

**BERNHARD LANGER**

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**CONNOR STANGE:** We'll go ahead and get started here with Bernhard, the 2020 champion here at the Cologuard Classic. Can you just open with your thoughts being back here in Tucson?

**BERNHARD LANGER:** It's always great to be back in Tucson on this golf course. There's so much history, so many great champions to this place. I remember coming here on the regular tour and playing a couple times. Usually we have awesome weather, but we don't want to talk about that right now. It's a great venue and you can tell by the strength of the field I think that players love coming here and competing here.

**CONNOR STANGE:** Last week you notched your 43rd win on the Champions Tour. What went well for you last week that you're looking to have carry over to this week?

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Well, I think last week the course really suited me. It wasn't a bomber's golf course like some of the courses we play that just suit guys who can hit it 300-plus. I'm not in that category, so it was very tight and narrow and I drove the ball extremely well. I think I hit 39 out of 42 fairways or something like that. Does that make sense? Whatever. Hit a lot of greens in regulation. And the three fairways I didn't, the three fairways I didn't hit I was still in the fairway bunker, I wasn't in the penalty area, so that was probably the key together with some fairly good iron shots and the odd putt that went in.

**Q. You had your first win on this tour in 2007, which was the year that Hale Irwin won the last of his 45. When you were just joining the tour, was pursuing his record or getting to his record anything that ever crossed your mind?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** No, not with his record, no. I was just trying to establish myself and hopefully win a few tournaments. The goal was to be one of the leading players on the PGA Tour Champions, that was really my mindset coming out here, and having fun and enjoying the camaraderie with all the other guys. It's been all of that and more.

**Q. Now that you're close to it, is it something that's on your mind or do you just have to set it aside when you're out there?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** No, I really set it aside, but you guys won't let me. Every other week or so it's brought up, and I understand but it's not on the forefront. On the forefront is every day, you know, my game, how can I get better or how can I improve a little bit here or there. I know if I play the best of my ability, I have a good chance to win, and if I don't, I'll probably have very little chance to win.

**Q. Can you still improve?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** I believe I can, yes. I believed that all along. You're going to say he's crazy, what's he taking? No, I just -- when you think about the game of golf, I know I'm not going to get longer or I'm never going to hit it 300-plus, but I can still get straighter, I can still become a better short game player. You know, if I make one more putt a week, I'm one shot better. That could be enormous over a period of, you know, 25 tournaments or something like that. If I could chip one ball closer or hit one more green with my irons, if I could get that one stroke better a week or half a stroke better, it would have tremendous outcome over the period of the whole season.

I think golf is very much a mental game as well as it is technical, so you can work on your technique like I just mentioned, but you can also work on your mental side. If you're mentally stronger and believe that you can do it and don't get overwhelmed with the situation that we get ourselves in when you get in contention, yes. So that's the long answer of yes, I believe that I can still get better.

**Q. How do you stay motivated year after year, week after week?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Yeah, it's never really been a problem getting motivated, that's just part of my DNA. Whenever I do something, I want to do it well, I want to do it great to the best of my ability. When the day comes and I'm out here just goofing off, it's time to go home, I think, and play with the grandkids and kids, which is great, too. It's generally just my mindset. I want to give it 100 percent.

**Q. What was your first ever win as a pro, even in the '70s?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Well, it depends. As a teaching pro or --

**Q. A "getting-money pro."**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Well, you get money as a teaching pro. I turned pro when I was 15, teaching pro, and I will never forget the first tournament I ever won. I was 16 and I won 500 Deutschmarks, which is nothing, but at the time it was huge. Then I won the German (indiscernible) Championship when I was 17. I won 6,000 Deutchmarks, which bought me my first car basically. Then it went on and on to obviously bigger tournaments on the European Tour and then on this tour and around the world. There were many steppingstones.

**Q. One of the reasons that others haven't been able to do what you've been able to do is injuries sort of inevitably happen. Aside from luck, how do you think you've been able to avoid any major injuries along the way?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** I haven't been avoiding injuries. I've had my share of injuries as well. I was drafted into the German Air Force, everybody had to do it then, 18 months and

the first three months was, whatever, boot camp, whatever you call it.

Make a long story short, during that time I had a stress fracture in my lower back and two bulging disks. I was six weeks in the hospital and I thought I was done at 19 years old. I had just joined the tour a year before and I thought, well, this is it, you're probably never going to play professional golf again.

But I recovered without surgery. My back looks a mess if you see the x-rays, but haven't had surgery yet and hopefully I won't have to.

And I've had a bunch of other injuries. I had surgery on my thumb, I had neck issues, I have foot issues and now I have knee issues for about five years, and shoulder. But I don't want to talk about it because it really doesn't do any good. Most people don't care what you're dealing with to start off with. Secondly, I'd rather be a positive person than talk about, oh, dear me, what I had to go through. But I've had a few injuries and I'm still hurting every day I get up.

**Q. I'm sure you've heard people say stuff like 40 is the new 30 or 50 is the new 40 or whatever. Do you feel you can serve as an inspiration to others who want to play this game and play it well for a long time?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Yeah, I hope to be an inspiration, you know, for the younger generation but also for the older generation. When many people play our game between the age of 40 and 80 or whatever and many of them say, oh, I'm too old or I started too late or my back's bad, I want to prove them wrong. I want to show them, this guy can do it, he's got a bad back, he's 64 years old, he still thinks he can get better, maybe I can do the same thing. Yeah, I'd like to be that kind of role model.

**Q. Is it possible if you break Hale's record that you would view it almost like winning the Masters?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** I'm not sure you can compare the two. The Masters is winning a golf tournament over four days. Winning 45 tournaments is like half a lifetime it seems like, even though it's not. It's whatever it may be, 15, 16 years out here. You can't compare the two, they're separate achievements.

But I think whenever you break a record that nobody has ever done before in the history of the game, it's something special, it's something unique, that's all. And Hale's record of 45 tournaments is incredible, it really is. It's stood for so many years and it may stand for a whole lot longer. Who knows, time will tell. You know, whatever I do takes nothing away from him. He's been an amazing champion and a great player.

**Q. How do these weather conditions impact your preparation for the tournament, if at all?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Yeah, it's not ideal. We would love to be out there. Brought some new irons that were made for me and a couple of other clubs and you can't test in a 30-mile an hour wind or even 15-mile an hour wind. My body doesn't function very well in 40 degrees weather, or 50. It's not ideal, so we'll have to wait and it will have to be postponed. But it is the same for everybody. Good thing is we've all been here before, we know the golf course, so we don't feel like we have to be out on the golf course to figure out how to play each and every hole.

**Q. Do you and Hale ever needle one another about it?**

**BERNHARD LANGER:** Oh, yeah. We've become very good friends over the years. We had the famous match at the Ryder Cup in '91. That was part of our history together. We have a lot of respect for each other and we both have a great sense of humor, so we do needle each other. I think at the same time we both understand how blessed we have been to play this game at the very highest level for many, many years.