

Honda Classic

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Resort

Daniel Berger

Press Conference



JACK RYAN: We'd like to welcome Daniel Berger into the interview room at the 2022 Honda Classic. Daniel is making his seventh start in the event, has two top 10s. If we could just get an opening comment from you on your return to PGA National. I know you weren't able to play last year.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I wasn't able to play last year. You know, it's one of the events that I always circle on my schedule just being 15 minutes from here and having some good memories in the past. It's a great event. I love coming back.

JACK RYAN: We last saw you in Phoenix, had to withdraw from Pebble Beach before that. Could you just give us an update on the status of your back injury.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I'm feeling 100 percent now. It's a bummer to not be able to defend at Pebble. Phoenix didn't go the way I wanted it to. Didn't get the practice in that I would normally do. But I've had a nice 10 days that I could be at home, be in the gym and do the stuff I needed to do, and I feel ready to go this week.

Q. When I spoke to you in Phoenix, one of the reasons is you just didn't have the preparation that week because of the back. Were you able to get in the golf part of it and that part and get prepared for this tournament like you want to?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, it was a struggle early on in the week leading up, but I've felt 100 percent the last five or six days.

It's always nice to come back here. I think I take for granted playing here and being so close to here. A lot of people will talk about who's not playing, but I think it's a great event, and I'm glad to be back for my seventh time.

Q. What are the advantages of playing a home game, and if there are, what are the disadvantages?

DANIEL BERGER: I think one of the advantages is

obviously being in your own bed and being so close to home and having the support from your family and friends so close by. I went to high school not far down the road, and I've played well here in the past, and I've got good memories here. I almost won here my rookie year.

It's a tough golf course. I think it suits my game really well, and as the course continues to get firmer and faster, I think the scores aren't going to be very high, and there could be some carnage out there.

Q. Why does this course suit you?

DANIEL BERGER: I just think it's a driving golf course. You've got to put it in play, and I drive the ball really well. So that's the number one thing. You have to chip and putt it well out here. You're just not going to hit a ton of greens. There's a lot of challenging holes, especially coming down the stretch, obviously the Bear Trap. You really have to be solid tee to green.

Q. Are there any disadvantages to a home game?

DANIEL BERGER: I honestly don't think there are. I love it. I mean, being able to, like I said, sleep in your own bed and do everything, wake up in the morning and make coffee on your own coffee machine. It's nice.

Q. Off topic, a couple of things. Could you talk about what it meant to get the letter from Arnie after your first victory?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, that was a really special letter, and it was kind of a couple months before he passed, so I framed it. It's in my office. I look at it occasionally just to kind of bring back good memories.

I had some good experiences with Mr. Palmer. I played in the Palmer Cup when I was in college, so got to know him a little bit better there, and then throughout the year spent a little time with him.

He was such a cool guy and he was so open, you had any questions you would ask him and he would go on for hours talking about whatever you wanted to talk about.



Q. You've won three times since then; have you missed those letters?

DANIEL BERGER: I do, yeah. I've missed those letters. It's just so cool from such a legend of the game to get something like that. It's a very special thing to get.

Q. For THE PLAYERS Championship, it's often said that the most terrifying tee shot is 17. I'd like to write a story about what is the second most terrifying tee shot?

DANIEL BERGER: Probably 17 here.

Q. I mean at THE PLAYERS?

DANIEL BERGER: Oh, at THE PLAYERS? That's a good question. Probably the 18th tee because you feel like once you get done with 17 there's a little bit of relief, and then you get to 18 and it's just as hard of a tee shot. For me, I cut the ball and it's a dogleg left. You're re-teeing if you don't hit the cut that you want to hit.

Q. You start it over the water?

DANIEL BERGER: I start it over the water, yeah. I've played it differently in years past. I used to hit 3-wood off the tee, then I went to hitting driver, then I hit 3-wood. It really depends on the wind. I remember one year it was so firm and fast, I hit 3-iron, 9-iron into the green. It really depends on the conditions, but it's usually firm and fast out there.

Q. We all know what water brings, but how difficult is that right side?

DANIEL BERGER: Well, if you miss it to the right it's almost an automatic bogey, as well. You really have to step up there and hit a good tee shot if you're looking to win the golf tournament coming down the 18th hole. It's an amazing finishing hole, it really is. You've got 16, 17, 18, it's one of the best finishes in all of golf.

Q. For this golf course, most people's attention is on the Bear Trap, but on the front side, 5, 6 and 7 are a pretty tough three-hole combination. What makes those three holes so difficult?

DANIEL BERGER: Well, I mean, 5 is a 215-yard par-3, again, with water all down the left. And the greens are firm, so you're hitting a 5-iron into a green -- it's almost impossible to stop it on the green. It's a bit challenging.

Then 6, it's almost -- I mean, it is a par-5. We're playing a

par-5 as a par-4, and if you hit it anywhere in the bunkers, it's a lay-up. You almost have to think of it as a par-5 and you're just trying to make four birdies throughout the round. If you played that hole 1-over for the week you'd be gaining shots on the field.

Then you go to 7 and it's another 230-yard par-3. You've got three really challenging holes. I almost think sometimes those are harder than the Bear Trap because you just have to hit so many quality shots in a row.

Q. If I could ask you about what your reaction was to Phil's statement last night and if you've talked to other players about that statement.

DANIEL BERGER: I honestly don't know what he said. I don't follow really much of what's going on, so I wouldn't be able to comment to really make any sense to be honest.

Q. Since this whole thing out came out, a lot of players getting behind the TOUR now. Can you just give your stance on that?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I've always been behind the TOUR. I think Commissioner Monahan is the right guy for the job. I think he's done an amazing job through COVID, something that people didn't give him enough credit for what he was able to do in such challenging times. There's no one I would trust more to guide the TOUR through all of these difficult times, and I think he's done a great job.

I like where the TOUR is headed. I like the new initiatives that have been brought out, and honestly, I don't know much about the whole Phil/Saudi thing. I try not to pay attention to it. I just think it's kind of like noise. But my experience with Phil in the past has been good experiences, and I think everyone deserves a second chance, so if he sincerely is sorry for what he said, then I think he deserves a second chance.

JACK RYAN: Daniel, we appreciate the time. Best of luck this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports