

2015 US Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 24
Press Conference



Bernhard Langer

THE MODERATOR: This is our final press conference of the day. I'd like to welcome Bernhard Langer to the media center. World Golf Hall of Fame member and 2010 U.S. Senior Open Champion. Playing in his eighth U.S. Senior Open, Bernhard has finished in the top 25 each time, including five top ten finishes in the U.S. Senior Open. It seems like you're playing the best golf of your life right now, including the Senior Players a couple of weeks ago, where you won by six strokes. Is there a certain aspect of your game that's working better than others, or is everything kind of firing on all cylinders right now?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, last year was exceptional. I had a phenomenal year out here with five wins and the Father-Son making it six. This year has been a little slower start. But lately, obviously the last tournament we played was very good, hit a lot of greens in regulation. Just hit the ball pretty sure and avoided making bogeys and mistakes and made a bunch of birdies.

THE MODERATOR: You have nine consecutive top ten finishes in Champions Tour majors. It seems as though you play especially well at the major championships. Nicklaus always talked about trying to peak at the majors each year during the Tour. Can you attribute your good play in the majors to anything in particular or just playing well overall?

BERNHARD LANGER: I think it's hard to peak at golf or work towards peaking at certain times. Obviously, you can take weeks off or play whatever you think is best for you, but it's not like an athlete, a runner, or anything that can say, okay, if I train for three months, I should be -- if I train this much and eat that and do this, I should be peaking that week. It's difficult to do in golf. We all go through ups and downs. Some days and weeks you swing better and putt better, and you don't really know why. It just comes and goes. I think in general, majors we play on tougher courses so it brings the better players to the front. And you have four rounds so you have an extra round to make up or to increase your lead if you're playing well.

THE MODERATOR: And you mentioned other athletes, other sports, runners. We had Gary Player in the U.S. Open Media Center last week. Of course, he was known for his physical fitness, his strength training, flexibility, eating right. That is something I know you try to do. Do you feel that gives you an edge in playing at a course like this or in warm conditions, where it could be 100 degrees each of the first two days?

BERNHARD LANGER: I'm not a big fan of heat. Probably comes from growing up in Europe, even though I've lived in Florida for 30 years, but I've just never loved very hot weather. I'd rather put a sweater on and play in the 60s or 70s, you know. I think fitness certainly plays a part of it. When you play in extreme conditions on hilly courses or extreme weather, it certainly helps if you're not out of breath and if you're feeling well. If the body isn't aching or hurting too much, you're going to do better, no doubt about it. You focus better, especially four days in a row and under extreme conditions.

Q. Bernhard, the win that you had a couple weeks ago was slightly but not quite as much reminiscent as The Open Championship, the Senior British you won last year, where you seemed to be able to separate yourself, pull away a little bit. When did you develop a gear that really kind of just propelled you to be able to do that? Where did you find that in these last few years?

BERNHARD LANGER: I've done it before. I remember winning the World Under-25 Championship. That was in 1979. I won that by 17 shots, which actually was in the Guinness Book of Records for a while. So I've won a number of tournaments throughout my career by a large margin. Again, if you play just extremely well, you hit a lot of greens, hit a lot of fairways in majors in tough conditions, like I did last year at the Senior Open Championship. When you play four rounds, it's easier to separate yourself, especially when it's windy and the conditions are really difficult. Lots of people make bogeys, double bogeys, or just not many birdies. That week, my game was on. Last week, ten days ago, I played very well. One day I hit 18 greens. One spun off, so I hit 17 officially. I think I hit 17 greens again on Sunday in regulation. When you do that, you just give yourself opportunities to make birdies and hopefully not too many bogeys.

Q. Bernhard, you mentioned fitness and the importance of that. What do you do outside of golf to keep yourself in shape? I would think that trying on one of your Master's jackets is a good way to kind of gauge how you're doing. When was the last time you actually slipped one of those green babies on?

BERNHARD LANGER: I slip that on every year when we play there.

Q. That's true.

BERNHARD LANGER: It's a test every year again. But they give you a new one if you outgrow the old one. It's not like they can't afford another one. That's really not a good measure. The scales don't lie. I've tried working out over the years. I just feel better. I think it's good for you. I'm not a workaholic, workout-aholic, whatever you call it, like Gary Player is sometimes. I just enjoy being fit. I feel it. When I gain five pounds, I feel it. I feel sluggish. I feel just not very energetic. So I haven't gained a whole lot of weight, but I have body parts that hurt. Things are not like they were 20, 30 years ago. I hurt my back 40 years ago. I've been struggling with that ever since. When you ask what do I do? I stretch every morning, every evening at least twice for about 20, 30 minutes. I do work out in between, sometimes more, sometimes less. It depends where I am and what's going on.

Q. I also know that later on tonight Loren, Scott, and yourself are going to a special dinner. Talk about how important faith is not only to you as a person, but how you can relate to others on the Tour in situations like being here at the U.S. Senior Open?

BERNHARD LANGER: Faith means a great deal to me, and it's a big part of my life in general in everything I do. I'm very happy to share it with anybody that is willing to listen. People say they don't care what you know. They only want to know how much you care, and there's something to it. But tonight, yeah, we have the opportunity to speak in front of about 400, 450 people not far from here at another golf course, and the three of us -- I think Loren Roberts, Scott Simpson, and myself, we will share some golf stories and part of our testimony, Christian testimony, and it's a lot of fun. People seem to be interested. Everybody seems to be searching for something. I'll be glad to, hopefully, help somebody find the truth and point him in the right direction.

Q. I wonder if you could translate that answer just now into how you handle golf through that, how your faith gets you through the pressures of golf and if you're -- I mean, are you silently saying prayers when you're out there, or is it more just a calmness of knowing where you are in your life and

so forth?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's a lot of that. Obviously, I pray every day. It just puts it all in perspective. There was a time in my life when I wasn't a Christian. I wasn't a believer. I had other idols, and there were things that were far more important. When golf was not good, my whole life was miserable. Now golf is still important, but it's not the most important thing. Just faith puts it all in perspective. I'm not scared of dying. I'm convinced I know where I'm going. And it just doesn't make life easier. It actually may make it a little bit harder because people look at you all the time, thinking you're this really good person. And as soon as you do something that's not right, oh, yes, just one of those hypocrites. But I always say, no, I'm a Christian because I know I'm not perfect, and I need the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. That's why I'm a Christian. I never said I'm perfect, and I never will be perfect. I'm a sinner, and that's why I need Jesus Christ. So a lot of it is misunderstanding. It's like people say, oh, you're born again. They have no idea what born again really means. I was one of those for 28 years, and I'm glad I understand it now.

Q. But you never prayed for a putt to go in, I take it?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, I've prayed for putts to go in. But I think to God, it's more important that I'm faithful, that I learn and grow out of situations. I prayed for the putt to go in at Kiawah, and it didn't go in. That didn't mean I gave up on God, and God didn't give up on me. Sometimes we have to go through tough times. Sometimes we have to be disciplined, whether he's the cause of it or not, but we learn a lot more in the difficult times than in the good times in general.

THE MODERATOR: Haven't heard too much about the course yet. What do you think of Del Paso? You said you haven't been here previously? But having played a few practice rounds, how do you feel about the course, and do you think it suits your game?

BERNHARD LANGER: I think the golf course is phenomenal, absolutely fantastic. It's in great shape. It takes everything. You've got to drive it good. You've got to hit great iron shots, put yourself in the right positions. The greens are super. The bunkers are great. The fairways are fantastic. I can't say anything negative at all, not that I would want to, but it's really fun to play a golf course like this. They also have opportunities to make some holes a little shorter, a little longer. Right now it's pretty long. 7,000 yards for a par 70, you could claim if you played a par 72, you would be at 7,500, or 7,400, which is pretty long for seniors. But it is the U.S. Senior Open, and it's supposed to be a tough test, and it certainly is. The rough around the greens is the most severe rough I've seen in a very, very long time. It's really juicy and long. I've tried

various shots, and sometimes I went right underneath it, if you open it a bit, to get it up and land it soft. I hit at least six, seven, eight chip shots that went from here to there, pretty much just right under it. So got to be careful, hopefully not miss too many greens. And if I do, take the medicine and just get it on the green.

Q. Bernhard, it seems particularly to have a difficult finishing stretch. Could you describe how tough the last six holes are, please.

BERNHARD LANGER: Very much so. They're long. They're tough. There's water. There's everything you can think of. The greens are firm now. Nothing stops unless it's a very solidly struck golf ball. A lot of the greens, they funnel in. So if you miss the green on one side and you short side yourself, you've got nothing. The ball is not going to stop. So very important not to short side yourself here, I think. Probably middle of the green is a wonderful thing around here. You can get to most pins from the middle of the green. If you miss the greens, it's very, very difficult. But the last six holes are extremely tough. They're long. They're demanding. If you hit it in the rough or in the bunker, you're probably going to lose a shot.

THE MODERATOR: Bernhard Langer, Thursday at 1:27 p.m. off the 1st tee. Best of luck.