

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW: BERNHARD LANGER
Saturday, June 13, 2015



MICHAEL BALIKER: We would like to welcome Bernhard Langer into the interview room. Bernhard, you have an 8-shot lead through 54 holes, which ties the Champions Tour record, last done by you at the Senior Open Championship last year. Talk about your play through three rounds and then we'll open it up for questions.

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it's been really solid. The first day I made two bogeys with a pitching wedge in my hand, one from the middle of the fairway, which was disappointing, but since then it's been really good. Yesterday I played outstanding, hitting 17 greens. Actually, I hit the other green, too, but it spun off. And today was not quite as good but still a lot of good shots, a lot of good play and smart play and a solid 4-under with no bogeys. So yeah, you don't play like that very often.

MICHAEL BALIKER: If you could walk us through those birdies, that would be great. Thank you.

BERNHARD LANGER: Sure. Birdied No. 2, was playing downwind so I hit 2-hybrid off the tee and I think it was a pitching wedge or 9-iron to about 12 feet. Then No. 4 was a 3-wood off the tee to stay short of the rough and then that was a 2-hybrid, great shot but it rolled through the green. Had a difficult pitch, pitched it to about five, six feet and then actually thought I missed the putt but it lipped in, so it's very fortunate there.

Then 11 was a driver in the right rough, pitching wedge to about 18 feet. No. 17 was a very good drive, tried to hook a 2-hybrid, run it up the hill and I overcooked it a little left of the green, two yards left, chipped it up to about six feet and made that one.

Q. Emotionally and physically, how does this compare to Royal Porthcawl last year, the way you played there and the way you distanced the field?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, physically I'm exhausted right now but this is a hard course to walk and with the heat, I don't like really hot weather. I would rather put on a sweater, I like 60s and 70s so I'm always struggling when it's hot.

Emotionally, it feels great to be in the lead. After last year it's been slightly disappointing. It hasn't been a bad year, just not quite what the last few years have been. I'm eager to put a W behind my name. I'm not saying we're there yet, still got a lot of golf left, but I'm excited the way I'm playing right now. Talked to my coach, Willi Hofmann from Germany, over the phone a couple days ago before the tournament and he looked at some of the swings that I sent him and he gave me two or three pointers. We do that quite often, but this time it's somehow stuck and it's really made a difference. I'm hitting the ball much more solid, straighter and have more distance control, and the putter's been working pretty good this week, too.

Q. As far as sublime performances go, is this fair to compare this with that last year?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's difficult to compare anything, but whenever you have a lead on a very good field, it takes some really good play because there's a lot of great champions out there, great players, and it just shows how difficult the course is. It's not a pushover, a lot of sloping fairways and very tough greens. Played with Kenny Perry. As I said yesterday, he's one of the best players we have anywhere in the world and he really struggled to read some of the putts out here. They're tough to read, there's a lot of slope and a lot of movement going on.

Q. With an 8-shot lead, do you play more conservatively tomorrow or do you even think about the other people?

ATTORNEY2: At first probably I'm going to play just normal golf. I have my game plan, what I try to do on every hole. Depending where the pin position is, I'm going to attack some and stay away from some others, but at first my goal is to shoot under par. If I can do that, it will be very difficult for anybody to catch me.

Q. That was kind of the question I had, but maybe I'll hit you with this: Since this was a new golf course, did it take a little while to kind of formulate a game plan and did it change at all since Thursday's first round?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it kind of evolves at times, but actually the game plan we've had -- when I say we, my caddie and I -- has been pretty good. I also had maybe a slight advantage, I have a local friend who's a club pro a half hour from here, he's played a few tournaments here and walked with me in my practice round and just pointed out a few things that I wouldn't have known right away. I might have picked up most of it, but it still helps to have somebody point it out right away so you're aware of it from the get-go, whether it's certain tee shots or the slope of the greens or whatever. So I had a pretty good game plan from the very first time I played, even in the pro-am, and that helps when you don't have to change and throw everything and do all that.

Q. And that gentleman's name?

BERNHARD LANGER: Dave Lane.

Q. And how do you know him?

BERNHARD LANGER: I've known him for years and years. He comes to Florida for a couple of weeks every winter and followed me around in the Honda Classic and Bay Hill and a couple other tournaments and we got to meet. Then we practiced together a little bit and he gets a few pointers from my coach when he's here, Willi Hofmann. I fly him in every January for a few days to work with me and usually Dave is down there. So we've just become real good friends over the years. He's a solid Christian, goes to church with me

down there when he's visiting, so we just enjoy each other's company.

Q. You've been in this position before with an 8-shot lead and 18 holes to play. What's the key going into tomorrow to get through 18 more holes?

BERNHARD LANGER: Just not to get ahead of yourself. There's a lot of golf left. Stay away from big numbers and, like I said, if I can play under par tomorrow, hopefully continue my good play, hit fairways, hit greens and make the odd put here and there, I should be in good shape.

Q. Is Dave from Hopkinton Country Club?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yes.

Q. Is he here this weekend?

BERNHARD LANGER: Um-hmm. Talked to him two minutes ago before I came in here.

Q. I assume he'll be here tomorrow?

BERNHARD LANGER: Probably. I'm not sure.

Q. When Willi looked at the video, what did he say about the video, or did he just say keep doing what you're doing?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, no, he pointed out a few things. Lately he says, You only send me your best swings, because for some reason the swings I took on the range that we filmed were always good. I said, Well, I block a couple or pull hook or hit them thin or whatever. He said, Well, what you're sending me looks great, so I can't comment on that anyway.

He finally compared what I sent him, like 15 swings on Tuesday I think it was, and he compared them to last year and he just pointed out that my shoulders right now are a little left, aiming slightly left; my backswing is a little shorter than it was last year, which happens at old age but I didn't age that much the last few months, so still capable of a full turn, so I've been trying that. And then I was a little quick at the change of direction. When you get short, you get a little fast and then it can go anywhere and everywhere. So I worked on those. I hate to play with a lot of swing thoughts, but it's been working for the most part.

Q. Could you give us a sense of what it was like for you to go through the issues that your daughter had earlier this year, how it affected you maybe professionally? And then also how inspiring is it to play with your sons here with you this week?

BERNHARD LANGER: Great questions.

Well, it was tough, you know, when you see your 22-year old daughter going through that. We had to make the decision which surgeon to use and what to do and what not to do and when to do it. We kind of pushed her along saying, Let's try as long as we can without surgery, which most people do. But she was in a lot of pain and eventually she said, I have to go, this doesn't work anymore. The drugs didn't even work, so we had to go ahead and do that. And then she came out of surgery and she was no better, she was actually worse. So now you have doubts whether the guy messed up or whether he did more damage than before or whether he just whatever, we don't know. He closed her up and said everything looks good. Well, everything went great but she's in more pain now than she was three days ago. Took another MRI, showed another herniation of the same disk. So we go, What now? Got to do another operation. Anyway, so it was tough. It's still tough.

And my son had a broken pelvis at the very same time. He was in a wheelchair for four weeks, crutches for another four weeks, now he's okay. But all that happened at the same two- or three-month period and I had a hard time focusing probably and preparing and I was spending more time talking to doctors around the country and trying to figure this out and whatever. That's fine, you know. That's what fathers do and that's far more important than winning a golf tournament.

Q. How about with him here this week? Did you go out to dinner, did you stay in a hotel?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, we're staying with friends. Actually, Dave Lane's friends, I should say, right here on the golf course, which is a wonderful treat. Don't have to fight the traffic and we've really enjoyed the hospitality. We went to the Red Sox game last night. We were really excited for a little while and it went downhill, but it was a great experience. Just spending time with family is always special and having my oldest son, you know, only happens once or twice a year now.

Q. Lanny was saying on TV, because he has sons and playing for them when they're there makes you -- I don't know if it makes you try harder but you're inspired by them. Talk about that dynamic.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, because when my son caddied for me, he had an unbelievable caddie record. He caddied for me like eight or 10 times and we won four or five out of 10 and a lot of good finishes. So there might be something to that. You know, you just want to show your son what you can do and you enjoy having him around. It's good camaraderie. How much longer can we do that? He's going to have a job and he's going to be gone like he is already; he's in New York, we live in Boca. It's not that easy. He doesn't get that much time off. We go visit him once or twice, but that's about it.