

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
October 20, 2021

BERNHARD LANGER



CONNOR STANGE: You come in here as No. 1 in the Charles Schwab Cup standings and you're a past champion here. Can you just open with your thoughts on being here this week?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it's great to be back in Richmond. The golf course presents itself better than ever. The weather's beautiful, it's all perfect. It's great to be heading the Schwab Cup standings at this point in time, very excited to start the Playoffs. Whoever does the best these next three weeks will probably end up on top.

Q. Speaking of the Playoffs, you have the lead heading into them. What has clicked for you this year?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's just been more solid play. I haven't had a lot of Ws, but I've put myself in contention a number of times, lots of top-10s, top-5s, just knocking on the door. Very consistent play for the last, well, it's been two years really because we had the super season going.

Q. How much more competitive has the entire tour been this year and how do you expect that to manifest itself this week and over the next three weeks?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it's been a very strong rookie class as we all know. Where shall we start, with Ernie Els, Retief Goosen, now Pdraig Harrington, you have Furyk, Darren Clarke. It goes on and on, K.J. Choi, Mike Weir, Phil Mickelson. They're proven champions, winners, major winners, and they're going to have a big impact on this tour, no doubt about it, and we've already seen it. Cejka came out and won a couple big ones, so there's more and more of that. It's been, as I said, a very strong year and a half of rookies coming out here, which makes it that much tougher.

What I notice is these guys hit it a lot further than we did 20 years ago, 10 years ago. So I used to be one of the longest guys out here about 15 years ago, 14 years ago, now I'm in the middle of the pack trending the other way. So I've got my work cut out making up for that lack of distance somewhere else, either accuracy or better thinking or better short game or whatever, but it's not easy because they're good in all of that.

Q. However, they're also chasing you. So what have you worked on? Noticing all those changes that you've noticed, what have you worked on personally?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, I just try to be the best I can be. I've got to play my own game. I drive the ball a maximum of 280 yards and I've got to live with that and then play

from there on in. That's what I've always done my whole life, so I just constantly look at myself and say where can I get better, do I need to hit more fairways, more greens, where can I still improve, is my bunker game good enough, is my putting decent? You know, all the different aspects, my ups and downs. When I miss the green, sometimes you look at stats. I'm not a big stat person, but I look at them every once in a while and see how do I rank against my opponents in these various areas. Then you try and get better in the weak areas and stay strong where you're good.

Q. When it comes to the Playoffs, does your approach change in any aspect?

BERNHARD LANGER: Not really, not at this point in time. It might change playing the last nine holes in Phoenix at the Schwab Cup if you, whatever, need to be in a certain position. Let's say you need to win or you need to be two whatever placings better than where you are, you've got to make some birdies. You can't get there by playing safe.

But not at this point in time, no. You just try and do the best you can, have a good result, hopefully win and play better than the guys that are in the hunt.

Q. Talking specifically about this course, what makes it challenging and unique in your opinion?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's just a wonderful golf course from tee to green, and then the greens are very demanding by themselves. They have Bermuda rough, which is always tough because the ball sinks down, it doesn't sit on top of it and you never know, does it come out like a knuckleball or flyer or what does it do. That's part of the challenge.

It's a good mixture of some very long holes and every once in a while you have an opportunity where you can have a shorter iron in. Par 5s are definitely favoring the long guys. Where I might not reach any of them, they might reach most of them. So again, my wedge game has to be better to get it close and hopefully still make birdie.

Q. You've won five Schwab Cups. Have you thought about would a sixth be more special in any way or are they all kind of special? How do you kind of look at that?

BERNHARD LANGER: They're all special in their given time, but now being 64 years old, it gets harder and harder so it would mean a great deal, especially with the super season. You know, two years running to win one would be extremely special. But we've still got three big events ahead of us and I'm not going to get ahead of myself. Try and put my work in and hopefully get some good results.

Q. You've talked about the rookies a little bit earlier. Do you foresee any of them kind of making a run at the numbers you've been able to put up here on the Champions Tour?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, they'll all try and make a run. It all depends how committed

they are to the tour and how much they play. We've seen Steve Stricker producing some tremendous results out here, but he hasn't fully committed yet. He was the Ryder Cup captain and he still played a couple events on the regular tour. Once he comes out here full time, he'll win a bunch.

I think Jim Furyk is fully committed and he's going to continue his winning ways. So will Phil, I suppose, whenever that time comes from him. You have Ernie Els, Retief Goosen, they're all working very hard. Mike Weir's out here working his butt off, excuse my language, but so are many others. They're eager, they're realizing there's a second opportunity after the PGA TOUR's over now, and on the PGA TOUR Champions they have another chance of playing some really good golf and showing how good they are for the next 10, 15 years.

Q. Have any of them come to ask you any tips or things, how to handle the transition from the PGA TOUR to the Champions Tour?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, yeah, we've had some conversations with a few of them. Not going to call any names now or whatever, but they asked what do you think and how did you feel and is there any difference.

And there's slight differences. Most of our tournaments are three days, so you've got to play aggressive from the get-go. You can't afford to have a bad round and expect to win, that's not going to happen when you play three rounds. That's probably not going to happen when you play four rounds, but at least you have one more round to hopefully catch up. So there's things like that.

And the schedule is really good. You can go home Sunday night if you choose to and come back out Wednesday or Thursday and you'll get to spend a couple days with family, which it was always hard to do on the regular tour because it's just one more day of golf.

Q. Curious your thoughts on Phil and what he's been able to do out here, obviously winning three of four. He's defending for the first time on the Champions Tour this week.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, he's had tremendous success. He's only played, what, four or five tournaments and won three of them if I'm correct. That's a very high percentage.

I just heard today that he won 10 days ago and he was 81st in driving accuracy, which blows my mind. If I was 81st in driving accuracy, I wouldn't finish in the top-20 and he won the tournament. It just shows that length plays a huge part in this game, and obviously the short game as well, the wedge play and the putting. But I didn't think that would be possible on a golf course like we played in Jacksonville, to miss that many fairways and end up on top of the podium. But, you know, Phil did it, so all kudos to him.