

Sanford International – Bernhard Langer

We're here with Bernhard Langer, returning for his 6th appearance at the Sanford International. Bernhard, how does it feel to be back in Sioux Falls?

It's always great to be back at Minnehaha Country at the Sanford International. It's a great tournament, wonderful venue, people love us here and it's a great community for the Champions TOUR to show up. They appreciate us and we appreciate them. I played before yesterday a few holes and the day before yesterday 9 holes and the course is in phenomenal shape – it should be exciting and hopefully close competition.

You played well in St. Louis last week – runner up finish, what positives do you take from that?

A lot of positives – I hit the ball pretty solid the last couple of weeks and I'm fairly happy with my swing - not too much I have to change there. The putter got a little better last week, which is always key – you got to make putts. And I was happy the way I performed the last 9 holes, well really all day long because the pressure was on from the very beginning and it was like a match play between the three of us, and everyone was in the lead at some point or multiple times and it all came down to the very last hole, which was great for the tournament.

What makes this tournament so special to you?

They just take such good care of everybody – it's just like one big family. And I heard Bill Gassen, the boss of Sanford, talk last night at the Draw Party that they're here to make life better for everyone who lives in Sioux Falls – and not just giving them medical care, but also to charities and everyone who comes here for the tournament – they're going to be treated like family, and we can feel that, and it makes it different from different. And they do a lot of things for the fans – for all ages and genders to expose them to the game of golf.

Does the fact that this isn't a bombers course make it more fun for you because you don't have to hit it 350 yards off the tee?

You don't have to, but it helps. It's maybe not a bomber's course, but if you can hit it 30-40 yards further, it's a big advantage. Holes like 16, they can reach with an iron - I may not reach at all. 12 the other par 5, couple other holes – it makes a big difference. If you come into a green with a nine iron instead of a four or five iron, but that's just how life is on tour, and it's always been advantageous to hit it further, and the guys that are medium or short hitters are just going to have to try to make up ground somewhere else.

What percentage would you say your Achilles is at?

That's a great question. I'm not sure I can answer that in the percentage area. Probably somewhere between 50 and 75% - still little bit I'm not there with my flexibility range of motion in my foot. That's the limited, and the strengths is definitely not there, so I'm still riding in a cart which I don't like to do, but that's how it's gonna be probably the rest the year and then continue the exercises and trying to walk a little more and hopefully those other 30-40% will kick in the next five months so.

You're three days removed from Sunday. Have you had a chance to look back and think about what could have been?

Well it could have been a lot of things – Stewart Cink could have made par-par or par-birdie and could have won the tournament. Obviously I look back – I always look back and analyze every round I play, and I really didn't think I made a lot of mistakes. I was unlucky on 17 – I hit a great tee shot – middle of the fairway and when I got there, there was mud on the right side of the ball which I still don't understand how I could have mud on the ball at 5 p.m. in the afternoon when it hasn't rained in five or six days, so just a bad break and then I hit my six iron and sure enough ball always goes to the opposite side - just went into the left bleachers. You know with that pin being that far from the right – I couldn't aim 20 yards right of the green, and then if it only moves 5 or 10 yards, I'm dead on the right, so I got up and down, but I didn't have a birdie putt so it was a bad break, and maybe the only mistake I made was bogeying 13 I think – that long par 4 into the wind – mishit my hybrid into the bunker and didn't get it up and down. That was not great – but the rest of the 17 holes, I was really happy with.

The tee shot on 18?

I was thrilled with all the shots - the tee shots could have been on the fairway, but it's a tough fairway to hit because the left third of it kicks left in the rough, and you don't want to be too far right- there's more rough there, so it's difficult and Yang hit two brilliant tee shots – straight and long - probably an 8 and 9 iron, so I'm further back coming out of the rough, first time and judged it brilliantly made a really good putt when I knew I had to make a putt when I knew I had to make a putt so that was encouraging for me, and then I missed a second chance in the playoff but I don't think I had a bad putt – it just didn't break as much.

What do you see with the green here?

The greens are very nice speed that role very true and got some tough greens like 18 which is a double-tiered, number seven has slope, number eight has a lot going on – there's not many that are really flat. There's a lot of movement which means you can have some breaking putts, and so you have the correct pace with the hopefully perfect read.

Is that something you make a priority when you do your practice rounds?

Absolutely. You want to check out where you want to finish with your tee ball and then check out the greens, and you'll most likely have three different pin positions. They move around every day so you gonna figure out how to best make pars and birdies.

It seems like every year there is a pretty good size crowd here – what is it like playing in front of big crowds?

It doesn't get any better than great crowds. It was really weird when we played a couple tournaments during COVID, and there was no one out there, so that was really strange for professional golfer, so it's good to see the fans back in big numbers.

Does playing golf keep you young?

Every morning I wake up stiff and sore and things starting to hurt that didn't hurt a few years ago, but I think it helps because I'm active. I'm actually exercising. We have these physio trucks that follow us from

the tour week after week so we can work out in the trailers. We get treatment, and I do that every day for an hour or two in there, and I think that's that's good. If I were home I would have to make sure I'm disciplined enough to go to the fitness center and do my stretching or my strengthening exercises on my own. When I'm out here much of the routine comes natural, so yes I think it helps.

How much do you enjoy competition?

I think everybody out here loves competition because if you didn't, you wouldn't still be. Those people who don't embrace competition or perform under stress, they don't last on tour. Everybody out here looks forward to being in contention, looks forward to maybe having a winning putt or seeing their name on the leaderboard and trying to live up climb up to the very top.