

# Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

## Jimmy Stanger

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Jimmy Stanger to the interview room here at the Valspar Championship. It's kind of a home game for you. You're a Tampa native, you live in the Jacksonville area now, but you've got a lot of history at this tournament, what's it like to be playing here this year as a full PGA TOUR member.

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, it's special in so many ways. Born and raised here in Tampa and still spend a lot of time down here over at Avila in the north Tampa area. I grew up working the range here, grew up being a standard bearer for guys and one day saying I want to play in this tournament. So I played in it, got the opportunity as a sponsor's invite in 2017 and 2018, which was special in so many ways, but my game wasn't ready to compete out here. And as a sponsor's invite you're not a member of the TOUR, so to be out here as a member of the TOUR, knowing that I earned my place out here is, man, it's cool. It's special in so many ways and a dream come true.

THE MODERATOR: What do you remember from that first year in 2017 playing as an amateur?

JIMMY STANGER: That was by far the most nervous I've ever been in my life. I know I think I told my caddie, we started on the front nine, so by hole 12 green I told him, I can finally feel my hands. So, I was pretty nervous that whole day. I don't remember much of what happened because I was so nervous, but I just remember enjoying every minute of it. I remember going out to hole 15, and Avila, my home course, had rented a tent out there, and they were stomping around, making a bunch of noise yelling, "Jimmy Stanger", so that was pretty special. Yeah, it was just an amazing experience. I didn't make the cut that week, but, man, I learned so much from being around all the guys out here.

THE MODERATOR: Before we take some questions, as I said your first year on TOUR, as a rookie, you've done pretty well. A T-3 at Puerto Rico, but then you were the last man in, I think, at PLAYERS last week, and top 35 finish. What was that experience like for you and what did you take from it?

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, that was pretty special too. The goal coming into this year was to try to qualify for THE PLAYERS. So to be able to be the last man in, even with Tiger not being able to play there, I was probably one of the happiest guys in the country that Tiger decided not to play. But it was really cool to do that and to play on a golf course against the best field in the world and to be able to do that, and not only do that, but compete, play the weekend and finish 35th. So just continue to build on top of that and hopefully we can do that this week.

THE MODERATOR: Great, take some questions.

**Q. The finish on Sunday, was that your biggest check as a pro?**

JIMMY STANGER: I think actually the week before in Puerto Rico was probably my biggest check as a pro, finishing third. It was pretty amazing to see what the check was after finishing 35th at THE PLAYERS with kind of how that's happened.

**Q. A lot of players have parlayed high finishes in Puerto Rico into big things out here on TOUR. What did that do for you confidence-wise?**

JIMMY STANGER: I think it just gave me the confidence that I could compete out here. I remember I think Viktor Hovland won for the first time in Puerto Rico, and then I got a chance to play with him on Sunday at PLAYERS last week. So there was a little bit of an, okay, like I'm seeing how Viktor did this, I remember how he came out of college and obviously started off playing so incredibly well. But to see, okay, I'm down there competing, I had a chance to win coming down the stretch, and played good golf, so let's just continue to do that last week at THE PLAYERS, let's continue to do that this week here at the Valspar. Yeah, it's special any time you get to compete on the PGA TOUR and have a chance to win. So that's the goal, let's get ourselves in contention.

**Q. What's your best memory as a standard bearer out here, how old were you and what kind of groups did you get?**



JIMMY STANGER: I know I did it a couple times when I was probably seven, eight, nine, ten. Then did I it again kind of early high school. I don't remember it much when I was just a young kid, but I remember when I was like 15 years old being a standard bearer for a group with Jerry Kelly in it. I just remember how incredibly kind he was to me. Just the willingness to ask me, hey, do you play golf, where do you play golf, do you want to be playing out here in a couple years. That stuck out in my brain, like I remember thinking to myself, if I ever get a chance to be out here I want to be like that to the standard bearer, I want to be like that to the guys who work the range and do all those things. Again, I keep saying it's special, but it is special to be able to have that opportunity to do that to whoever my standard bearer is this week and to be able to talk to them and ask them those questions, so maybe make an impact in their lives.

**Q. Wanted to hear more about your organization with Birdies for Hope. Kind of very rarely do you hear guys this young already having a dedicated cause and just wanted to hear more about that.**

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, so long story short of Birdies for Hope, for every birdie that I make this year on the PGA TOUR I'm donating \$20 to it. What we do is we help build churches and hope centers in third world countries. These churches obviously are a place of worship on Sunday, but also Monday through Saturday they're helping the community out in whatever ways necessary. A lot these villages don't have the traditional charities that we have here, so these buildings double as orphanages, they double as hospitals, they double as schools for children, and they really fill these necessary needs that give hope to those communities, that keep kids out of drug trade that, teach immigrants how to function in a civilized society. It's been really special to do that, we've built nine churches so far, and hoping to continue to build on that number here in the future.

**Q. Where did that come from? How you were raised? Where did the idea come that you wanted to give back?**

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, so again, a lot of that comes back to my faith and the idea that what Jesus said, it is truly better to give than to receive. The golf life is amazing, there are so many perks to being a professional golfer on the PGA TOUR, but in the end, like, it's far better to give back to the community than to receive all these gifts. I fully believe that I am profiting by giving back, I'm profiting by impacting the lives of others in a better way, and I really hope that I can look back on my golf career and say that my golfing career was used for more than the glory of

Jimmy Stanger, but that it was used to further the glory of God and to help other people in whatever ways that can happen.

**Q. Do you remember what year you were the standard bearer for Jerry Kelly and are there any specific memories that stand out from that?**

JIMMY STANGER: Oh, man, I want to say it was 2015, or, not 2015, I want to say that was 2010 when I was 15 years old, but I could be wrong, it could have been 2011, kind of one of those few years. I just remember how kind he was. I don't remember anything specifically. I think I was playing with him and Jeff Driscoll, or, playing, I was the standard bearer with him and Jeff Driscoll, but I just remember how kind he was and how considerate he was.

**Q. Have you kept in touch with him at all since then or since you turned professional?**

JIMMY STANGER: I have not. He probably has no idea really who I am. I just remember what impact he made and thinking I would love to be able to make that same impact on others.

**Q. As a rookie, do you feel on schedule? The years you spent on the Korn Ferry Tour, what's the challenge of being patient out there?**

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, I got to spend six years on the Korn Ferry Tour and I know a lot of guys would kill for that opportunity to even be on the Korn Ferry Tour. But it was, it taught me a lot of patience. Obviously, I wanted to be up here faster than I did coming out of college as a top-ranked player, but I had some holes in my game that I needed to fix, and probably some mentality things that I needed to work through. I realize, again, that I could be playing professional golf for, I hope to play for the next 20 years of my life, but I could be on the PGA TOUR for the next year, I could be on the PGA TOUR for the next 20 years. I'm not really in control of the results, I'm in control of doing the best thing I can do day-in and day-out in order to get the ball in the hole with the least amount of strokes possible. So that's where I put most of my focus where, today, what can I be doing to help myself play the best golf Thursday through Sunday. I think if you can stack that mentality week-in, week-out out here you can -- I've learned that I can compete out here, and that's amazing. To be able to compete against the best in the world was my dream growing up and now I get a chance to do that.

**Q. Growing up here, what's your earliest memory of winning a local tournament or, and then on that playing for Gaither -- I know you're home schooled, but playing for that school, what do you remember about**



## that or your fondest memories?

JIMMY STANGER: So many good memories. It's hard to pick one. Probably my earliest fondest memory was I remember winning the Greater Tampa Junior Golf Association Tournament of Champions at like eight years old. I remember how special that was because I was competing against -- I remember two of the final three people were Jim Liu, who was a junior legend, if anybody remembers him, the youngest to ever win the U.S. Junior Amateur, and Jack Maguire, and playing against some of those guys at a young age was special. The Greater Tampa Junior Golf Association, if you guys want a story, is a great local golf tour that has fostered some of the best in the country, even on the PGA TOUR over the years. So, I think that's probably my earliest memory.

Playing with Gaither was special, too. The team took me in so well, despite the fact that I was kind of an outsider as a home-schooled kid who lived in Tampa. Coach O, Dwayne Olinger was the coach at the time there, and he's made such an impact in my life. He's come out to a couple events, might be coming out to this one this week, too. Just his leadership that he showed and the guys on the team, the kindness they showed to me and the encouragement to continue to get better has made such a big difference for me.

## Q. Growing up in Tampa do you have any favorite sports legends, local sports legends, your favorite teams, sports memories of the Tampa Bay teams?

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, it's funny, I've always been a Bucs and Rays fan, obviously Lightning as well, but the Bucs hold a special place in my heart, for the reason that my real full name is Raymond James Stanger. So as I was just saying I think on PGA TOUR Radio in the other room, there's no relation to the company Raymond James Financial, but Raymond James Stadium was built and named that in '97 or '98 I believe, when I was three years old, so my dad had me convinced until I was about 10 that he was able to pull some strings and get the stadium named after me. For that reason I was a diehard Bucs fan, it was just engrained into my subconscious that I was going to cheer for the Bucs. Favorite player had to be Derrick Brooks, obviously, who is your favorite player, Derrick Brooks, Ronde was right up there with 'em all, and really that whole 2002 team, I was following -- I mean at the time I probably knew every player on the team, probably could still list off a good bit of them today. So love the Bus, love the Rays, as well, I've gone to games whenever I'm in town, and have gotten a chance to know a lot of the guys. And then even the Lightning, I mean going to Amalie Arena is one of the coolest sporting events -- I think Tampa sports are as great as it gets.

THE MODERATOR: The game at this level is such fine lines between success and struggle. I want to take you back to the Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches. You had to come back on I think Saturday morning and hole an 8-footer to make the cut, which you did, and went on and finished decent in the tournament. But that led to a top-5 finish in Puerto Rico, and then on to the PLAYERS. When you go back to that point, do you look at that as a moment that maybe sent you on your way a little bit?

JIMMY STANGER: That was a big moment. That was a fun moment. That was not a night where I slept very much, because I had I felt like I had no business flirting with the cut line. Coming down the stretch I hit some wayward tee shots and missed a few putts that I should have made. But had a chance, hit a bunker shot to about eight feet. It was dark, they blew the horn. Wanted to hit the putt in the moment, but my caddie just advised me, like, hey, let's come back out in the morning with fresh greens and make the putt then. And it's, like, okay, let's do it. So, eight feet on the PGA TOUR I think is quite literally a 50/50 putt, so to have a 50/50 chance to play the weekend at a Florida golf course that you grew up admiring like PGA National, not a lot of sleep was had. But to be able to come out in the morning and make that putt was about as exciting as I could get. In fact, I was probably more nervous over that eight-foot putt than I was any time finishing third in Puerto Rico. So that was definitely a pivotal moment.

## Q. Did your caddie get a nice bonus check that week?

JIMMY STANGER: He got a nice bonus check that week. The bonus checks on the PGA TOUR for caddies are quite nice, so I'm trying to take care of him well.

THE MODERATOR: I want to go back to your local ties. How do you manage the expectations of family and friends? I'm sure there's lots of demands on your time and for tickets and stuff, and I believe you're managing some other things in your life, I think you're planning a wedding coming up, and so you got a lot going on. How do you manage all that coming into the tournament?

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, managing that and playing golf -- golf's a great game, it is my job, so it's not necessarily all of my life. But having a good team around you is so important. I've got a great team. My mom and my fiance' are really handling the tickets this week, so that's been helpful where, if anybody reaches out to me, I'll just kind of point 'em over to them. All those other things that are going on, just having good systems and making sure that everything has its priority, but it has its time as well. So I think that's just part of living a good, full life.



THE MODERATOR: All right. Anything further?

**Q. Do you have any estimate of how many people will be out to watch you?**

JIMMY STANGER: Oh, man, I know I get 12 tickets and that's not going to be close to enough to handle 'em. We'll see. I would probably say we'll probably have 50 people at a minimum out watching at some point Thursday or Friday.

THE MODERATOR: Calling in a few favors?

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, definitely going to some fellow guys and asking them, Hey, I don't think you'll be using all your tickets, do you mind sending them over.

**Q. You enter the week 5th in the Aon Swing 5 standings to try to get into the RBC Heritage, with that third place finish in Puerto Rico. Obviously you have a couple more weeks to try to accomplish that goal, but just what do you think about starting this week with an opportunity to improve your place in the standings and an opportunity to get into one of the Signature Events coming up?**

JIMMY STANGER: Yeah, I mean, that's a big thing that, as players, those are kind of goals that we have. So I want to be playing in those Signature Events, I want to be playing in the majors, those are kind of the two things. So with the Aon Swing 5, I mean, that is a huge opportunity for guys to go play those big events with big points to help us keep our cards and get into those into the future -- and you get to play against the best. So I want to be careful putting tangible goals on things with results, because that doesn't necessarily help me, but I do know it's very clear that if you go out here and win one of the next few events you're in the Masters, which is a dream, and you do that, it will probably put up there in the Swing 5. So that's kind of, that's certainly something that's circled on my list where I think if I can get focused and super into the process, that I have a -- I would love a chance to win, I would love a chance to get up there and play in those majors and to play in those designated events.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we appreciate your time and good luck this week.

JIMMY STANGER: Thank you.

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