

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

John Daly Press Conference

JOHN DEVER: Insuperity good afternoon. Welcome back to the 78th KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship. Pleased to be joined by two-time Major champion, John Daly. John, welcome back to the championship. It's good to have you. Congratulations on your win a few weeks ago at the Insuperity Championship. It was your first victory in a little bit. Maybe talk a little bit about that and how satisfying it was for you.

JOHN DALY: Yeah, it was a drought, there's no doubt, but it was just one of those weeks that I finally got the putter working. I've been driving the ball very straight this year which is really helping me get some pretty low rounds. I didn't really play great in Birmingham, but I went out on Sunday and said, I know I can play this course, and shot 65 on it on Sunday to hopefully build on it, get some confidence. But, no, it was, the first year out here on this Champions Tour, I mean it's hard to win. It's hard to win anywhere. Where the fewer guys that we do have out here all of them their short games are just so incredible it make it's tough to win. But it felt great. There's nothing like winning. It doesn't happen often for a lot of us, some guys have been on this tour for five, six, seven years and haven't won. And kind of get the monkey off the back and hopefully just kind of feed on the confidence of it.

JOHN DEVER: So I think that one of the big questions this week is about the shorts in the practice round. Are you going to be sporting stars and stripes at all? You've got some stars going today.

JOHN DALY: Yeah, a little bit. Dan Patrick took my American ones for his man cave and the shirt I wore on Sunday. But, yeah, I did wash it. The champagne was all of it. I was going to send it to him dirty just to tease him a little bit but, no, we washed it. But I was hoping to get them in this week, I haven't seen them yet. I was hoping to wear them, if I make the cut, wear them on Sunday.

JOHN DEVER: Questions?

Q. My question -- by the way, I listened to you sing, you have a great voice.

JOHN DALY: Oh, thank you.



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Q. How did you get into golf and what motivated you to go and practice as a kid and then through all these years?

JOHN DALY: I was motivated through Jack Nicklaus. I started when I was four. I wasn't allowed to play on our little nine-hole golf course in Dardanelle, Arkansas. They would let me wade in the ponds. I got to sell them the good balls, I had to keep the bad ones, they wouldn't take the bad ones. Then we lived on a baseball field, so I learned of how to play kind of on a baseball field. Hit cuts to the right, straight shots over center field, hooks down the left, third baseline. Flops to the pitcher's mound. Pitch and runs to first, second and third. That's kind of how I learned how to play. Then when I was six years old I got to start playing on the course a little bit. So that's -- and I learned through the Jack Nicklaus Lesson Tee, the cartoon, back then it was '70 or '69, '70, 1970 when it came out. Learned the grip that way and everything in the cartoon. So that's kind of how it all started for me.

Q. Can you just tell us a little bit about how this course sets up for you and a little bit more about the driver. I know you got a new driver in the bag this year you say you've been hitting is much straighter?

JOHN DALY: Yeah, the course is unbelievable. It's beautiful. It's it plays longer than what the yardage shows I think maybe because of the weather a little bit. But the fairways are beautiful. They're just tight. It's hard to get the ball in the air with your longer irons so I'm trying to put I put a 2 and 3-iron hybrid in the bag. We haven't played on bent this year yet. We have played on I think six or seven events have all been on Bermuda. So any time you get up in the north, northeast, even the kind of northern Midwest and stuff, you go to poa annua and bent and it change, everything changes, the greens are a little softer, and going from Bermuda to bent there's not much grain, so I struggled yesterday just getting the ball in the air. That is because we just haven't played on tight tight fairways like this in a while. So, the golf course is beautiful. It's got some pretty good tough par-3s, the par-5s if I drive it really well I can get home to most of them. I think here it's just keeping it in the fairway. The rough's up, it's a little damp, which makes it tougher to hit out of, but it's a great, great golf course. Unbelievable golf course. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. When did you start thinking about playing the Champions Tour and given what's gone on with your game and on and off the course the last few years, did you think you would get to this point where you would be playing Champions Tour and playing at this level?

JOHN DALY: Well, I knew I was going to have at least two years through my points and my career money the. I think more the points. I was looking forward to it probably a year out. Because I was, I wasn't playing very good I was getting a few spots in some tournaments but it's great to go home and practice but if you're not playing tournaments it makes it tough to compete anywhere. I don't think I played, I think I played Puerto Rico, last year, that was pretty much the only TOUR event tournament I really played going into the Champions Tour. So I had all the way through, April 28th was my birthday, so my first tournament was Houston of course last year so I really didn't play a lot of golf for quite awhile. It made it tough to compete. I know one thing these guys a hundred yards in are just as good as anybody in the world. And I've seen it over and over and over again. Bernhard, the way he putts, it's phenomenal. I don't know how a guy can make three, four, 35-footers every round and doing what he's doing, but he does it. And it's something that we all want to do, but I was looking forward to the Champions Tour probably a little longer than most of the guys. Most of the guys like Jerry Kelly came out he still has his card, so he could play both tours. Steve Stricker can play both tours. So when you're not playing competitive golf going into something as this, it makes it tough. I think that's probably why I didn't get the hang of it for awhile. I played too conservative last year, I went out and played Houston I got a little more aggressive on a couple of the holes that I normally would probably hit 2-iron off of. But out here you got to be aggressive and you got to, you've just got to go low. It's just -- if you don't, you shoot over par or is or 2-under a round, you're pretty much out.

Q. Winning can do a couple of things for players. Has it taken the pressure off or has it given you the determination to enjoy that winning feeling once more?

JOHN DALY: I think it's like anybody else that wins. For me my droughts are longer than everybody else's it seems like, but I love the way I've driving the ball, to answer your question, the Vertical Groove driver is really, if you haven't hit it, you need to try and hit it. Against the wind it's just there's just no spin. It just keeps going. I feel like it's just a driver that I can control and hit straighter than anything I've hit since probably the 540 back when I won with TaylorMade at Torrey Pines. I just feel like I'm going to hit it straight every time or hit my nice cut with it every time. And when you're hitting fairways it's a lot easier to score,

you got better chances to get it close to the hole, shorter clubs going in, and so that part of it I just feel like that's going to help me, if I'm driving the ball good with my length I feel like I can score pretty good. That's pretty much it.

Q. As a supporter of Donald Trump is it especially meaningful to be on this course, on his course this week?

JOHN DALY: Oh, yeah, definitely. Me and the President have been friends, geez, I think I met him in Boston, Massachusetts in 1992 I think. It wasn't Endicott, it was another tournament we played that didn't last very long, but I played in the pro-am with him and we have been friends ever since. I love what's doing for our country.

Q. As you may know there are protests planned at least on Sunday here. Do you understand that and do you have any comment on the fact that people, obviously he's a controversial man and there are going to be protests here?

JOHN DALY: Yeah, I just ignore them. I think that's the thing you got to do. I think any time, you know, we get -- he's the President of the United States, I think people need to get on his wagon and ride with him and let him do what he's doing and leave him alone. It's not going to change for at least, you know, this year and three more. So I just -- seems like the Democrats always have a problem when a Republican gets in office. Republicans seem to kind of put up with the Democrats sometimes, we just go along with it. But I think they just need to leave him alone and let him do what's doing. I think he's doing a hell of a job. I really do.

Q. Since you continue on that, you have no concerns about all the investigations and all the allegations that are out there about him?

JOHN DALY: No, I mean, if anything's wrong then we'll see. But I don't think so. I think we still need to worry about Hillary and what her and Bill did all these years. That's the ones we really need to worry about.

Q. She's not in office.

JOHN DALY: I know that, but there's been a lot of things go on with the Democrats that people just want to ignore now. They don't, they just want to pick on my buddy. Let him do his job and just see what he does. He's doing great so far.

Q. When you play on the Senior PGA how much does that cause you to reflect on winning your first Major on the PGA TOUR and do you reflect on your career in general when you come to this kind of coming full circle almost?

JOHN DALY: It's great to win the PGA. It's been a long time, but it's not -- the PGA's not one of these

tournaments -- we have never gone back to Crooked Stick, so it's not like we're going to go -- we go to a lot of the same places where a lot of players are going to get to say, yeah, I won here, maybe Winged Foot, Medinah, certain places. But it's special, it's a special group of people. The PGA of America does a great job getting people involved in the game of golf, a chance to get Class A cards, become club pros, make a hell of a living. And what I like is the assistants coming up, the program that they have, under the care of a good club pro they're going to be a club pro. And we have a lot of universities that do a lot of good things for guys with golf. Teach them how to become better golfers and in the program as a business sense and learning the grasses, the agronomy of it and all that. So the PGA of America does a lot. As does the USGA and a lot of other companies that do it. But PGA's just, they're my friends, I won their tournament and we're all close and they just do one hell of a job when it comes to growing the game.

Q. Having played golf with the President so long ago, how would you describe his relationship with the sport?

JOHN DALY: He loves golf. I think if you look at, I think Bush Senior was still, to me, when I played golf with the President, best President golfer I ever played with. Trump's pretty good. He hits it pretty good. But he loves the game. He's a historian of it. Look what he's done. He builds beautiful facilities that people love to many could out and play but I think he's a big, big golfer. He loves it.

Q. Given where you are right now, in your life and with the game and everything like that, do you look back at all with any kind of regrets in terms of the years that you didn't win and the droughts that may have been self-inflicted as opposed to just not playing well and because of your talent do you feel like you left a lot of wins out there that you could have had?

JOHN DALY: No, I talked to Lanny Watkins about this. I could go out and hit 18 greens and shoot even par. I was never the best putter out here. One year, 2004, I think I led the stats in putting, but other than that I was always at best maybe 70th. I've never been a great putter. I've been a good ball-striker a long time, but if you're not a great putter you're not going to win a lot. And I can classify myself as not a great putter. I know the way I hit the ball if I putt average or just a little above average I'm going to have a great round. But if I don't putt at least that, it's not going to be a good round. I pretty much, I don't have any regrets on that, that's just the way it is. I'm one of those streaky feel putters. I don't know why. I never put mechanics in my putting, every time I tried -- I tried different grips, I tried different lengths, I tried different putters but I always

seem to go back to the same way putted, it's the only way I know how. I can't consider -- I can't dwell on the past, that I haven't won a lot, but any time I didn't play good was mainly because I didn't putt very good.

Q. Did you have a mentor in golf and how did you develop your relationship?

JOHN DALY: I kind of had a few. Jack Nicklaus was the reason I started, but when I got to meet guys like Watson and Fuzzy Zoeller and Crenshaw and Stadler and Palmer, I just kind of took it all in. I love how fast Fuzzy and Trevino played. Problem is I didn't get the mentality of it. Like Watson and Nicklaus, they were so strong mentally. That was just out the door for me. I just, I don't know why, I just mentally I just, I'm not the toughest guy on the golf course. I think because I lose patience too quick. And I'm not scared to admit that. There's other guys that do that. But that's just me. If we all were the same, nobody would be watching the game. But I kind of took them all in. The greats of the greats. Arnie played quick, Arnie had the charisma. We can't sign all the autographs and do everything and take pictures that -- we would like to, but sometimes we just can't -- Arnie's the only guy I think that could. So I try and do things besides the golf just try and do things like he did and Fuzzy did and stuff like that. So, my here rows are all 10 to 12 of them, they're all just such great guys and it's cool that I got to meet them and be friends with them.

Q. Galleries are still drawn to you these days, fans are still drawn to you. Throughout your career that's been the case. Why do you think that is? Why do you think fans have been such big followers of you throughout your career?

JOHN DALY: I think because I don't have any skeletons in my closet. I'm a guy that's always told them when I screw up, I screw up and I admit it and go on. I don't hide anything. There's just nothing to hide with me. I've always just been straight up front with you guys. And when I play bad, I don't want to talk to you that's just as easy as it is. And I've always told everybody that. I'm not one of those guys that's going to lie to anybody about what's going on in my life. I think it just takes the pressure off of not having anything looking back or anything. I'm just one of those guys that have always told you guys if I get fined -- the TOUR hates it when I get fined, but I tell you anyway. Because if I screw up, I did. But I think the fans relate to that. I think that if you hold something in your stomach for so long, if you don't get it out, you're always worried about it and it just creates more problems. I can say, with this big old belly that I got, that there's nothing inside that you probably don't know about me.

Q. I wanted to get you to talk about Bernhard a little bit. What attributes does he have that you wish

you had?

JOHN DALY: I think the patience level. Bernhard's always been a very patient guy. I think he just might take a little too much time when he plays, but that's Bernhard. We have guys like that out here, which is okay. But I think the mental part of it and the patience is what I like to take, get some of that from Bernhard. He's got more patience than -- that's why he's winning so much. Not just making putts, but -- he doesn't hit the ball very high, which means that -- and he hits it kind of on a trajectory that he's not going to miss a lot of shots or miss a lot of fairways. He's always, he always putts better than average. Every time I play with him, he's right around that 27, 28 putt mark and that's a bad day for him. If I have 27 or 28 putts, I'm going to shoot 5- or 6-under par. I have 30, 31, 32 day putts. That seems to be my average. I work on it and work on it, but I just done seem to get any better.

Q. In your estimation does he have enough patience and time to catch Hale Irwin and win 45 tournaments out here?

JOHN DALY: What's he at 30 now.

Q. 31?

JOHN DALY: 31? Yeah, he does. Bernhard's in great shape. I know I can honestly say if I was at 31 I would be trying to shoot for it and I'm sure he is. Can he do it? I think he can. Yeah.

JOHN DEVER: John, grateful you spent some time with us and talked to us. Have a great week here at Trump National.

JOHN DALY: Thank you.