been an incredible 50 years, a very long career, long ride traveling the whole world and many other things. Many ups and downs, but playing on the European Tour, now living in America playing the U.S. Champions Tour and playing all over the world. But it all started right here, 1976, so 50 years ago.

Q. What's the importance of Portugal Invitational for golf in Portugal?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, hopefully it will draw a lot of attention to the Portuguese people, but I think it will draw attention all over the world because it will be televised in America and Europe, in Asia. You have a world-class field, I think you have the best players over 50. Just about everybody's here, which is incredible testimony I think to Ernie and the sponsors. So it should be a thrilling week and great for people to come out and watch the best players over 50 competing here.

Q. As Connor mentioned, 47 Champions Tour titles, decades long career with many, many titles, a couple green jackets. What drives you to keep playing week after week, to keep playing these tournaments?

BERNHARD LANGER: I still enjoy competing, I still enjoy playing golf. It's just a wonderful game. I play a couple of tournaments less now. I used to play probably 25 to 30 a year, which is a lot, and now I'm maybe down to 22, 23. But still enjoying it.



You know, worked hard to get where I am and now I can pick and choose the best tournaments. Maybe don't play one or two that I don't like or if there's something going on with the family or the grandkids and I need to stay home and want to rest, I can afford that. That's actually a wonderful place to be in.

We have four children, four grandkids. Now the children are out of the house, so I actually have more time now than I ever had in my life. Before it was being a full-time playing professional, full-time dad, full-time husband. There was a lot on my plate and different things when I came home. Now I have a lot more time.

And it's fun. It's a different season. I enjoy playing with the grandkids when I get home, but I still enjoy competing out here. The camaraderie we have with all these guys out here is phenomenal, it's fantastic. We've been friends for, some of them I've known for over 50 years, some of them 30 or 20 years. You create friendships and it's great to hang out together.

Q. Of those moments in your career looking back, like the '04 Ryder Cup win in America or the green jackets, is there any career defining moment for you?

BERNHARD LANGER: Not really, no. Obviously the two Masters wins are very important and some of the Ryder Cups have been extremely memorable, being the captain and playing 10 times. There's so many great memories.

But it's been step by step. My first tournament as a pro was important, my first German Open, my first German Masters as a German, it means a lot. Then the first win on the Tour, on and on. Qualifying for the U.S. Tour, winning the green jacket and having a 10-year exemption in America, then living in America.

There's so many important steps. You don't go from zero to 100.

We have a tournament in America, in Orlando every December, it's called the Father-Son, PNC Father-Son. That's to me even very meaningful because I get to play with one of my children, either the sons or the daughter. They're competing with me in a scramble, they're inside the ropes. We've been able to win that six times, more than anybody else. That, as a father and a husband, means a great deal.

Q. Could you talk about the memories that you mentioned in the first tournament in Portugal? Was it the time you slept in the car?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, it was that time (Laughs.) Yeah, I had very little money and the prize money was very low. We had to -- there were no courtesy cars, no range balls, no food. You had to buy everything and bring everything yourself.

It was extremely difficult playing on Tour, just getting from one place to another because I couldn't even rent a car, I was too young. You had to be 21 or 25 and I was 18.



It was challenging, but it was a brand new experience. It was exciting for me as difficult as it was. Driving from Munich to here was I think two-and-a-half thousand kilometers and I drove it here to play the Portuguese Open and then the Spanish Open and Madrid Open. That's a long drive. Your body feels stiff and out of whack and sleeping in the car wasn't the best. Couldn't afford a caddie, so I was pushing and pulling my own trolley. Things were difficult in those days, but it made you probably work even harder to succeed and to become successful.

Q. Just talk about the importance of coming here to Europe with the Champions Tour for the first time besides the majors. What does it mean as a European?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I think it's fantastic. We're branching out. We've had a tournament in Japan and one in Morocco several times. We played in Korea and now it's first time in Europe. Maybe there's more in the future, who knows, because there's no doubt the best senior players are in America. Anybody that's really, really good over 50, they want to play on the Champions Tour. We have the most money, the best courses and that's where everybody is. I could foresee in the future that we have maybe two or three tournaments a year and some overseas as well, other places.

Q. I think you played the Portuguese Open. Did you play this when it was the Portuguese Masters?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, I never did. No, at that point in time I was already --

Q. Give us your impressions -- have you played in course before?

BERNHARD LANGER: I played Vilamoura before, but you have several courses, so I'm not sure I played this course before.

Q. Then give us your impressions because Ernie switched the one nine, reversed it.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I wouldn't know. I don't remember if I played here, I didn't remember any of it and I don't think I have. Played this golf course once on Tuesday and my impressions were very good, very positive. I think it's playable off the tee and challenging second shots with a lot of water, especially when the wind blows.

Unique is that, what is it, six par 5s and six par 3s, so that's unique. It probably suits the bombers, the long hitters because they can reach some of the par 5s.

I think he's done a great job with the greens. They're challenging, undulating but not crazy. Some of the modern architects, they built some crazy humps and bumps in there where you can trip over your own feet sometimes. That's not the case.

I think he did a great job and it's going to be a beautiful challenge and an incredible



tournament with the players you have here and what we're facing out there.

Q. You talk about the bombers and you've talked before that you can't get caught up in length, you have to play your game. Does it get harder when it becomes six par-5s and you really see guys hitting it off the tee? You seem so focused constantly. Is that something that just doesn't come into your mind?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, I obviously I realize that I'm first to hit and the other guys are 20, 30, 50 yards ahead of me. You can't block that out of your mind and I don't need to. That doesn't really affect me, I need to play my own game. But it's a lot easier for them. When I first came out here at age 50 I was in the top-10 in driving distance. Now I'm 60th or so.

It's definitely much harder for me to win now. I mean, when I first came out I was in contention every week almost and finished in the top-3 or top-5 pretty much most weeks I teed it up. Right now, if I finish in the top-10 that's a very good result because I just have that much of a disadvantage. I'm hitting 2-hybrid and they're hitting 7-iron or something like that into some of the par 4s.

Q. Bernhard, you've always had the reputation of a very strong mentality. What's the importance of the mental aspect in this game? Also, when you are getting not younger, it's very important to beat those younger guys to have that focus, that drive, that mentality.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, you need to be mentally strong no matter what age you are if you want to play this game at the highest level. And the thing about golf is you have so much time to think. Tennis, you're reacting. In soccer, you're often reacting to what the opposition does in many sports. But in golf, you hit your shot, you walk 200 yards or whatever and you hit another shot. So there's a lot of time between where your mind can wander. It can wander to bad things, it can wander to good things.

It's easy to get down on yourself in this game because even the pros, who are the best the world, they don't hit every shot good or perfect. So we hit a lot of mishits or not-so-good shots and it's hard to say positive. Your self talk can become very negative.

I was impressed with Tom Watson, I played with him many times. He would leave a two-meter, a six-foot putt short and most people are just calling themselves names, "you idiot, how can you do that, you're a professional, you shouldn't leave it short."

He would just go, "Well, just a little harder, I would have made it."

I was thinking, wow, that's incredible how he turned that around to being something positive and not totally negative when it is really negative, it's really bad. So that's just a quick story.

Q. Just on the destination, general impressions of players coming to Vilamoura, the Algarve for the first time? What are your impressions of this place and the region in



general?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I think everything I hear from my colleagues from all over the world, they're very impressed with the hotel, the food, the golf course. Just everything so far they have seen is top notch, 5-star.

We were just talking about how convenient it is to stay right here on the golf course. You walk 50 yards or 100 and you're on the driving range or wherever you need to be. The food is exceptional. The breakfast buffet is out of this world. We had a players' dinner last night, which was very nice. The sponsor invited all the players and spouses to a dinner here and that was exceptional.

So far it's been amazing and I think everybody loves the golf course as well.

