

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: KENNY PERRY
Wednesday, June 10, 2015



PHIL STAMBAUGH: We welcome Kenny Perry into the interview room this morning. Kenny, the 2013 Constellation SENIOR PLAYERS champion, making your sixth start on the Champions Tour this year. You said goodbye to the PGA TOUR I guess last week at the Memorial, unless of course you win this week and that would get you back in the PLAYERS Championship.

Just a few thoughts about coming to Boston for this tournament and Belmont country club.

KENNY PERRY: Well, one thing, excited. In 1995, I believe, I won the Bank of Boston in Worcester. It was my second PGA TOUR event win. '91 I won the Memorial and I didn't win again until I won at Worcester, so Boston has kind of a special place in my heart to kind of get going again. It kind of revitalized my career. Always loved coming up here.

I've got a good friend up in Hartford. I've had a family I've stayed with for 26 years, they're going to come here and watch me play since I don't play at Hartford much anymore so that's special for me. Look forward to it.

I played on Monday, played the golf course on Monday, thought it was fantastic. Just a big golf course right in front of you kind of tells you how -- where you need to go, how you need to hit it. Big complexes, big greens, they were just velvety smooth, beautiful surfaces to putt on. This place, I would call it a sleeper, a jewel. Was very impressed with it when I got out there so I'm looking forward to playing again. I didn't play any yesterday, I took -- this is my fifth week in a row. I've been on the road for five weeks, so I took yesterday off, just kind of took it easy, hit a few balls. So I look forward to getting out in the pro-am today and kind of playing a second practice round and trying to get a feel for course management, where I need to hit it, what I kind of need to do to get ready for tomorrow's round. But I think it's going to be a great venue and it's going to take a great champion to win here.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: We asked Colin Montgomerie yesterday about how he thought it would play for the tournament. What's your assessment? Do you think it will play hard, easy?

KENNY PERRY: Well, on Monday with those 30-mile an hour winds, I would say it would be very difficult. But I think it's going to be a lot warmer, it's going to be in the 80s and 90s, the ball will go a little further for us. I'm looking at 8- to 12-under wins the golf tournament. I don't think it's going to be super low scoring and I don't think it's going to be that high, either. I think there's a lot of birdie holes out there. There's a lot of 370, 380-yard par 4s I noticed, so you can either position it off the tee with a driver, 3-wood, an iron, whatever. And I think the greens are so good, if you get it on line you're going to make them, so you're going to make putts this week. So I just think it will be a medium test. The rough's not too severe. It's bad enough but I think you can actually advance it and get it up around the greens and

still survive. So it's still going to be a great challenge, a great test.

Q. When you were looking toward the end of your PGA TOUR career, what signs were you kind of looking for and when did you reach the point that the time was now?

KENNY PERRY: I think it's mostly commitment. I play with Billy Horschel and Stewart Cink there at Memorial and I played with Justin Thomas and Brooks Koepka at Byron Nelson and they probably hit it 20, 30 yards by me. But I kept it up with Billy and Stewart, we were about the same off of every tee so my distance was fine. To me, it was my heart and my commitment and my desire to want to continue to sacrifice, work to try to be the best in the world and I just don't have that anymore. I don't have that drive and that desire. I just want to kind of come play, focus in now on the Champions Tour. It's hard to split both tours. If you split and try to play both tours, you're really not going to be very successful, I don't think, because I've already played 10 events on the PGA TOUR and it's knocked out most of my tournaments out here on the Champions Tour. So now I'm way behind and I'm trying to play catch-up now the rest of the year to catch up with Colin Montgomerie and it's going to be hard to do.

I enjoyed winning the Charles Schwab Cup a couple years ago. That to me was a huge accomplishment in my career and I just, I kind of -- I've still got top 50 money I could use, but I took my top 25 this year just so I could go back to Colonial, Memorial, Byron Nelson. I've got a daughter that lives in between Ft. Worth and Dallas in Colleyville. She's got a four-month old, so it's my third grandchild and I got to spend two weeks with her. So I played Colonial and Byron Nelson and I stayed at her house for two weeks, and that was fantastic to be able to hang out with little Caine (sp?) I've got two more grandkids coming in July, July 4 and July 10, so I'll have five.

So I just thought, you know what, I beat the road, I've beat the hotels, eating out. You know, I said I'm playing more golf now than I played when I was on the regular tour trying to be the best in the world and I said I just want to kind of scale back, just focus in on the Champions Tour. I still believe in my heart I could still win on the PGA TOUR, but I really -- I enjoy my time out here a lot more.

It's funny, those kids Koepka and Thomas and Harris English I played with, they're 21 to 25 years old. My youngest daughter is 27. My kids are 27, 29 and 31, so there's a huge gap there and I just need to move on, I think. Was happy to do it and I wanted to kind of say bye to Jack one more time, sit and talk with him a little bit and thank him for being my Presidents Cup captain, which he was a couple times. Three of my wins came at Muirfield so that place has a special place in my heart, so I thought it was just a perfect ending to my career out there.

Q. You talked about Monty having a head start, so to speak. How much of a challenge is it going to be for you to try to get close to him and maybe win another Charles Schwab Cup and how much of a commitment is that going to take on your part?

KENNY PERRY: It's going to be very difficult and these next two weeks will determine how I'm going to do that. I need to somehow get a W one of these next two weeks here or the U.S. Senior Open because it's a double point. I'm not going to go to the Senior British because that is right when both my grandkids are going to be born back home, so I'm not going to be able to go to that one. These two weeks are big for me and I'm playing well. I've already played, this is my fifth week on the road so my golf game's good, there's no rust in it. It should perform okay if I can keep the nerves under control. That will tell me. If I don't play very well these two weeks, you may see me just kind of slack off and take it easy the rest of the year because I'm already way behind to begin with, but if I play well these next two weeks, it may regenerate me and get me to chase it a little harder.

Q. How bittersweet was it to say goodbye to the other tour and to Jack last week?

KENNY PERRY: Well, it wasn't bittersweet; it was joyful in my opinion. I was ready to go and I wasn't sad. I had no regrets, I told him. I said I'm looking forward, I'm not looking back and it was -- it's just been a joy for 30 years to live my dream out there. I told dad if I won one tournament I've made it out on the PGA TOUR. But I was a late bloomer. I won 11 times in my 40s -- I won 11 of my 14 when I was in my 40s and I won three times at 48 and twice at 49. I almost won the Masters at 49. Ryder Cup was incredible at Valhalla, I was 48 there in 2008. I just told everybody I was a slow learner. I wasn't good at school and I wasn't good at figuring this game out until late, so it was perfect. It was just -- to me it was a Cinderella story. I didn't get the slipper, but I came from a nine-hole golf course from a small town about 5,800 people in Kentucky, not known for its golfing, you know, and was able to compete for 30 years out there. I thought that was pretty neat.

Q. Sounds like you're obviously in a good place coming off the tour and having your focus on the Champions Tour. Is that something that you think in the long run is going to benefit your game and just kind of getting your mind on this and just focusing on this and moving forward?

KENNY PERRY: Well, you know, I just feel more comfortable out here on the Champions Tour. These are the guys I loved, I looked up to, I competed against for 30 years, I tried to emulate, I tried to be like. To me, this is where I belong and I feel very comfortable out here. It's like wearing an old pair of shoes, it just feels natural to me.

I felt a little out of place on the PGA TOUR. I heard little grumbling of why are you taking up places for the young kids out on the PGA TOUR when I would play. I felt like I was taking a spot up a little bit and I can understand that. If I was a rookie out there and you let an old guy come in and kicks you out and you end up being first alternate and don't get in the tournament, that can be a little bitter and I understand that. But I did put 30 years out there and I felt like I earned it, too.

Yeah, I will focus a lot more on the Champions Tour. I like it out here. I feel I'm very competitive out here and I feel like I can still win and win multiple times. So that always gets

you motivated, gets you charged up and gets your interest piqued. So yeah, I look forward to the challenge to beat Colin, beat Bernhard Langer, beat Lehman. There's just multiple guys that are still very talented and still play great golf out here.