

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

Sunday, July 2, 2023

Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA

SentryWorld

## Bernhard Langer

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Bernhard Langer, 43rd U.S. Senior Open champion. How does it feel?

BERNHARD LANGER: It feels awesome. It's been a long time coming, but very, very happy. Never thought it would happen at a U.S. Senior Open, but I'm very thrilled that the record of 46 wins happened this week.

It's certainly one of the greatest tournaments we ever compete in, and to beat this field, where everybody was here, especially Stricker and Kelly on their home grounds, is a very special feeling. Very grateful.

**Q. Congratulations, Bernhard. You talked about your faith on the 18th green. Can you talk about how it helped you through some of the tougher moments today.**

BERNHARD LANGER: Absolutely. I'm reading my Bible every day and certain devotions and just realized the last 30 years that I'm not in control and everything I've been given is a gift from God. I try to play to the audience of one, which is Him.

I'm not too concerned about people, even though I love them and I care about them and I want to entertain them.

The key is to have a grateful attitude, a thankful attitude because I have so many reasons to be grateful and thankful for.

Yeah, there's many great bible verses. The book of Philippians is one of my favorites. It talks about do not be anxious. Well, we're all anxious playing golf to some extent. There's certain shots that we don't feel totally comfortable or confident about, so it's always a good reminder.

I felt at special peace today early on, where it just was very calm. You think that under the circumstances of playing the United States Senior Open and getting a record 46



victories and playing against Stricker and Kelly and all the other greats, Goosen and Els and on you go, you would think you would be extremely nervous.

And I was somewhat nervous, but a lot calmer than I have been many other times.

**Q. Talk a little bit more about knowing the Wisconsin native sons were behind you, and did you feel the weight of Wisconsin at all on the last three?**

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, I knew it was going to be a tough day just because Steve Stricker has been in top form. He's winning basically every time he tees up or thereabouts. I knew he would want to have his streak going of three majors in a row, and I knew he was going to give it his all.

The same with Jerry Kelly. He's one of the best ball strikers, very underrated golfer. I knew he would do well because he is one of the straightest hitters. The key this week, I think, was hitting the fairways. If you could keep it out of the cabbage, you had a chance.

I think that's one of the reasons I did so well. I didn't hit it in the rough very often. Took many 3-woods off the tees at times, but then I had to hit 3-wood into the green or a very long club. But I'd rather do that than hit driver and wedge it out from the rough.

It was not easy. My age probably showed up towards the end. I lost concentration a little bit there. Finished with three bogeys. Well, the last hole was a bogey on purpose almost. I wasn't -- I was aiming way right. I knew there wasn't much trouble.

Then I had a very long putt and I told my caddie, I'm going to leave this short because I don't want to go down the hill and bring double into play or more. So it was pretty much a bogey on purpose.

But the other two were just poor putts. I was twice unlucky where the ball just rolled into the fairway bunker, and I made two bogeys that way. But that's how it is out here.

**Q. We were just out with you when you were taking pictures of the trophy and the flowers and you knelt down and all of a sudden you said, can somebody help**



**me up? I thought that was awesome. With what you're doing, to Gary's question about your faith, do you feel like an inspiration? And are you human?**

BERNHARD LANGER: I'm very human. I've got two bad knees, for those of you who don't know, and it hurts bending down and staying down. When I have dinner and I sit for an hour or something and get up, it's hard to get up. That's just been that way for a number of years.

Reading putts is very difficult because I figure I'm bending down 200 times a day or for 18 holes at least. That's a lot of bending down. Then I read, if you go downhill, from a tee box you go down the hill, it's 20 times your body weight.

So for easy math, if you're 200 pounds, that's 4,000 pounds on the knee joint when you walk downhill. Imagine how many times I've walked downhill in the last 50 years on TOUR.

So the body's taken a beating, no doubt about it. I feel it just like everybody else.

But I got good news. I have my mother that's going to be 100 on August 4th, so I think I have good genes. Hopefully I'll be around a few more years.

**Q. Can you talk about how important it was to get off to that fast start with the two birdies? And then on 5 to keep it going from kind of a funky lie there in the mud?**

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, that was the shot of the week there for me. It was great to birdie the first two again, like I did yesterday, which are not easy holes. But somehow I managed.

My second shot on 5 was as good as yesterday. I absolutely hit it the way I wanted to. I wasn't even concerned. Then I asked my caddie, where is it? He says, I think it hit a rock or it's short, and I was actually in shock almost because it just took off out of the middle of the club face.

But as we came around that island of trees, the breeze was definitely into me. I thought the breeze was more left to right. That explained why it came up three or five yards short.

As I got there, the ball was sitting a little bit in water and mud. So I immediately said, I'm going to play this. I've just got to hack it out on the green somehow and get away with par hopefully.

Turned out I played a brilliant shot. I hit it to about 4 feet or

something, 3 1/2 feet, and made birdie and actually increased my lead, which it could have gone the other way.

**Q. Bernhard, you mentioned yesterday wanting to have a lead just to give you some of that cushion. Starting off and getting that lead, extending it early, how much comfort did that kind of give you in the middle of the round knowing that the guys behind you had a lot of work to do to get to where you were?**

BERNHARD LANGER: It definitely gives you comfort because you know you don't have to push for birdies. You can play sometimes through the middle of the green and make pars, and if you make pars, you're not losing anything, which is a general rule at a U.S. Open.

But when you have a six-shot lead or something like that, it's definitely true.

I didn't know where I stood until I came to the 10th hole, I think, or the 11th hole, and I saw a leaderboard somewhere and looked up and saw that I had a six-shot lead.

Then my goal was to get through 12 and 13, the two water holes. So I took a club less on 12 to make sure I'm not going over the green; made a great par.

And 13, I hit it really close. Should have made birdie, but I didn't.

That was very encouraging to get through those two holes with actually a birdie chance. And just played really solid from there on. I three-putted, what was it, 15, 16 -- 16. 16, I three-putted, really shouldn't have, from nowhere.

17 I hit a good tee shot, rolled just into the bunker. Again, from there you don't want to take on the flag and maybe go in the water long, so I played it up front, and then three-putted again from just off the green.

But I knew my cushion was big enough to -- I was hoping in the morning to have a two or three-shot lead coming down 18, and that's what I had. So I could afford making bogey and still feel comfortable.

**Q. The USGA kind of took a chance coming to the middle of Wisconsin, central Wisconsin, to a smaller market.**

BERNHARD LANGER: I'm just glad they did.

**Q. How did the golf course hold up, SentryWorld?**

BERNHARD LANGER: I was just saying to several

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

people, it's one of the best golf courses I've ever played. Condition of the golf course was fabulous all week long. Beautiful fairways, great greens. The ball rolled really nice. Bunkers were good. Rough was a bit juicy, but it's the same for everybody, and it's a U.S. Open.

My hat's off to the greens keeping staff, to the owners of SentryWorld. They've got a jewel here. It's a really beautiful spot.

**Q. Congratulations. You've won a number of majors, Senior Tour, the Champions Tour, and the regular TOUR. I know it's probably hard, but how would you rate this one?**

BERNHARD LANGER: It's certainly up there. Obviously my two Masters wins probably still mean more because it was on the regular TOUR, but I wish I had won the British Open. I had plenty of chances and just couldn't do it at some point.

But having won more majors on this Tour than anybody, even Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino, Gary Player, you name them all, that's incredible. Now to add one more at age -- I'm almost 66. My caddie just told me the average age of the U.S. Senior Open winner is 52, and here I am at 66.

So the odds were definitely stacked against me, but I don't always go by odds and what's written on paper.

The golf ball doesn't know how old we are, and we do the best we can.

**Q. As we get older, we think more about history, at least some of us. When you talked about your Masters wins and now you have two U.S. Senior Open wins, it's only Nicklaus, Player, and you. I don't know what that means to you or if you look at history that way.**

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it means a lot. Whenever your name is mentioned with these guys, Nicklaus, Player, whatever, Palmer, Trevino, many others, it means you've done something very special because they were extremely great champions and legends of the game, and I'm very fortunate to be mentioned amongst them.

Thank you. Appreciate you all. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports