

BERNHARD LANGER

CHRIS RICHARDS: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm pleased to welcome Bernhard Langer to the media center for the Mitsubishi Electric Classic.

Bernhard, last weekend you made the cut at the Masters for the fifth time in the last seven years. What kind of accomplishment is that for you at this point in your career?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's pretty huge actually at my age because since they changed the golf course dramatically some years ago, it's become very, very long, playing 7,450 yards. The fairways are mowed into you, which is the grass and the grain is into you so the tee ball doesn't run as much as some other places. And where my ball lands, you know, I carry it about 260 off the tee and have 280 average, so where I land at 260 there's often an uphill. Like No. 1, it goes up the hill, then it flattens out. So I land on the uphill and stop; they land on the flat and the ball runs 20 yards.

It's like that on five or six holes. No. 5 is that way, 14 is that way, No. 8. There's a number of holes that just come to my mind right now, 17, 18. So it's even more of an advantage. So I'm not just 30, 40 yards shorter, I'm even more short because they get around and I don't.

Then they hit their 8-irons as far as I hit my 6-iron, so they're two clubs longer there. Then they're 40 yards further with their drives, so that's six or seven irons at times difference. So when I'm hitting a 2-hybrid, they're hitting -- what's seven clubs less -- 8-iron or something like that, 8-iron, 9-iron. That's hard to compete when you think about it.

But, you know, I have to make up for that by precision, by better course management or better short game or straighter. There's other ways to at times compensate for some of it, but there's also times when I just can't, you know. They go for par 5s, I can't go for them, I can't reach them. Or if I go for them, like 15 I can go for it with a 3-wood, but if I hit 3-wood into that green, it runs over that green and down the other hill and either goes in the water on the back or I have a really hard pitch towards the water when the green's slanted away from me.

So you really have to think. It's like a chess game, you have to think a shot or two ahead. What if I hit it there, what do I have next, that kind of thing, so it becomes a real challenge. But I like challenges and it's still been fun. Out of those five cuts I made the last, what did you say, the last seven years, I was in contention twice on Sunday in the last couple groups. It's still a lot of fun, but difficult for me.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You were one of the players Sunday afternoon to congratulate Tiger as he was walking to the scoring. What was that moment like for you and from your

perspective?

BERNHARD LANGER: It was very cool. We were all extremely happy and thrilled for Tiger. Hopefully, for the game of golf. What he's been through for many years now, nobody knew if he would ever win anything again a couple years ago, or if he would even play golf again. We could all see the writing on the wall as he came back healthy, started playing better, got himself in contention in several majors and other tournaments, and then won THE PLAYERS Championship -- no, the TOUR Championship, sorry. You know, we could see the old Tiger is coming back again. This was a major moment for him.

So we were sitting up in the Champions locker room watching it on TV, some of us, and we decided, let's put our jackets on, go down there and just congratulate him in person.

CHRIS RICHARDS: And now you're back to a tournament that you won, you won in 2013. Does it feel good -- as great as the Masters is, but does it feel good to come back to PGA TOUR Champions and play at a tournament that you've won before?

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, it always feels good. Actually, this place reminds me a bit of Augusta National, just the way it is. Very hilly, used to be the same type of grass. I think they changed the grass now, so that will change. You know, a lot of other things are very similar. We're still in Georgia and very hilly, a lot of sidehill, uphill, downhill lies. It always reminded me of similar playing conditions.

Yeah, the fans are great here. Love our sponsor, Mitsubishi, and it's a wonderful stop. Easy drive for me, just a couple hours up the road.

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

Q. Boy, after a week like you had at the Masters, how is it -- do you find it difficult at all to recalibrate and get focused on this place or do you take a little bit of a deep sigh of relief knowing you're not going to have to hit hybrid?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, that's a relief I don't have to hit hybrids into par 4s too often. No, I took Monday off and just relaxed. Went to Reynolds Plantation, stayed with friends of mine and just hung out there. Came up yesterday morning.

Yeah, it's a little different this year because we're playing nine holes on the other golf course, and even the other nine that we used to play there, those nine are slightly different, so you kind of are almost playing a new golf course in a sense. Takes a little bit of work with the yardage book and just figuring out the best strategy, how to play each shot.

Q. Do you have Tommy Aaron in your sights here? Do you want to be the oldest guy to make the cut at Augusta?

BERNHARD LANGER: I don't know, that's not necessarily one of my goals, but as long as I

feel like I'm not making a fool of myself, I'm going to keep playing. I don't want to go around there and shoot in the 80s every day and miss the cut by 15 shots, that's not fun for me. I don't know what the rule is there, how old you can be to participate or not. I haven't asked that yet because I feel, as I said, I can still be in contention.

Q. Given all your success out here, how do you -- I guess how do you not become complacent? Have you ever been tempted to say I don't want to go to the range today, I want to just stay home and binge watch Game of Thrones?

BERNHARD LANGER: There's times, yes, when it's raining or when it's not nice out, you know, you would rather -- well, do I want to do this right now or wait until tomorrow until the weather changes, you know, that kind of thing.

No, most of the time it's not my nature. My nature is to -- I'm a hard worker, I enjoy giving the most and the best, whatever that may be. So I like to be prepared, and whenever I go out, I would like to win, too. So that's just my nature. I don't do things half heartedly I might as well stay at home. If I just show up to be on vacation, there's a better place to go on vacation than to play golf here under competitive circumstances.

Q. Does that come from your father, do you think?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, probably my -- just the way I was raised and watching my parents, yeah.

Q. I guess along the same lines, too, about your physical regimen to stay prepared for this, I don't know, do you have any cheat days where you just go crazy and eat hamburgers and hot dogs?

BERNHARD LANGER: I'm afraid so. My cheat days are not hamburgers and hot dogs, they're dessert. That's probably worse than hamburgers and hot dogs. I have a cheat day almost every day, which needs to change. I'm in the process of actually looking at all that. You know, the body is aching, I don't have to kid you. It's more and more where things are just not like they used to be. I'm trying to make the best of it and it's no good complaining because nobody really is interested anyways. They're all about themselves, they don't want to hear about your aches and pains.

Q. Was it achier after a week at Augusta?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's a very demanding golf course, yes. Yeah, feels like you played two tournaments in one. It's just that kind of terrain and mentally on top of that because every shot -- you know, one bad shot at the wrong time, you might make double bogey and shoot yourself in the foot.

Q. And I guess speaking of records as well, how much do you keep Hale Irwin in sight? Record for wins out here, how big of a goal is that?

BERNHARD LANGER: You know, I don't really think about it too much, but you guys bring it up every week, so I'm forced to think about it.

Q. Getting closer.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I'm getting closer. I've always said -- years ago I said it's very unlikely but not impossible. Yeah, I'm sneaking up, I'm getting closer. If I just look at the last year and a half, I could have won five or six more tournaments actually. Last year I had a bunch of seconds and a couple playoff losses and this year I had a playoff loss. So with a bit of luck or something, I would be right there with him already, but I'm not, so I had better get to it.

Q. One of the guys you might see around the course this year is John Smoltz. What do you think about him being here and do you kind of get a little jealous when you see some of these cross-sport athletes come in and kind of pick it up so quickly?

BERNHARD LANGER: No, I don't get jealous at all. I'm sure he's worked extremely hard at his career and then he had to work pretty hard to get his golf game to a certain level. It doesn't come easy, trust me. These guys practice quite a bit. I was a friend of Ivan Lendl when he did the same thing. He thought, "Well, I'm so good I can just become" -- and he practiced a lot of golf after tennis. He thought, "I'm pretty good, all I've got to do is turn pro, practice for a year or two and I'll beat all you guys." It didn't happen, but he reached a pretty high level.

Q. Are you a baseball fan?

BERNHARD LANGER: Not really.

Q. I was going to ask you how your slider was.

BERNHARD LANGER: No, I never actually pitched or whatever. Never done much of that. It's not a game I grew up with, and when I came over here I just, for some reason it's maybe one of two sports that I don't follow. I follow most everything. But I'm aware of who he is.

Q. (No microphone.)

BERNHARD LANGER: Absolutely, yes. Yeah, we talked last night, spent a few minutes there at the pro-am draw party talking about golf and the challenges and all that.

Q. The new nine, everybody's kind of on a level playing field because it is a new nine. Have you gotten a sense of how it will play and how you might attack it since --

BERNHARD LANGER: I only played it once and that was yesterday, so I'm looking forward to it tomorrow in the pro-am, to seeing it again because yesterday I really focused hard on

getting the green details down and making my notes.

Sometimes the wind can change and makes a big difference how any of the holes play. But yeah, there are a couple holes I need to pay more attention to tomorrow or pay attention to again and figure out which way I want to play it. You know, do I want to take on the fairway bunkers and take a chance of getting stuck next to one of those high lips they have now and get penalized badly or do I want to lay up and hit a little longer club into the green. Some of that might have to do where the pin is and all that, but the greens are pretty severe and they're firm. Surprised how firm they still are because that course was built more than a year ago, wasn't it? Would that be correct?

Yeah, it will be a learning experience for all of us the next few days, and we might even change the strategy after Friday or Saturday if we think there's a better way of doing it.

Q. When do you start paying attention to the Charles Schwab Cup?

BERNHARD LANGER: I think it's on everybody's mind all season long. Ideally you want to -- I think we found a much, what do you say, a better way to distribute points and make it fairer. It was one or two years when it seemed a bit weird, you know, how it all developed because it was too heavy on one or two tournaments near the end, I think. We realized that and made changes. I think the system we have in place now is much better where every tournament counts and some tournaments don't count three times the amount or whatever, and the playoff tournament does count double, so I think the system is great.

So, do I pay attention? Yes, I think most of us do. You want to be in that 3, 4 or 5, top-5 going into the playoffs where you can make a move or ideally would be to even have a huge lead so you have a bit of an advantage going into the playoffs.

Q. You won it numerous times. What does that mean?

BERNHARD LANGER: It means a great deal. I think it's just the big carrot at the end of the season. It also means that you were probably the most consistent or best player during that season, during that year. There's obviously other things like the Player of the Year or the money title, those are all important recognitions for that season.

Q. You see these young kids come in and try to challenge you every year.

BERNHARD LANGER: Oh, absolutely, yeah. Why wouldn't they? You know, I was the same when I came out. Yeah, we got a good crop of guys coming out. Some of them hit it quite a ways past me, so again it's not going to get easier as I get older. I'll just try and find a way to sustain my game and make the best of it. I can't control the others.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Thank you very much, Bernhard. Good luck this week.

BERNHARD LANGER: My pleasure. Thank you.