

U.S. Senior Open Championship

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Omaha Country Club

Kenny Perry

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome Kenny Perry here to the interview room. Kenny a two-time U.S. Senior Open. Kenny, you took home the first of your two Francis Ouimet trophies right here at Omaha in 2013. Big picture, what are some of the memories that came flooding back when you stepped on property here again from that great year in 2013?

KENNY PERRY: Well, Sandy and I, we just got into town on Monday night, and then when I came out and played nine holes on Tuesday and I played 18 today, today was more of a reminiscing day for me. I was telling the guys I played with what I hit on this hole.

I remember the Sunday pin placements on a lot of the back nine holes, so I was kind of living in the past in 2013, which put a smile on my face. It was a lot of great memories.

The golf course is totally different, though, than 2013, and I want to apologize to all my competitors if the golf course is a lot harder this year because it's totally different than 2013.

THE MODERATOR: Going back to that weekend, you trailed by 10 strokes after 36 holes, 64, 63 on the weekend to storm to victory, winning by five. Can you remember a situation where you were in the zone maybe as much that weekend at a USGA championship?

KENNY PERRY: Never. Obviously I didn't have any USGA championships to my name at that point. To be 10 shots down and to all of a sudden get in the zone, I just remember hitting every fairway, making every putt I looked at, and it was just a magical weekend. It was a weekend you dream about, and it just happened to show up at the Senior Open.

It was fantastic. Just a lot of great memories, a lot of great feelings. I still remember the shots. I still feel the shots I hit. That was my first -- that was actually my second major. I think I won at Fox Chapel first, but this would have been



my first USGA major, which to me was very special. It's always nice to have that connected with your name, that title.

Q. You mentioned coming back here earlier this week; have you been back in the eight years since?

KENNY PERRY: I have not. This is the first time I set foot on property until -- '13 was the last time I was here.

Q. You mentioned the course feels different this year. Maybe some of the descriptions from what you've seen in the practice rounds; how is it different?

KENNY PERRY: Well, for one thing, they changed the grass on the greens. To me the greens are a lot faster, a lot more slope. I don't know if they recontoured some of -- I know they recontoured a few of the greens, but I don't know if they did them all. The greens are a lot faster.

It's a different bladed grass. I remember the greens being kind of brown, had a little brown tint, like they watered them a lot, and they were kind of soft because we were playing in high heat and humidity, which they were trying to keep the greens alive, where this year it must be a new strain of bent. It's a leafier, thicker bentgrass to me, and it's beautiful.

The golf course is amazing looking. It's got more grass on it than I've ever seen. I felt like the rough in '13 was half of what it is this year. I haven't seen anybody even attempt to hit a shot out of that heavy grass and move it more than 150 yards.

We could play out of the rough in '13. It was bad, but it just seemed like you could actually get away with a shot offline pretty good there. And it's longer. Like holes like 10, 12 are a lot longer now, 18. I mean, there's so many -- there's new tee boxes that's really made this place very difficult and very demanding.

The guy who wins this week is going to drive it long and straight in my opinion. If you can keep it in the fairway and have ball control, you're going to have success here.

Q. You've talked about your score and maybe influencing. How about with Steve Stricker going 19-under two years ago? Do you think there's a little



counteraction here?

KENNY PERRY: Well, there could be. I think the USGA is actually going to throw us a curveball this year, and this golf course is going to show some teeth. I don't think they like us shooting that kind of low scores for a major championship.

But you know, Steve is playing great golf. You can see what he's been doing.

But to me in '13 when I won, I was able to overpower the golf course and was able to carry a lot of these forced bunkers and was able to drive it straight enough and keep it in fairways where I had an advantage. So I look at the guys like a Retief Goosen or an Ernie or somebody who can bomb it and still hit it fairly straight. That type of player is really going to have an advantage this week.

Q. Ernie mentioned his first impression was it's going to be a physical test as well as the undulations overall on the course. As someone who's passed that physical test, I know you mentioned different dimensions of the course, but how does it feel knowing you've got that advantage, you've done it, and only did you do it but you did it pretty well.

KENNY PERRY: Well, that was 2013, I was 52, now I'm 60. So there's a big difference between 52 and 60. What you notice on the Champions Tour is the guys that are winning are usually from 50 to 55 unless you're Bernhard Langer. But most of the guys who are having success are from that age group.

This week will definitely be a physical test with high heat, humidity. With the undulation and the hills out there, it's going to be a very demanding physical test as well as a mental test. You're going to be fighting the rough, speed of the greens, hole locations. I mean, this is going to be the total package this week. You're going to have to be physically into it to be able to compete because if your legs give way on you like on hole 15, you're going to struggle to finish this golf tournament.

Q. What are you hoping to get out of this week outside of winning the golf tournament? What do you want to see out of yourself?

KENNY PERRY: Well, I just want to compete and be competitive again. My last win was 2018, and it just seemed like -- I got COVID in April, early April, and I got it bad. I was in bed for like two weeks straight. I couldn't hardly move.

I have really struggled until -- I didn't get my wind back until

last week. I was able to finally walk 18 holes last week and feel like I had energy. My energy is now coming back.

My goal coming here was just to come back and compete and just to finish the golf tournament, but now actually I'm playing a lot better. I got a lot -- I played better at Dick's last week, and walking -- I was able to walk the 18 holes today, but obviously I walked in -- it was a lot cooler this morning. It wasn't 91 degrees and 100 percent humidity.

That's going to be a demand on me, and being at age 60, I can really see my golf game is not nearly as good as it was in 2013. I've got a tough road ahead of me.

Q. You were mentioning just getting your energy back to walk a course, and to walk this course with so many hills at different elevations, how is that going to test mentally and physically?

KENNY PERRY: Well, it'll test every bit of you mentally and physically. It will test you 100 percent.

You know, I think we're at 1,200 feet elevation. I think my caddie said that. I think we're somewhere around there, so actually the ball does go a little bit further here, which helps you. And the air, with the air being as hot as it is, the ball is really moving.

But you've still got to have energy. You've got to be able to fight for 18 holes. You've got to be able to stay out there for five and a half hours or five hours, however long it takes us to play, and you've got to have your legs under you. You've got to be able to swing at it hard. You've got to be able to move it and keep it in the fairway and keep your mental state -- don't lose your mind out there while you're out there after about nine holes or whatever.

You know, it all comes into -- you've got to have the total package this week. You're going to be tested in every phase of your game. It's going to be short game, long game, mental, physically. It's going to be -- the guy who wins this week is going to do it all, and he's going to do it all very well.

Q. How did you do walking during your practice rounds?

KENNY PERRY: I did okay. I played nine yesterday, and we got in Monday night, so I played nine -- I walked 18 this morning, but like I said, it was low 80s or high 70s and the sun wasn't shining, so it was a perfect 18 holes to walk, and I did fine in that. But if it's 91 and 100 percent humidity or whatever, it's going to be a tough grind out there.

Q. When did you know you could come back? Was it

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like riding a bicycle? You've got to put in a practice regimen, get out there and play golf. How can you be prepared for a test like this?

KENNY PERRY: Well, that's it. You've got to get out there and work all three days in my opinion. You need to get out there and walk. You need to get your legs ready. You need to get your mind ready to be prepared.

It's not like a normal Champions Tour event where you can roll in there on Wednesday, play the pro-am on Thursday and tee it up Friday, Saturday and Sunday. You can ride a cart if you want to.

I was lucky two weeks ago, we played in Akron and I was able to walk four rounds there. I actually walked five with the pro-am, and that was kind of the start of my getting going and walking again. And then I was able to walk okay last week at Dick's.

I knew coming in this week I was going to be okay to do it. I was really worried about that because coming off COVID and everything, I've really been out -- physically just didn't have a lot of energy and just couldn't really do it. I've been riding previously. Riding carts on the Champions Tour was the only reason I was able to play.

To me it was good. I mean, just to be able to walk today was a big boost to my confidence.

Q. Could you practice, chip, putt, hit some shots on the range before you get back into it?

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, yeah, I'd get out there and do that, but I wouldn't last long. They would be short sessions. I didn't really practice that much. Just was tired all the time. I don't know what else to say. I was just very fatigued is the word. Just didn't have a lot of energy to get out there to work at it.

Q. After you won at Salem in 2017, the USGA had a chance to come out and visit you at your home and see your impressive car collection. How long have you been collecting cars, and in the past year what are a few that you've been excited about being able to bring into the garage?

KENNY PERRY: I think we got our first old car when Sandy and I got married in 1982. I bought a '69 Camaro. I think that was actually my first one. It was an old junk -- old fixer-upper. It needed to be fixed. But that kind of was the start of it.

In 1969 I was nine years old, and my dad bought a '69 Camaro brand new for my oldest sister, and I knew right

then when that car came home, I was going to have one of those one day, and so that kind of got me into the old car bug. So now I've probably got 20 old cars at the house.

I've got from '55 to '57 Chevies. I'm a Chevy guy. I've got Camaros, Novas, Impalas, Chevelles, just got a little bit of everything. I've got fast cars, I've got slow cars. If you want to go cruising in a convertible or if you want to get in a 1000-horsepower car and go out and have some fun and not kill yourself.

Yeah, I've got a '57 Chevy I used to call the Black Widow. It was a black and white car which was -- in 1957 they built this car, it had a 283 and two four-barrel car, and it went straight to the dragstrip, so I always wanted one of those cars. So my youngest daughter -- I've had this car forever. My youngest daughter said, Hey, Dad, you've never given me an old car. You've given Justin a car, and all this, and she says, I want one of your cars. I said, Okay, just pick one. And sure enough, she picked the '57 Chevy.

I redid it. I pulled the big block out of it. I put an LS3 in it with an automatic transmission and everything where she can just get in it and crank it up and take off and have fun in it, so I lost that car, so now I've got to find another one. I've got to go buy me another one somewhere.

But that's a lot of fun. I've got them with some Art Morrisson chassis underneath them, which makes them act like a Corvette. They're very high-horsepower cars, so I've got a little bit of everything.

I like to drag race. I've got my drag cars that I go quarter mile. I've got some fast stuff there.

Golf is a slow game, and then when I go become a grease monkey or whatever, get out there working on my cars and stuff, I like to feel the speed. To me that's exhilarating.

THE MODERATOR: Kenny Perry, thanks so much. Have a great week.

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