

Chubb Classic presented by SERVPRO

Friday, January 27, 2023

Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Bernhard Langer

Media Conference

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Good morning, everybody. Happy Friday. Thank you all for joining this media conference call to preview the 2023 Chubb Classic presented by Servpro taking place in a few weeks.

I'm going to kick things off. Before we open it up to questions with Bernhard, I'm going to introduce Sandy Diamond, our executive director for the Chubb Classic.

SANDY DIAMOND: Thank you, Jeremy, and thanks, everybody, for being here this morning. Really appreciate it. Look forward to seeing everybody. By the way, the tournament is 17 days away, so it is rapidly approaching.

I know Jeremy will give a few more details about our media day lunch and golf that's scheduled for next Thursday, but just a couple quick talking points just to kick it off.

This is the 36th consecutive year of the Chubb Classic presented by Servpro here in Naples. It's the longest running PGA TOUR Champions event in the same market. Chubb also, a very cool thing for them, it's a silver anniversary; it's their 25th anniversary as title sponsor. Obviously we're very grateful for Chubb and their continued support, everything they do here to help and benefit local charities in southwest Florida.

As an aside, also Chubb is also the longest running title sponsor on the PGA TOUR Champions. They do a lot here locally for the community and obviously a lot for PGA TOUR Champions, as well, so we thank them.

Shaping up to be another world-class field, a host of Hall-of-Famers and major champions, including our special guest today, four-time and defending champion Bernhard Langer. Thank you for being here. We appreciate your time.

Ernie Els, Jim Furyk, Steve Stricker, they'll all be here, as well as last year's Schwab Cup winner and Player of the Year, Steven Alker. They're all committed to play.



Lastly, I would remind everyone, appreciate you getting the word out, that we do have limited general admission and VIP tickets that are still available. Our website, Jeremy will make sure everybody has it, is ChubbClassic.com.

With that, I'll turn it back to Jeremy, and thank you for being here and spending a few minutes with us. We really appreciate your time.

BERNHARD LANGER: Thank you, Sandy.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Thanks, Sandy. Appreciate it. For those of you on the call, there's an additional news release that's coming out with the latest and greatest commitments. I've got it right here. It's going to come your way in probably the next hour or so, as Sandy mentioned, highlighted with Steve Stricker, 2021 champion, who is going to be returning. Unfortunately he wasn't able to join us last year because of his mystery illness, along with Ernie Els, Jim Furyk, Tom Lehman and Steven Alker.

With that, I'm going to kick it over and introduce and welcome Bernhard. For those of you on the call, I'm going to ask a quick opening question and then we'll turn it over to you guys.

Bernhard, thank you for joining. First off, there's a good storyline that's coming into the tournament for you. Depending on how you do overseas, you're either going to be going for Hale Irwin's or going to eclipse Hale Irwin's record or you're going to tie Hale Irwin's record of 45 wins. Has that been in the back of your mind? I know it's an accomplishment to have 44. Talk about that as you look to defend your title here at the Chubb Classic.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, well, years ago it was a faraway sort of thing. At the beginning I thought, well, I don't think anybody is ever going to achieve 45 victories again out here, but as I get closer and closer, it becomes more and more realistic, and as you said, I'm one away. I believe I have a few more wins in me. Still playing full time and excited to defend my title in Naples.

It's probably the tournament I want the most. I've won one



or two others maybe three times, but I think it's the only one I've won four times, and I've won it on different golf courses.

I think I have a slight advantage living in South Florida, being used to the grasses that we have down here, mostly Bermuda, which some people struggle with a little bit. I know I used to when I first moved here. So that might help slightly.

To me it feels like a home game. I've lived in Boca Raton, which is two hours straight across from Naples, and I've been here for over 30 years, so this is pretty much home for me, South Florida, and it's nice to drive for two hours and not get on an airplane and all that and have some of my family and friends around.

I've always enjoyed playing Naples. I think I've played it every single year, if I'm not mistaken, and we have a great sponsor with Chubb. They usually play on wonderful golf courses at a good time of the year, and the field is always strong, as well. When you win there, you know you've beaten the best.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: I'll open it up to the group. Thank you for joining. If you have a question, raise your hand in the chat or raise your chat and unmute and then we'll take it away.

Q. I know the Irwin record is right there, and that's an immediate incentive, but what's keeping you going all these years, and do you have any thoughts as to how long you're going to keep playing?

BERNHARD LANGER: That's a great question. I've been asked that a number of times, but the idea is really or the thought is I've always said if I'm healthy, if I enjoy the game and have fun doing it and I'm somewhat successful, if those three things are present, I'm going to probably continue. They're still there. I'm fairly healthy. Do have my aches and pains, but I still enjoy being out there with my colleagues and playing golf under competitive circumstances, and I'm still fairly good at it.

As long as those three things are there, I'm going to probably continue. If one or two of those have gone missing, then it's probably time to pack it up.

I'm also at a point in time where we have four kids, two sons, two daughters, they're all grown up now, so they're out of the house, so I have more time. I'm now spending more time with the grandkids. We were blessed with four grandkids the last three years, so I actually feel like this is a good time in my life to play professional golf.

Q. What about the Irwin record? Is that going to be a little pressure off after you get that? I'm assuming you're going to get it pretty soon.

BERNHARD LANGER: No, I don't feel any extra pressure, to tell you the truth. I really don't. I just try to be the best that I can be and play the best golf every day that I can, and deep down, I think I know and feel if I do play to my best, I can still win tournaments, even though there's a lot of younger guys -- when I first came out on the Champions Tour I was top 10 in driving distance every year. Now I'm about 60th or 70th.

I have a distinct disadvantage with hitting the ball shorter than many of my colleagues and have to make that up somewhere else, in either accuracy or short game or putting or whatever you may call it or course strategy. But it's the unique thing in golf that there is ways to sometimes make that up. Maybe not on every golf course, like the one we played last week in Hawai'i was wide open. It was what I call a bomber's paradise. It gets often wider the further you hit it, and they have a huge advantage.

But like the course in Naples, you've got to hit it really straight. Tiburón is not a golf course necessarily for the big bombers that spray it around because if you hit it offline you're going to be in the jungle and you're going to take a penalty drop.

There's certain courses that favor straight hitters and other courses favor the big bombers.

Q. You mentioned the success that you've had in Naples. Is there any particular moment or memory that stands out from any of the four Classics that you've been able to win?

BERNHARD LANGER: You know, they're all very special. Every win is unique and special in its own sense, but maybe the last one is maybe the most important in a sense because when you get to age 65, or near there, or even before that, you never know if you're going to win again. Actually nobody has won at that age before, and I'm the oldest winner, and I've broken my own record, I believe, two or three times. There's no guarantees anymore.

When you're 50 or 52 you expect to win sooner or later and you say, well, if it doesn't happen this week or next week, it's going to happen in a month or two, but in my case, it's almost the other way around. I can't say, well, hopefully I'll win in two years. No, I'd better win soon because the clock is ticking.

Q. I thought it was kind of neat where you won your first Champions event within months, I think, of Hale

winning his last one. Where along this journey did this record become a realistic target or goal?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, that's a good question, too. I'm not so sure, but as I said earlier when I came on the Champions Tour, I was just trying to be one of the better players and win some majors, win some tournaments, have fun, and that kind of stuff.

Then as time went on, I got to 20 and I got to 30, and every once in a while you heard the question, well, do you think you will achieve Hale Irwin's record, and at the time I said, well, it's unlikely, but maybe, who knows.

As I said, the closer we get, the more realistic it becomes, and now it's very realistic, especially when I look back the last two or three years. I lost several Playoffs or I was in contention in a bunch of tournaments that I didn't win in the end. I could have surpassed him. But that's the game of golf, coulda, shoulda, woulda, right? We've all been there, done that. None of that matters in the end until you actually do it.

It's never been more realistic than right now because I won two tournaments last year to get to 44, and one more and I caught Hale, and now one and I surpass him. It's very much on the radar screen now.

Q. I want to ask you, you're renowned for your work ethic. I want to ask you about the origins of that, where you pull that from, and how that's driven you through 50 years of being a professional player.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I think it all comes back to my parents. I grew up in a pretty poor home. It was Germany after World War II when my parents were raising me, and we didn't have much. I saw how hard both my parents had to work and how little we had, basically just food. My dad didn't have a TV for many years. He didn't have a car. We couldn't afford bicycles for years. A lot of what we call basic things nowadays, we didn't have.

I think I just learned and watched my parents, how hard they worked. They got up at 6:00 in the morning. My dad worked for an hour or two around the house. Then he would go to work as a bricklayer, come back home at 5:30 p.m., have dinner and then work again until 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, and my mother was the same. She never stopped.

Just watching that for many, many years probably shaped me and said, hopefully I will have a job that makes more money than they do and maybe provide a better life for my wife and my kids. So that probably was a driving factor.

Then once you get used to a certain work ethic, it becomes

part of you.

Q. Talk about the Black Course at Tiburón. Naturally you're familiar with both the Black and the Gold, but talk about the Black Course and how it sets up for competition for you guys.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I think it's a very testing golf course. It's one of the tightest and narrowest courses we play, and you've got to be very precise with a lot of tee shots, and it's very penal if you miss your target. But if you do hit it straight, you can make some birdies.

As always, the weather plays a big factor. If the wind blows, it makes it a lot harder than what it's calm. The conditions are usually phenomenal right there. I've enjoyed myself. It's a great setup, good practice facilities. We usually find very nice and fast greens, which I enjoy, and all of that, I think, contributes to a great test of golf.

Q. How is your game overall? How did you feel you played in Hawai'i, and how is it looking when you go overseas and then coming to Chubb in a couple weeks?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, this off-season was maybe the -- I was the least prepared ever, I believe, just because we moved house, and there was a lot going on, and then I got sick for about two days, didn't feel great, and stuff like that. There was some preparation but not the normal preparation I would have had.

Also lost my coach about a year and a half ago, and then just the head pro that became sort of my second father figure when I was 15 and turned pro, he just passed away last week, beginning of Hawai'i. All of that made it a little tougher.

But I actually played fairly well. I was tied for fourth going into Sunday in Hawai'i. I shot 5-under and 6-under the first two rounds, and then on Sunday I made a couple mistakes. I hit one in the water which I caught slightly fat, high on the face, made double bogey. That was on the 5th hole, and that kind of rocked the boat a little bit, and in the end finished 10th.

Top 10 is not bad, but I'm always hoping for better.

Q. I was going to ask you about the coach you just lost that you grew up kind of under his wing. What was the best thing he imparted to you? I'm double checking who that coach was.

BERNHARD LANGER: Coach was Willy Hoffman, and he's been with me for 48, 49 years.

The best thing, he gave me a lot of great pointers, obviously, over all those years, but I remember him saying, I think I was in my 20s or 30s, I can't recall the day exactly, he said something like, we're going to have to change your technique a little bit because I still want you to play well in your 40s and your 50s and your 60s and your 70s. I said, well, what do you mean. He said, well, right now you've got this reverse C finish, and you already have a bad back.

I hurt my back when I was in the Air Force at age 19, had a stress fracture and a bulging disc, so it's a miracle that I'm even playing professional golf.

Anyway, he said, I think we've got to change some of your technique so you can still play the game as long as you live and play it well. So we did that, and we did it slowly, gradually, not in one go.

Faldo changed his swing totally. Nick Faldo I'm talking about. He always made changes very slight, little bit by little bit, so it would take longer, but I could play -- in my whole career I never lost my Tour card. I never kind of had a long lull or a bad spell. I was competitive throughout my whole time.

I think that's down to Willy Hoffman's foresight, and he's taught me a swing, I think, that will go on for a long time, where I'm more rounded, I'm not reverse C where you put a lot of pressure on the spine, and takes pressure off my spine the way I swing now and makes me able to play the game probably as long as I live.

Q. That had to be a little bit bold, right? Everyone in that era had the reverse C type, Johnny Miller type stuff, right?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yep, absolutely. It was taught. When I was a youngster, that's what pretty much was taught around the world. You know, we still see it. If you look at Jeff Maggert, he kind of has it. Furyk has maybe a little bit, not as much of it. But there's a few of those, Radar -- what's his name?

Q. Mike Reid.

BERNHARD LANGER: Mike Reid. He had a bit of that. You know, it works. You can make anything work if you perfect it. But for some body styles, it's not the best way to swing the club.

Q. How long has the Tour Edge connection gone on? I can't remember when you were originally signed. That gets quite a contingent of Tour Edge players on the Tour.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, absolutely, and I love it. I think it's a great company. I signed up with them, I believe, two or three years ago, and just renewed for another two years.

As I said, the company is phenomenal. It's family owned, existed about 35 years, very successful. They make a great product, and I think they're getting better.

They're picking our brains, and they have great people there by themselves, and the product is really, really good, and it's getting more and more popular, even on Tour. I know it was always fairly popular amongst the average player or the amateurs, but they're coming out with good product. I just tested the new hybrids. They brought out a new set of irons that Mike Weir immediately put into play, and I loved just looking at his, so I'm getting mine hopefully in Naples, and the driver is really good, 3-wood is great.

Throughout the whole bag, they make everything, and they pride themselves on making a very good and solid product for anybody, whether you're a great player or just a beginner.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Thank you all for joining. Bernhard, thank you for joining. Good luck overseas in Morocco. We'll see you in a few weeks.

Sandy, thank you for joining, as well.

I'll give you more info about our media day, media golf outing next Thursday at Tiburón.

Again, transcript will be coming your way as soon as it comes to me, and also we'll get you an audio and video recording of this call, as well.

Thank you for hopping on. Appreciate it.

BERNHARD LANGER: Thank you all very much.

SANDY DIAMOND: Thank you, Bernhard. Thank you, everybody. See you all soon.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports