

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: JEFF MAGGERT
Wednesday, November 4, 2015



DAVE SENKO: Well, we would like to welcome Jeff Maggert to the Charles Schwab Cup Championship media center. Jeff, maybe just get us started. Everything pretty much on the line this week with the Schwab Cup and our last event of the year. Maybe just get us started, talk a little bit about that.

JEFF MAGGERT: Well, it's actually been fun for me because the race has been pretty tight between me and Colin for a few weeks now, and then Bernhard jumped up with a win a few weeks ago and got himself in the mix. I don't know the history of the points each year that you all have been doing this, but this year it's literally just really between the three of us who finishes on top it looks like the way the points are going to break out. I expect to play well and I always expect those guys to play well, so I feel like I need to have a chance to win the tournament on Sunday, if not be right there. I feel like it's going to be probably a difference between a guy finishing third and fourth or second and the next guy finishes third. The goal is to obviously win.

I've had a good year. I actually set a goal for myself kind of halfway through the season when I was playing well, kind of after the U.S. Senior Open to win five times on the tour. So I've got four, and if I can win five that would be very good obviously. That's kind of in the back of my mind.

I like the course here, it's in great shape. The weather today, and I'm sure the other players feel it, kind of took me a little bit out of my rhythm for preparation. But I had a good practice yesterday and Monday I was out working on my game. I feel good. My putting is good. I struggled with my calf injury off and on the last month but the past couple weeks it's been really strong. Just more confidence with that every single day and kind of pushing that out of the back of my mind that it's not really a factor.

Q. How does the dynamic change now? You're playing week to week or whenever the tournaments are, tournament to tournament trying to do well, but now this is it, there's no more beyond today. Is that a change of dynamic or the approach the way you're thinking aside from obviously trying to win?

JEFF MAGGERT: Well, it's always nice to have a system in place where the last tournament of the year is important. For a few years on the tour, for actually quite a few years on the regular tour before they had the FedEx playoffs, the last three or four weeks were kind of a go-through-the-motions, kind of just relive a good year or bad year. Unless you were down on the bubble of the Money List trying to keep your card, it was kind of a nonchalant ending to the season. But now with the playoffs on that tour and the Charles Schwab Cup, it puts a lot of emphasis at the end and on the last tournament. I consider this just as important as one of our major championships earlier in the year that we play and really working on my game leading up to this tournament and wanting to play well. Even

though it's the last tournament of the year, it's still just as important as a lot of the others.

Q. My impression is that this is a good driver's course, a good driving course, so that should suit you. Do you agree with that?

JEFF MAGGERT: The fairways are pretty wide but the rough is a little more penalizing this year. It seems like the winter grass has really grown in well, it's pretty thick. Driving's a good part of my game but it's also a very strong part of Colin and Bernhard's game, so I don't see myself having a big advantage in that department. I think this is a ball striker's course from the fairway hitting the ball close to the pins and putting well. The greens are a little tricky to read here because it's a mountainside course and there's going to be a big difference of hitting your iron shots well and giving yourself those nice 10-, 12-, 15-foot birdie putts as opposed to putting from 20, 25 feet most of your round. I feel that's really my game plan is to really work on my iron play, get the ball close to the hole and try to make the putts. It always comes down to putting no matter what tournament it is, but it will be important this week as well.

Q. I wanted you to talk about Bernhard a little bit. What's the trait that he has competitively that you admire the most or maybe that you wish you had?

JEFF MAGGERT: Well, he's been unwavering really since I've known him for 20 or 25 years in the fact that he's very methodical, he works hard off the course in the gym, he keeps his body in shape, he eats healthy, he works hard at the course, he plays practice rounds, he scouts the course. For him, you can tell that mentally he's going to be prepared not to make a mistake. You can get a little lazy sometimes out here and you don't pay attention in your practice rounds and you're kind of going through the motions, but he is very methodical, he doesn't miss. And I want to be like that but sometimes I'm just a little lazy and I don't put in the effort that I should and I know that. At times when it means a lot I'm very focused, but he's that way every week. I mean, it's the same if he's at the U.S. Senior Open or any other tournament we play, he's out there to win every single tournament that he plays and he's 56, 7 years old. I would consider him a top two or three player out here automatically before we even start a season. He's just that consistent.

Colin's playing the same way since he's turned 50. He just seems to be top five of the leaderboard week in and week out. So I'm thinking to myself, you know, if I'm going to beat these guys I've got to be right there winning tournaments, and if I'm not winning I had better be right there a few shots away finishing in the top 10. Every week I feel that way.

Q. Do you feel like saying, "Would you guys lighten up a little bit so I could win more tournaments?"

JEFF MAGGERT: Yeah, there's a little joking about, you know, with everyone; it's like, "Bernhard, take it easy on us this week." It's fun. It's a little different out here. The competition, I would say it's just as competitive but there's a little more friendliness about it. The regular tour is pretty much -- it's competitive but I really want to beat you and I don't

really want to talk to you because I just want to beat you. Out here it's like when we're on the course we're that way, but off the course I just feel more of a friendly atmosphere and it's been fun, I've enjoyed it.

Q. So I know this happened a while ago, but Jake's pass to you was like a fly pattern or down-and-out, whatever it was, did he overthrow you?

JEFF MAGGERT: Well, he's a pretty good little thrower but he was at one end of the pool and I was at the other end, so we were passing it back in the pool and it was the strangest thing. You would think in a pool of water you're not going to hurt a muscle, but I just reached out real far to grab one of his passes and I planted on my right foot, and as soon as I planted my foot on the bottom of the pool I just felt that little pop in my calf. I knew right away that I had pulled a muscle because I had pulled hamstrings before and it was the exact same feeling. Then for literally two or three days I couldn't walk 15 feet across the room. I told my wife, I said this is -- it seemed funny at the time but this is starting to get a little more serious. Then I saw a rehab guy that I rehabbed my shoulder when I had shoulder surgery and worked with him for two and a half weeks before we went to Pebble Beach. It was lucky in the fact that it was right when we had that three-week break on the schedule so it gave me a good two and a half weeks to work with him. It was feeling good, I didn't have any issues at Pebble Beach at all, which I was surprised, I thought I would be a little tender. Then in North Carolina, a couple tee shots I could feel that it was kind of, I don't know if I would say reinjured but a little bit bothersome. Then San Antonio, the first round I hit a tee shot on the second hole and I knew right away that I was going to be struggling with it all week. I tried to play the second round but it was good timing just to rest it. I had a nice 12- or 13-day period where I was able to stay off of it. Last week it felt really good.

Q. Would you go back to 1990 and give a sense of how proud you were or what that moment felt like to lead the Ben Hogan Tour in earnings and be Player of the Year?

JEFF MAGGERT: Well, I had struggled getting through the qualifying tournaments so when they announced the Hogan Tour format and the fact they were going to give five tour cards away, so I was excited. I thought this is really my opportunity to show over a period of a year my body of work, that I'm good enough to play on the tour. So I was excited, and I had had some success in Asia and Australia so financially I was a little bit more secure. I was able to pay the bills, so to speak. So the Hogan Tour was -- today a lot of young players are out there trying to scrap a living as well as get a tour card, but I was there to get a tour card and my goal was to play as good as I could every week and just to kind of finish that off at the end of the year. The tour card was the prize. It wasn't the prize money or being Player of the Year for the Hogan Tour, but for me the prize was that access to the tour. I knew once I got there, I couldn't take it for granted and was fortunate, 25-year career on the regular tour.

Q. Do you feel like you were considered underrated?

JEFF MAGGERT: Maybe more of an unknown. Strangely enough, I was in Australia, it was

probably 1989 and I was paired with Curtis Strange the last round of a tournament. We were both right near the lead. I think Greg Norman or Mark O'Meara won it. At the end I think I finished third and he signed my card and he kind of flipped it over to me and he said, "You know what? You're the best American player I've never heard of." But you've got to know Curtis and it was actually, it was a compliment and it really made me feel good because here at the time two-time U.S. Open back-to-back winner tells me that I'm the best American player that he's never heard of. That was his way of giving a compliment and it really gave me confidence that I'm going to be good enough to get on the tour eventually.

Q. When you say to Bernhard, "Hey, take it easy on us," how does he respond to that?

JEFF MAGGERT: He probably tries harder to beat us. I just try to keep my mouth shut. You don't want to anger a guy. He's just the ultimate competitor and it is amazing. I mean, physically we all lose a little bit when we get older, but in a lot of ways I think guys are mentally better. I feel like I'm mentally better now than I was 15 years ago for sure.