

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
June 20, 2018



BERNHARD LANGER

CHRIS RICHARDS: Good afternoon, everyone. Bernhard, welcome to the media center. Thank you for joining us for the third annual American Family Insurance Championship. It's been two years since you've been here in Madison. What do you remember from your first time playing in this tournament?

BERNHARD LANGER: I just loved everything about it. I enjoyed the people, the enthusiasm, the golf course, the organization. It was all very, very good. I can't remember what happened last year, but there had to be some kind of conflict, either I was in Europe or family conflict, I couldn't come back. But thrilled to be back this year again.

CHRIS RICHARDS: This week we've got one of the strongest fields of the season. Does that give a different vibe to the tournament week leading up to the first round on Friday?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's always great to have a good field or one of the best fields. Means if you win or you do well, you're beating the best. It's just, you know, helps everybody to maybe focus even more and understanding it's not going to be easy to win here because you have everybody participating and you've got to be at the highest level of your game to have a chance.

CHRIS RICHARDS: The tournament host, Steve Stricker, is in his second year on tour. What's it like having a player of his caliber out here and hosing a tournament that's done so well so quickly?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, Steve's been an amazing asset to the game of golf. He's a great ambassador and a wonderful person and we're thrilled to have him out here. He's still extremely competitive on any tour. Wherever he plays, he shows that week after week and he'll be certainly a big force this week. Playing in front of your home crowd is always a thrill. I know that from playing at home in Germany in the past. You want to do well and you want to show how good you are in front of your home fans. So I expect him to be up there on the leaderboard trying to win the championship in his hometown.

CHRIS RICHARDS: I'll open it up to questions.

Q. Thanks for coming to Madison. What's your secret? You've been successful for so long, Bernhard. What's your secret?

BERNHARD LANGER: There's no secret. It's lots of little things that have to come together. You know, first of all, you've got to be healthy. Then you've got to have a decent

technique to, you know, try not to have a weakness. Some guys are good drivers, good putters or good iron players. You've got to try to be good at everything that you do to be up there consistently.

You need to have a good team around yourself, a good coach, good family, caddie, the whole thing.

And I think one of the things that's important is just the drive, to be willing to still work at the game, to believe that you can still improve, to be willing to put yourself through the rigors of getting ready, because I've done this for 43 years now on the tour, that's a long time. Some of us just, you know, say well, I've done this long enough, let's just take it a little easy.

Q. You're closing in on the record for most wins here. You've got a ways to go yet on this tour. Does that motivate you yet or does that play any role?

BERNHARD LANGER: I don't need any extra motivation, I've always been very motivated. That's just part of my makeup, part of who I am. I'm driven, I want to do well. I have never had a problem with motivation.

If I go out to play a tournament, I give it 100 percent. If I don't want to be here, I'll go home. Then why come here on vacation or something to play a golf tournament? That's not the idea. No, I don't need any extra motivation. It's sometimes even too much.

Q. Just maybe to rephrase that a tad, what would it mean for you if you did get it?

BERNHARD LANGER: It would be another milestone of achieving something that nobody else has done before. It's going to be difficult to achieve. We all know it's hard to win tournaments in your 60s. It gets harder and harder, but it's not impossible. Last year I won seven and that's going to be hard to repeat, but I've already won one and I've had several seconds and some of those seconds could have been a W as well. So there's still hope and I'm working on my game and I think there's a slim chance of getting there or surpassing Hale Irwin's record.

Q. Davis was in here just a moment ago and Steve will be in next. They both have been conflicted as to how much time to spend on the regular tour and how much time to spend here. Do you remember being in that position, and what got you to commit to the senior tour and when did you know it was the right time to make this your primary tour?

BERNHARD LANGER: I think it's different for everybody, but I pretty much realized after a few weeks out here that this is where I want to play the rest of my life the majority of my golf. I still play in the Masters. I might still play a tournament in Germany or in Europe somewhere, or I played THE PLAYERS Championship three years in a row, things like that, but the majority of my golf is going to be on the PGA TOUR Champions. I just love it out here. I like the guys, I like the setup. You know, I don't miss my 6:55 a.m. tee times on the

PGA TOUR or that kind of stuff, and you've got to get up at 3:30 to be on time, or at 4:00. So there's a lot of things I like about this tour and one of them is also that some of our tournaments are only three-day events, so you get an extra day at home. Everything seems a little bit more relaxed and friendlier, yet still very competitive.

Q. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your 18-year-old self?

BERNHARD LANGER: My 18-year-old son?

Q. Self.

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, myself. Well, there may have been times when I practiced too hard. You know, I would have -- I would go and practice after my round when I played poorly to find something to play better the next day. If I played really good, I would still go out there and think, you know, I'm going to go and hit some balls, do this, do that to groove it. I found it, now I want to groove it.

I think the body can only take so much and I think that's why the young guys are maybe doing a little better nowadays. They work out and they take time away from the game a little more. I was really consumed by it to some extent.

I would probably take it a little bit easier on myself when I was 18, but that was me. I had certain goals and I wanted to achieve them quickly. But you live and you learn. It turned out okay the way it turned out.

Q. Bernhard, when did you embrace the fitness aspect of golf, because it seems like you've been ahead of that curve at least since you've been out here. And Davis spoke to how fit all these young kids are coming out on the regular tour, but now you're going to start seeing Davis and Steve and Vijay, some of these guys that have kept their bodies in great shape coming out here. Do you see maybe yourself as being kind of the blueprint for this next wave of senior tour golfers that can play at a high level into their 60s?

BERNHARD LANGER: I absolutely agree. I think fitness has always been a big part and it's important. We saw Gary Player set a great example, and you compare him to some of his age colleagues and he's so much better off than they are. He can still make a full shoulder turn.

And then Tiger Woods came along and made working out very popular, and so did some others.

But my generation, there's very few who, you know, 50 years ago were thinking of working out. It was many of them would finish their round and then go to the bar and have a beer or whatever it may be. But I've always enjoyed working out. I've felt like I have more energy, I feel better, I last longer if I stay reasonably healthy and fit and not overweight. I think now is

the time when it's paying off. It's probably not so much paying off in your 20s or 30s because everybody's fairly fit and healthy, but the longevity aspect, I think is really pays off as you get older.

Q. Looking back at your season this year, I think it was back early like around the time of the Toshiba you were kind of a little bit more up and down than maybe some of us have become accustomed to and I think some of the announcers mentioned that a lot, too. Were you getting a lot of that, what's wrong with Bernhard, and what did you do to kind of right the ship and get things back to the level that you've come to expect from yourself?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, was just a little rusty, a little off here and there. It doesn't take much. You know, one shot a day and you're 3 or 4 shots further away on Sunday afternoon and it means instead of finishing top-5, you're going to be 50th or 35th or whatever it may be.

So I knew I was close. It was mostly the putter. I think my putter wasn't as good as it had been, so I spent some extra time trying to figure it out and it took a few weeks, but I think I right the ship starting with the Masters. I've had a really good stretch, played well there and then continued to -- got into two playoffs and lost both of them, and then won the third tournament, so it's been a good stretch ever since.

Q. When did you realize golf was right for you and who encouraged you?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, I was fairly young. I was caddying from age 9 to 15 and finished school at age 15, so I had to decide what I was going to do with my life.

I figured I wanted to become a golf professional, a teaching professional. So I became an assistant pro, learned the trade of how to run a pro shop, giving lessons, doing tournaments and on and on, how to repair clubs, speak English and all sorts of other things. So it was a process of about three years, and during that time I also became a decent player. I won a German golf championship in Germany at age 17. Beat all the other pros then, best amateurs in the country at age 17. Anyways, I had the opportunity to go on tour, somebody backed me financially for a couple years and I decided to have a go at it at age 18, which is very young. So yeah, if it turns out, great. If not, I'm going to go back to coaching, and as we all know, it turned out all right.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Bernhard, thank you very much and good luck this week.

BERNHARD LANGER: You're welcome. Thank you.