

Chubb Classic presented by SERVPRO

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Bernhard Langer

Sandy Diamond

Media Day Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining. Welcome to the 2024 Chubb Classic presented by Servpro media day, virtual media day. Without further ado, we'll kick things off.

Want to welcome in Bernhard Langer, two-time Chubb Classic defending champion, five-time Chubb Classic champion, 46-time PGA TOUR Champions winner, and a Hall of Famer and legend of the game.

Then Sandy Diamond, our esteemed executive director for the Chubb Classic presented by Servpro. Sandy, if you could kick things off and do a welcome and intro and talk a little bit about the tournament and then we'll keep things moving.

SANDY DIAMOND: Good morning, everybody. Good to see some familiar faces. Thanks, everybody, for joining us today. Greatly appreciate your time and all you do to cover and promote the tournament. Our heartfelt things for that.

I also want to thank the great Bernhard Langer, our two-time defending champion, as Jeremy said, five-time Chubb Classic tournament winner. It's a mouthful and an amazing accomplishment for being here. Bernhard, we appreciate your time, of course.

Just a quick overview of this year's Chubb Classic presented by Servpro. This is the 37th consecutive Chubb Classic being held in Naples. It's the longest running event in the same market on the PGA TOUR Champions. In the same context, it's the 26th year for Chubb, our title sponsor, their 26th year as title. They are the longest running title sponsor on the PGA TOUR Champions, as well.

The competitive dates are February 16 through 18. We're at Tiburón Golf Club again, the Black Course. The field will be 78 players competing for a \$1.8 million purse. We're fortunate every year just where we are in the schedule,



we're blessed that the field is always very, very strong every year.

As of now with our early commitments, we have three current World Golf Hall of Famers. Of course Bernhard, Davis Love will be making his Chubb Classic tournament debut this year, and Colin Montgomerie all will be here, with a fourth being inducted later this year in Pádraig Harrington. We'll be releasing this this afternoon.

Some other early commitments will be released this afternoon, including six past Chubb Classic champions, Joe Durant, Lee Janzen, Miguel Angel Jiménez, and former Naples resident Steve Stricker.

We have two former No. 1 players and major champions in David Duval and Tom Lehman.

Again, this year's tournament is really shaping up to be one of the best fields ever. We're very blessed. More commitments to come over the next week or so. The full field will be announced at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 9.

Lastly, just appreciate you getting this out there a little bit, that our ticket sales have actually been going very well, but we still have tickets available and they're on sale now at Chubbclassic.com.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Sandy. Appreciate the overview on the tournament and kicking things off for us. We also will talk about this a little bit more during the course of the call. We've got some cool new enhancements that we'll be rolling out during tournament week, as well.

If everybody on the call wants to transition over to the man of the hour, Bernhard Langer, our two-time defending champion and five-time Chubb Classic champion.

Bernhard, last year you were going for tournament win No. 45, and naturally you have a lot of success in Naples in the Chubb Classic on the Tiburón Black Course. Walk us through that final day last year and winning the Chubb Classic for your fifth time and then tying Hale Irwin's record for that 45th win.



BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, thanks, Jeremy. Hello, everybody, Sandy and everybody else. It was definitely in the back of my mind all the time that as I was leading, if I win this, I would tie the great Hale Irwin and tie the record for the Champions Tour all-time wins, and I was really trying to block it out because I've learned in the past it's not good thinking ahead and worrying about something that may not even happen.

I was trying to stay in the moment, and like I say, hit one shot at a time, which is sometimes the hardest thing you can do.

To come back to the Tiburón course, I think it really suits my game. It's a very tight, narrow golf course. Length is always important, but it's a bit less of a premium on that golf course because you have to be extremely straight.

My game is not length; my game is more precision and putting the ball in the right place where you hopefully don't hit it in the water hazard or penalty areas as often because every hole has penalty areas on that Tiburón course.

I always like fast greens, and the greens have always been fantastic in the Naples area.

On top of that, most of you know, I've lived in Boca Raton for about 40 years now, so I'm used to the local Bermudagrasses. I'm used to grainy greens and chipping in these conditions. It feels like a home game for me, and I've always felt comfortable and have played often some of my best golf in the Naples area.

Q. How is your game shaping up coming into the tournament coming off the first tournament at Hualalai?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I felt rusty at Hualalai. I didn't play my very best, but they also changed that golf course. It's almost the opposite from Tiburón. It's wide open. There's no rough at all. There's very little punishment if you spray it, and the bombers have a huge advantage.

You look at the leaderboard, there were mostly bombers up there.

The other thing that happened over the time off since the Schwab Cup, my mother passed away. She was 100. She lives in Germany. So we traveled to Germany for a couple of weeks, and no golf, obviously. There was snow and cold weather. So my game was a little rusty.

But I'm working on it the next couple of weeks, and I'm

hoping to be ready when the Chubb Classic comes around.

Q. You're also going to be going for another one of Hale Irwin's records this year. If you three-peat, you will get your sixth Chubb Classic win. Hale Irwin won Turtle Bay six times. Like you said at the top, with the other record for 45 in the back of your head, is that going to be in the back of your mind at all during tournament week?

BERNHARD LANGER: Well, it is now. I didn't even know about that. Now that you've made me aware of it, I'll try even harder. It's quite something else to win a tournament two or three times, and for Hale to win that tournament six times is unbelievable. Obviously he loved that golf course, but it's the same with me at Tiburón. Hopefully I'll get into a tiebreaker there, as well.

Q. I know your parents were hardworking people. Just curious up front what's the best lesson your mom taught you?

BERNHARD LANGER: The best lesson was to always be honest and straightforward, not to lie, not to cheat. I tried to get away with some things when I was a kid, and that didn't turn out very good. So I learned the hard way. But it was a great lesson, so just let your yes be yes and your no be no, and if you promise something, do it, and if you do a task, whatever it is, anything, do it to the best of your capability. That's what I was taught by my parents, whatever it may be. If you clean the floor, clean the floor so it is clean; don't leave some behind. If you do this, do it, give it 100 percent, and be proud of what you're doing.

Q. You turned pro so young and you've been doing this so long, a competitor for more than 50 years, how do you stoke the fire to start another season?

BERNHARD LANGER: It's kind of easy for me because I'm a very competitive person. I love to compete, and I've done (indiscernible). As most of you know, I started very young. I turned pro at 15, joined the Tour when I was 18, so I've been doing this a very long time.

I've learned to take time off here and there. I've learned to pace myself. I'm listening to my body when I need breaks and when I need times away from golf and to recuperate. I'm doing other things in between.

When tournament time comes around, I'm usually eager to go. Golf has been such a big part of my life, competitive golf, that it's almost hard to envision my life without it.

Q. The TOUR announced today a new funding deal with private equity groups. Nowhere did they discuss



the possibility of bringing money to the Champions Tour. I'd like to know your thoughts because your purses have been languishing considerably compared to what the PGA TOUR purses are like. I'd like to know what your thoughts are, and do you feel like you guys should get some of this largesse that the TOUR is now going to be getting from private equity?

BERNHARD LANGER: You know, those are great questions, and I wasn't able to take a part of the call that we had this morning with the PAC because I had other commitments and I couldn't get out of it. So I really don't know the details yet. So I'm not going to comment much on this because I'm not really properly informed. We might have to do this again in a week or two.

We are affiliated with the PGA TOUR. Obviously the PGA TOUR Champions are (indiscernible). The better the PGA TOUR does, the better we should do.

Hopefully they will not forget us totally and leave us in the dust. Hopefully we will benefit from whatever develops.

But again, I am in no position to make any statements here at this point in time.

Q. Because of being the Senior Open champion, you've already made it known or Augusta has made it known this is going to be your last year playing in the Masters, so this could be your last year playing in majors. At 66, how do you prepare for them both physically and emotionally, going to places like Pinehurst, going back to Augusta for the last time as a participant? How are you going to prepare for that, and what do you foresee that being like from an emotional standpoint?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I'm not sure how to get myself ready for that. I've never done that before. It's going to be very emotional, especially Augusta, because it's been a big part of my life. I love the tournament. I love the golf course. I love what they do for the game of golf. It's going to be a tough farewell for me walking up the 18th the last time in competitive circumstances.

Obviously I still plan on going back there every year to participate in the champions dinner and maybe play the par-3 course. I have family and friends up there and walk around with the young guys a little bit.

Emotionally it's going to be very difficult. Otherwise I will just prepare like I always do: Try and bring my "A" game, be ready for the challenges that the specific course that I will face, and at Augusta it's length. I'm going to be hitting a lot of hybrids and 3-woods into par-4s. I will not reach

par-5s. I'm going to have to have a good wedge game and hopefully make some putts.

Q. I wanted to ask you a question about the proposed golf ball rollback by the USGA and the R&A. I know it's about a year away, but I think it's interesting, especially as you said earlier, that you do not play a power game. You play more of a precision game. How do you think this is going to be accepted across the world and across the tours when they actually do roll the ball back?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, that's a great question, and we've been debating this, what, 30 years now probably, when it all started. When Tiger Woods came along and hit it some distances that -- well, Jack was really long, Nicklaus. But I personally feel some of the thrill of golf is to hit the ball far. (Indiscernible) other people can hit it far. John Daly was one of the most prolific people playing golf, not just because he was entertaining with his golf, but he was hitting the ball further than anybody else, and same with Tiger and same whoever hits the ball very far has a large following, and not just out on TOUR but any amateur that plays golf. They talk about how far they hit it. They don't talk about, oh, I made a 30-foot putt or I had a chip-in or something or I made a par. They talk about the big drive they hit somewhere.

That's one issue; you will take some excitement away from the game.

The other issue is that the ball manufacturers have spent so much money in producing a competitive ball, and we're talking lots of manufacturers, not just Titleist, and so the danger would be if the TOUR players have to play a different ball than the amateurs, I think that doesn't work at all, because now you're forcing basically these ball manufacturers to spend millions and millions and making a product that won't sell. Nobody will buy the ball that we play if it goes shorter. They want to hit it far.

So there's a lot of issues. I understand golf courses need to be longer, we use more water, we use more ferret advertiser. Nowadays the golf course needs to be 7500, used to be 6500.

I've designed some courses I remember 30 years ago I designed bunkers at 240 yards, 250 yards from the back tee. Well, the good players don't even sniff those; they fly it 50 over these. So it's a predicament that's not easy. Otherwise they would have solved the issue a long time ago.

I don't know if this has ever been discussed. I said, why not make the golf ball a little bit larger, all golf balls, so that

it won't go as far, quite as far. You push more air, you can make the golf hole a little bit bigger. You still face the same dilemma I'm talking about, but at least we're playing the same golf ball. I'm one of millions who are discussing this, and I may not have the answer. I just see the problems we're facing.

Q. Having achieved what was probably your last big goal of 46 wins on the Champions Tour and surpassing Hale Irwin's total, what's the next big goal? We see a lot of players achieve a letdown after achieving the goal that's been in their minds for a long time. Just wondering if you'd share what that next big goal of yours is.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, I've never had a problem setting new goals. It's exciting. It's a challenge. I like challenges.

My overall goal was always to get better. How can I improve. You may be laughing at me. You're 66, you're not going to improve. Well, I know every day I play golf, I could be better. I could be a better putter. I could be a better chipper or bunker player, and I could hit one more fairway, one more green. So that is the goal, to be mentally tough, to be having a swing that I can rely on, have a technique that is repeatable or repetitive and competitive.

That's my goal, overall goal. If I can achieve that, I am confident I will have a chance to win more tournaments. Maybe a better chance on courses like Tiburón. Maybe less of a chance on courses like we just played in Hawai'i. But I'm aware of that. But there will be some tournaments where accuracy is more important than length.

As I plan my schedule probably the next few years, I will maybe focus more on some of the golf courses, venues that will suit my game better. So instead of maybe playing 25 to 26 events a year, I might cut it back to 22 or 20, which is still a full schedule.

But there will be some tournaments where I feel I'm still good enough to win. The goal is always to win. Win tournaments, win more majors, and be in contention, because you get that adrenaline rush when you're in contention and you play the game that you love and you've practiced all your life.

THE MODERATOR: Sandy, speaking of the tournament this year, we're going to work back on the tournament a little bit. We've got a couple enhancements that we're doing for the tournament, including our Champions Lawn. For media in attendance here, do you want to share a little bit about the Tito's Champions Lawn?

SANDY DIAMOND: Sure, just real quickly. Thanks for bringing that up. We're creating a new fan experience area behind the clubhouse. It's in close proximity to all the action. It's going to be called the Tito's Champions Lawn. It's really in recognition, again, as I referenced earlier, of the longevity and the rich tradition of this event. We're going to have story boards for our patrons to see that basically honors the litany of our amazing past champions, including obviously Bernhard, Steve Stricker, Gary Player and Lee Trevino to name a few. There will be a lot of cool activation areas taking place. We'll have a leaderboard, corn hole, some music, so a lot of fun things. This is new this year.

In addition, the thing that Jeremy was just referencing, we're going to have one of our concession areas there which will be named Cafe 46, acknowledging and highlighting Bernhard's amazing 46 career victories on the PGA TOUR Champions.

We're excited about it. A lot of new things for our fans and some cool fan experiences that will be taking place this year. Thank you, Jeremy, for bringing it up. I appreciate it.

Q. Bernhard, building on what Mike asked, you mentioned over the next few years kind of how you would plan your schedule. Do you have a goal in mind for how long you'd like to continue playing, or is it just something that you're going to kind of evaluate on a year to year basis?

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, it's got to be more like year to year. I think it's mostly how my body feels and what's going on in my private life. You can't play good golf if your body won't allow you to, so that's one of the key things, and I focus on exercising and stretching and keeping my body in good shape. That's one of my main goals.

The other thing is if I'm not competitive anymore and I finish 40th or 50th week after week after week, I'm going to just hang it up because for someone who's used to winning and being in contention, I imagine it's not much fun finishing at the back half of the field every week.

But that's my feeling right now. I'm not there yet. I'm still competitive. I'll take it, as you say, year by year, and see how things are going.

Q. You mentioned earlier this month that this will be your last -- your final Masters. Talk about that a little bit, just looking forward to just walking the fairways of Augusta National in a competitive nature one final time. Naturally you'll be there every year, but just kind of talk about the thoughts of your memories of the



Masters and walking the fairways for one final time in April.

BERNHARD LANGER: Yeah, it's going to be in one way a wonderful experience to celebrate the many years I've been there and all the experiences I've had. Playing the course in the '80s was totally different than now. There was no rough. There were wide fairways. The edges were pine needles. So it was all about the second shot.

Now they've planted 5,000 trees or more. The fairways are quite a bit tighter. You have rough on both sides.

It's still a second-shot golf course, but it's a much harder driving golf course now than it ever has been before. The chutes are very narrow, like 17, 18, No. 2. Then there's a lot of tee shots where you need to be very precise, and you need length because the golf course is really -- the greens are designed to come in with a 7-iron or 8-iron. I asked Jack Nicklaus in a practice round one time, playing with him and Arnie, and I said in your prime, Jack, when you were in contention every year at the Masters, what was your second shot distance, what kind of clubs were you hitting into these greens, and it didn't take him long, and he said, the most I ever hit was an 8 or 9-iron into the par-4s. So that's what they're trying to achieve now with the guys that hit it 300 plus, and back then they hit their 9-iron I'm guessing 140, 150. Well, now they hit their 9-iron 170. They had to make changes around the course.

But I'm so proud of the Masters, what they have done with the tournament. There is not one tent on the whole premises. It's all solid construction for one week. They started the Drive, Chip & Putt. They started the amateur tournament the week before. They have amateur tournaments around the world which they're involved in, and it's been an amazing almost institution, what they do for the game of golf.

I'm very proud and happy (indiscernible) for the Masters (indiscernible). As I said, I'll be very emotional. Hopefully I won't be crying playing these last few holes, but there's no guarantee because I have friends from Germany flying in. My brother will fly over. I have lots of American friends that will try and come up and support me and be there for me when I play my last round which is hopefully Sunday, not Friday, but we'll see.

I still look forward to, as I said, being part of this great championship in the future as I probably (indiscernible). The Sunday (indiscernible) and then I play the par-3 (indiscernible).

It's all exciting. It's all good. I've had my time there. (Indiscernible) for me to pack it up on that golf course.

THE MODERATOR: The Chubb Classic is going to be a nice -- I wouldn't call it a tune-up. That's not the right word because you're going for your sixth win there. You're going to get your game in really good shape in a couple weeks at the Tiburón Black Course. Bernhard, thank you. Sandy, thank you for joining. Everybody on the call, thank you for joining, as well.

BERNHARD LANGER: Can I say one more thing? Sorry to interrupt you. I just want to thank Chubb and Servpro and everybody involved with the tournament for all the charitable work they're doing for local charities. We really didn't touch on that. But that is one of the main reasons these tournaments are good, the good they do for the local charities that bring all the volunteers, and I'm so proud of each and every one. Thank you all, and that's the main reason we do this. Appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: How about that. I couldn't have said it better myself. At the Chubb Classic we've donated nearly \$3.3 million to charity, and one of the other initiatives, big initiatives that we do that we didn't touch on earlier, we have an event that's kind of our kickoff event for the tournament. It's called the First Tee Champions Challenge. The First Tee is a big beneficiary of this tournament. February 12, 13 and 14, we will have five First Tee chapters that will be competing in three days of competition at courses around Naples, including Tiburón. These First Tee kids, they'll get to meet the legends of the game. They'll get to meet Bernhard and other players that are participating in a First Tee clinic.

Some of these kids, because they're coming from cold-air markets, so they're coming from Massachusetts, Chicago, New York, and they're coming from cold weather to what we call the paradise coast, southwest Florida. Some of these kids have also never traveled before. It's a really, really good experience.

We're announcing the First Tee Champions Challenge back for its 14th year. We're also announcing that this year.

It's a really good way to kick off the event, the Chubb Classic, and really hammer home just the charity beneficiaries of this, and the Naples CVB does a great job of helping to partner with us for this, as well.

SANDY DIAMOND: Just in case everybody wanted to know, Jeremy mentioned four of the five markets. The other one is Philadelphia. So it's First Tee of Philly, New York, Chicago, Massachusetts and then the home market here of Naples.



Jeremy is right; the longstanding partnership with the Naples CVB, Cypress Ascendant, another partner, has jumped on board this year to help support, as well. The kids are going to have a great experience, two kids from each chapter, three days of competition. It's Tiburon, Windermere, a private course here in town, and then Twin Eagles, another private course here in town. So they get to play some really great golf courses.

We have other initiatives, catamaran ride, community service like a beach cleanup. It's three days of engagement both on and off the golf course. More details to follow if anybody wants. Thank you, Jeremy, for bringing that up. We really appreciate it.

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