

John Deere Classic

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

Daniel Berger

Press Conference

MARK WILLIAMS: We'd like to welcome Daniel Berger to the interview room. What do you like about coming back to the John Deere Classic and TPC Deere Run?

DANIEL BERGER: Well, you know, I had some success the first time I came here. I had a chance to win. Played well the first three days and just didn't have it on Sunday. I think it's a good tune-up event for me before the Open Championship. I know it doesn't play the same as obviously an Open Championship would play, but I think it can give you a lot of confidence. It's not overly difficult and you have a lot of birdie opportunities. I just look at it as kind of a stress-free week and just try to play my best golf and give myself a chance to win and look forward to obviously next week, as well.

MARK WILLIAMS: You've kind of answered the question about playing the week before a major championship and the attraction of playing this week and then traveling over to the Open. Some guys like to do that, other guys like to be there in advance. Why does this fit best for you to play here before going over?

DANIEL BERGER: You know, I've always wondered what guys like to do in terms of playing before majors, not playing before majors. It's pretty early in my career, so I've tested playing and not playing, and when I look at the record of how I played leading up to a major, I think I've had two wins and a couple top 5s and a bunch of chances to win, so I always feel like as much as it's an event to kind of get ready for next week, I've actually played really well in the lead-up events to majors. You know, it's just kind of stress-free, and sometimes that leads into really good golf.

I'm just excited to get out there and see how my game is and work on anything I need to work on leading up to next week, and just really enjoy being here in Iowa, so that's why I come.

Q. Your season this year has been really strong. You've had six top 10s, including a victory at AT&T Pebble Beach, but you've just taken a couple of weeks off. What do you do when you have a season like this



to kind of get your schedule in place and taking two weeks off at this point in the season?

DANIEL BERGER: You know, I think I've looked at the players that have had the most success in the Playoffs and having a chance to win the TOUR Championship, and it looks like they've always played the best kind of at that final peak of the season. I've really tried to work my schedule around being freshest toward the end of the year. That's why I haven't played a ton of golf in the last three or four months.

I think I've played maybe 16 events this year, which when you look at some of the other guys, they're in the low 20s, and I just think that's going to benefit me more at the end of the season when the big -- not the big events, they're all big events, but when I feel like those events mean the most and when you can move up the FedExCup very quickly.

Q. How does this event fit into your schedule? You've played here a few times and had success. How does it fit into your schedule as far as getting ready when you're putting that schedule together for the year?

DANIEL BERGER: Well, I think just the way that the U.S. Open fell this year, that was three weeks ago in California. It's tough for me, I'm not the best at jet lag and stuff like this, so I just felt like playing the U.S. Open and then coming home, taking a couple weeks off, getting some rest and then obviously playing one week to kind of get ready for next week was something that I've looked at in my schedule and thought it would be best.

In years past I haven't done it, and sometimes I have. I just felt like it was a good week to play, and that's why I added it kind of later in the schedule.

Q. What has been some of the keys to your success this year? What are you doing well that you really hope you can continue to do this week and then into the Open next week?

DANIEL BERGER: I've putted the ball really well. I think this is maybe statistically the best season I've had in terms of footage of putts holed, which I think is an indicator of the work that I've put in in the off-season and last year.

This is obviously going to be a course where if the weather



... when all is said, we're done.®

stays the way it is, the scores are going to be low and you're going to have to make birdies and essentially going to have to make a ton of putts. I always think that that's -- it's a good thing to come to a course the week before a major that you know is going to be very challenging and feel a little bit less stress, not in terms of being in contention but just the golf course isn't as challenging off the tee. You can get into a little bit of a rhythm if you hit some good tee shots.

For me it's just about getting ready for next week and coming to a place that I really enjoy.

Q. Talk about getting ready for next week and just the preparation, the things you have to do to go from an area where you can fly the ball a little bit higher to where next week you're going to have a little bit lower ball flight and focusing on those differences a little bit.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, obviously next week being a links style golf course there's going to be a lot more flighted golf shots, and here it's a little bit different with the greens being softer, you can fly things a little bit higher, less wind.

I am typically a lower flighted golf ball player, so it's not much of an adjustment for me. If anything it's tougher for me to hit the ball higher in the air. Like I said, I've played well here before, and I think the golf course suits me very well. I'm excited to play a course that I enjoy coming to. Not every golf course that we play when you get up to the tee you're really in love with it, but I feel like this place sets up nicely for me.

Q. We often hear that this course fits a player's eye. Can you define what that exactly means and what it is about this golf course that makes that description so common?

DANIEL BERGER: Well, I think a lot of it has to do with natural shot shape. I'm a cutter of the golf ball, so you look at some of the more challenging tee shots, 18, it's a cut, so I just feel like those challenging holes suit my eye.

Some courses are like that, some courses aren't, but this one just happens to have a few cut shots on the holes that are more challenging. You look at the drivable par-4, I think it's maybe 14, there's another cut shot.

Just a lot of those more challenging tee shots seem to fit my eye, and that's why I feel good off the tee here.

Q. There's a bit of variety of winners here, players who shape the ball different, guys who hit the ball long. Zach has had a lot of success here. How does this course work for seemingly everybody in some ways?

DANIEL BERGER: Well, I think it has to do with the guy that putts the best, to be honest. You look at the historical scoring here, it's pretty low, and that translates into just making birdies. You're not going to hit it to three feet on every hole; you have to hole footage of putts. Obviously Zach is a great putter, Steve is a great putter. You look at the guys that have won recently or throughout the history of the event, they're all great putters.

I think that's going to be probably the biggest category of relationship to how they finish, and then also wedge play. You look at the guys that have won here and they're also really good wedge players.

I think those are the two main keys to this golf course, wedging it well and putting it well.

Q. All that said, what's the golf course look like right now? How is it playing?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, the golf course is great right now. The greens aren't very soft, which typically they can be with the heat, and they have to keep them at a certain level of speed or else they just can't handle the heat. Hopefully we don't get any rain in the forecast, and by late Sunday it firms up a little bit and becomes pretty challenging. Hopefully I'm there with a chance to win.

Q. You've been in three Playoffs on the PGA TOUR, most recently the Charles Schwab Challenge which you won. Coincidentally that was the first event back after a break from COVID. Just curious if you watched the last couple of weeks with the eight-hole playoff at Travelers and the five-hole playoff at Rocket Mortgage last week and what your thoughts were on those.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, listen, it's brutal when you have to play an extra eight holes after a 72-hole event, but obviously both guys in both Playoffs were playing some great golf. I saw some of the shots that they hit. They hit some incredible golf shots.

I always think when you get into those Playoffs, it's more about kind of taking it now than kind of being conservative and trying to let your opponent make a mistake. I think that's kind of what I learned from my previous two playoff experiences is you need to go out there and try to birdie that first hole, and if it goes to the second hole, you need to try to birdie that second hole. It's less about being conservative and letting the other guy make a mistake.

Q. Just a question regarding your schedule. You haven't been here very often; what was the impetus to get here this year?



DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I mean, I don't think there was any particular reasoning. I just kind of -- I had taken a little bit of time off and I wanted to get an event in under my belt before heading over to the Open Championship, and obviously they make it really easy for us over here at the John Deere, they provide the charter over there to the Open Championship, which just makes life a lot easier, so that was another factor, as well.

Like I said, I've played here before and I've had success, and I like the golf course. I like the area, and I just thought I'd give it another shot and come back. I really do enjoy being here, so that was really the reason why I came this year.

Q. Talk about your season and the success you've had making cuts, being in contention. Has something changed in your game to get you up there that consistently, or has it just been a natural progression?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, you know, my goal has always been to just get a little bit better every year. With that one year, I think it was 2019 where I played a little bit injured, obviously I didn't have the greatest year, but other than that I've -- throughout my career I've shown that I've been a top player, consistent top-50 player in the world. I've made five or six TOUR championships in my first seven years. I think it's just about getting a little bit better every year.

I started working with a new golf coach two years ago, Cameron McCormick, who I think has helped take me to that next level. I just think every aspect of my game has gotten a little bit better and that's why I'm seeing more consistent results and a little bit better play than in years past.

Q. You're the highest ranked golfer in the field this week. Pressure, no pressure going into an event where you're the highest ranked golfer?

DANIEL BERGER: I think anybody can win. That's the beauty of the game of golf. I definitely feel confident if I play my game I'll have a chance to win on Sunday. Like I said, I mean, it's so tough to go out there and say that I'm going to go win that golf tournament, but if I prepare the way that I've been preparing and I play the way I'm capable of playing, then I feel very good about my chances.

Q. How tough is it to win out here on TOUR now with all of the talent that's out here?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I mean, you look at some of the guys that have the best winning percentages and they're at like 5 or 10 percent. It's very tough to win. But that's what

we strive for. That's what we work so hard for. When you get yourself in those positions to win, that's what makes it worthwhile for all those hours of practice.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

