

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Tom Lehman

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the 79th Kitchen Aid Senior PGA Championship. Pleased to be joined by Tom Lehman, 2010 Senior PGA champion. Let's begin there. That was your first major championship win on this Tour, and you were probably a little bit less than a year on this Tour at that time. How nice was it to get through that and get over that hump? There's a lot of guys here this week that are trying to win that first one.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, obviously to win a major so early in the start out here was a big deal. I mean, you kind of hoped -- you always hope to win the big ones. You want to win anything, but if you can win the big ones, that's way more special. So to get this tournament -- when you get that trophy -- I must have been 51, I guess. It was my second year out here, first full-time year out here, so it was a big deal to win that one early. I haven't won it since. Haven't really played that well since quite frankly, but that particular week, I did play well.

THE MODERATOR: Let's talk about your game. Top 5s two of the last three outings for you, so it appears you are playing well. Is that the case?

TOM LEHMAN: Yeah, I'm hitting the ball extremely well, and a couple weeks I putted very well. This past week at the Regions, tee to green I just played superbly, and just I was really lousy on the greens last week. As my putting goes, my game goes typically, and this course this week, of course the weather is going to warm up, I'm certain, over the course of the week, but right now the course is playing very long. It's very wet, so it's playing very wide. You know, but the longer hitters, I think, are going to have a bit of an advantage this week because of these conditions, and therefore guys like me need to putt well.

Q. Just curious on your thoughts; you mentioned the state of the course, but is there anything different from your previous trips here that you have noticed?

TOM LEHMAN: No. You know, the course is -- seems like the same course that we played the last time around. I think it's -- courses evolve, and I think this one has evolved. It's improved slightly, bit by bit. You can change the mowing pattern, you can add more

room here, take away more room there. Like the fairway is wider on No. 14 I think it is, the par-4, than it has been in the past, and there's a little more room left of the green on No. 6 than there has been in the past. Those little things make a difference. As a player, you notice those, and you notice how the course becomes a bit more playable in certain places, and also when maybe something is too easy or is not quite penal enough with a wayward shot. You bring in the fairway, make it a little bit tighter, you notice that. So I think the course has bit by bit by bit improved. It's really quite a good golf course.

Q. From playing the Regions Tradition last week, how have your preparations changed because you obviously have back-to-back senior majors? Is anything different from when you say have back-to-back Champions Tour events because you have the extra rounds to deal with both events and you don't want to burn yourself out too quickly?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I think the big thing from last week was the heat and humidity was brutal. It was very hot. I can't imagine too many guys who played last week played yesterday here. Even though the weather was lousy and really wasn't conducive to practice, it would have been a perfect day. I know I took the day off just because you do want to conserve energy. These are big weeks. Majors are big deals.

So we had the first one last week, you have another huge one this week with that big silver trophy. It's something that you want to be able to play your best. You want to be able to be at your best when you need to be at your best, and therefore having energy is important. So I think you'll see a lot of guys after last week maybe not working quite as hard over the first few days this week and making sure that Thursday through Sunday they're at the top of their game.

Q. Tom, you had that major last week, then you have it this week. Weather is a lot different. What makes you the horse for the course this week?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I think this week is a -- it's a long-playing golf course. The yardage may not exactly always say it's a long hole, but because of like -- well, today was even an aberration because it was so cold and the air was so heavy. But typically the course is what long, and so the better you can drive it, the longer you are, the straighter you are. I think you have a big,

big advantage simply because the little areas on the greens where the pins go in between all the little humps and the bumps you have a big advantage if you're hitting a 9-iron versus a 5-iron. So the guys who can hit it out there, move it out there, keep it in the fairway, shorten up the golf course are going to have a big advantage over those guys who are back 30 yards and hitting three or four clubs more.

That immediately brings into consideration a guy like Vijay, a guy like Kenny Perry, guys who can really knock it out there, any kind of long hitter, Brandt Jobe who's a long hitter, guys who can drive the ball and really move it out there, who if they drive it straight I think will have a good chance to have a good week.

Q. Being from Minnesota, is it fair to say that there's a special passion for golf in the upper Midwest, including somewhere like Southwest Michigan?

TOM LEHMAN: Yeah, I think because the season is so short, where I grew up -- I played golf four months of the year growing up, and so you took advantage of those four months and you played all the time. I think that's what you see is you see people who love the game of golf up here in the Midwest, upper Midwest. The chances they get, they take advantage of it, and rain or shine, they're out playing. I don't know, I'll never forget when I first left Minnesota and was living in California, when it would just start to sprinkle, people would not play. The course would be empty, and I would say, well, why is nobody playing. They would say, well, it's raining. Well, it's not raining, it's drizzling, it's sprinkling. Look, there's 365 days a year to play golf here, so why play when it's not perfect, you know. Whereas in Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin and wherever, if it's -- if the ground is not frozen, you're out there playing.

Q. Do you draw any kind of confidence from having this championship be contested on this venue now again from where you've played previously, coming back to this course here at Harbor Shores?

TOM LEHMAN: Do I feel any --

Q. Any confidence knowing the course or just being able to know kind of what to expect coming into this championship, especially over some new golfers that might be here for the first time?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, absolutely. You learn how to play a golf course. The more time you spend on it, the more you learn the dos, the don'ts, how to play it, where to play it, where you can two-putt from, where you can survive from missing a green and then kind of conversely where you can't.

I think more than anything, though, guys will get really

comfortable with a course, and then every time they play it, they play well. There's just this thing that you develop with a golf course, you like the way it looks, you like the way it feels. It suits your eye, it suits your game. You feel comfortable. You feel confident.

This course for me really hasn't been that way. I like the way it looks. I like to play it, but I've never really played well here. So I'm looking kind of for that kind of lightning in a bottle type thing, which I've had. There's been times where I've played terribly at a golf course, then all of a sudden I win. I'll finish 50th, 50th, 45th, missed cut, victory. And then 50th, 60, missed cut. So who can explain that? So I'm kind of looking personally for me to find that this week, to kind of get a good tournament under my belt here.