

American Century Championship

Wednesday, July 10, 2024

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Joe Theismann

Erik Schneberger

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have a few guests to talk about a few things that make this golf tournament different than any other golf tournament in the country, in our opinion.

With us, we have the great Joe Theismann, 12 years at the Washington Redskins. Super Bowl winner in '17. And he's also one of the great announcers, corporate speaker, restaurateur.

We also have Erik Schneberger, Chief Marketing Officer with American Century Investments.

Erik, you have a couple of different things going on out here this week with the fantasy golf contest that's open to anyone free of charge.

We also understand that American Century has a robot out here this week. Why don't you brief everybody on what you guys are doing.

ERIK SCHNEBERGER: We do. This is our 26th year sponsoring this tournament, and there are so many great things about the tournament, starting with the celebrities. Joe, thank you very much for coming. The beautiful environment, the energy from the crowd. But what makes us so proud about this sponsorship is the charitable aspect of it.

40 percent of our profits are directed to the Stowers Institute for Medical Research every year. The way we think about it, when our clients invest with American Century, they're not only investing in their financial future but they're investing in the future of all humankind.

With that, throughout the year, every year, we look for new ideas and ways to engage our crowd and on social media. So the first one we've brought back again, our fourth fantasy golf competition.



You can go to accfantasygolf.com and select your team. What's great is you can change your team every day if you don't like how your team is performing.

JOE THEISMANN: Why did you look at me? I don't know.

ERIK SCHNEBERGER: You're on my team. (Laughter) - I'm hoping.

Through the years, now this is our fourth year, we're seeing a huge pickup. We have thousands and thousands of registrants participating, and there's a prize every day. So the winner of each day gets an expense paid trip to next year's American Century Championship, and the overall winner, the winner with the highest points across all three days, not only gets that expense paid trip, but also gets \$10,000 to direct towards their charity of choice.

Again, it's all about philanthropy. This has become such a great family-friendly environment and golf tournament.

One other thing we brought this year, which is brand new, which is something that we're calling Beat the Bot. So tomorrow morning, on the fifth hole, we'll have a robot created by Golf Laboratories, and this robot is used across the world to test all kinds of different golf clubs by the major manufacturers. It's incredibly precise.

We're excited because we're going to have that robot on the fifth hole. Our celebrities are going to have a chance to compete against the robot, or Beat the Bot. If they beat the bot, then American Century Investments will donate \$500 to the Stowers Institute of Medical Research. If they don't beat the bot, they'll have an opportunity to buy the ball. So they'll be able to contribute a dollar amount of their choice to use the robot's ball and improve their position from a competition perspective.

So the fifth hole, hopefully, will be really fun. And Joe, I'm sure you're going to beat the bot.

JOE THEISMANN: I don't know about that. As a matter of fact, I was wondering, if you really like the bot and the bot beats us, are we allowed, for some fee, to be able to donate to American Century so that they can donate it to



the Stowers Institute -- are we allowed to take the bot with us for the sixth and seventh and eighth and ninth hole going forward? Because probably I'll need it. I'm guessing that.

But it's exciting. What I love about this tournament, first of all, is the participation between NBC and American Century Investments, to have the chance to be able to do the things that we're able to do, to have the resources to be able to do what we're able to do and the creative nature of the things that we continue to come up with.

I know the accfantasygolf.com is where you can go to log on. It's exciting. I'm in group three. I want everybody to know that, I'm in group three, and we're ranked basically by our ability to play the game. So I guess you could say I'm just an average Joe -- I came up with that by myself -- that wasn't written for me.

It's such a wonderful environment. It reminds me an awful lot of when I had a chance to play in the pro bowls, because you had so many people from so many different genres out here, entertainment, music, athletics, everywhere you could possibly imagine, you get a chance to meet people you've watched on TV or listened to. Now you get a chance to see them. That's what the venue provides.

But more importantly, Erik, as you mentioned, I think it's the great work that American Century does in this championship to generate money to give back.

Too often in life you get to a position where things are really going well and you think you need to be served, and that's not the case.

I think what we're here on this earth to do is to serve others, and that's what American Century does. It extends itself to be able to serve others to be able to make the donations they make.

Stop and think of it. 40 percent of the profits are given away to charity. Anybody that's in business out there understands the number and how unbelievable it is to have a company that can do that.

That's why I'm so honored to be part of it. This, I believe, is my 34th out of the 35 years, and I noticed one thing in particular, that the drives are getting shorter and shorter and shorter; and now, thank goodness, they created the hybrids because the hybrids make it longer and longer. It balances out.

There isn't a person that you talk to that participates here or the 150 some that want to play that don't point towards

this particular week to say "I want to be a part of the American Century Championship."

ERIK SCHNEBERGER: We're very proud. So to date, that 40 percent has yielded \$2.1 billion directed towards the Stowers Institute of Medical Research since the year 2000, and this tournament itself has raised over \$8 million to local charities and other charities that are involved in this tournament. So we're very proud. And thank you so much, Joe, for coming.

JOE THEISMANN: I think the other thing, too, is the Lake Tahoe community is so wonderful and embraces us. We're expecting somewhere in the neighborhood of 50,000 people, 50,000 people to come out and watch us try and hit a golf ball.

I use the term "trying" because the guys on TV hit the golf ball. A lot of us are trying. But there are some great golfers out here. Tony Romo, Mardy Fish, John Smoltz, Alex Rodriguez will be out here for the first time. We have a lot of newcomers, as well as people who have competed and had a chance to be able to win this tournament in the past.

Q. Name your top three players that need the bot the most.

JOE THEISMANN: No question, Charles Barkley. Is that a loaded question? I think Charles would be interesting.

We hear this every year, Charles is playing well and getting better. Now he's lighter, which makes him quicker. I don't know what that means. But that's sort of the way he's defined right now.

Larry the Cable Guy -- Dan's been playing really, really well. He's been playing a lot lately.

And, of course, Big Bomb, Baumgartner, those three to me, I think, might benefit from the bot, as well as Joe Theismann, as a fourth on that list.

Q. Erik, explain to us how the categories work as far as the fantasy contest. Like Joe mentioned, he's in the third level. How many levels do we have? How does it work? You pick players out of each flight? Explain that to us.

ERIK SCHNEBERGER: When you sign up for fantasy golf at accfantasygolf.com, the players are broken out in five groups. Go through and select a player in each of the groups. They'll be ranked by golf handicap. Basically average score of your last, I think, what is it, 12 rounds?

JOE THEISMANN: 12 rounds.

ERIK SCHNEBERGER: So based on the average score of the last 12 rounds, they'll be grouped into the five different groups and you'll be able to select your favorite celebrity in each of those groups, athletes, entertainers, comedians. Once you do that, you'll get to see in real time their scores and throughout the tournament you can make those changes.

Now, what's really interesting, too, is that I've noticed a lot of people who have signed up year after year are really getting into it, they're having conversations and they're watching their team and they're speaking about, well, I really loved how Joe played today, I'm going to stick with him.

So it's really been a big addition to our tournament and allows people at home to engage in ways they couldn't engage before.

JOE THEISMANN: I really like the fact that we've added a dimension where you can pick the first day on Friday and if you're not happy with that selection, you now can go pick another one on Saturday and another one on Sunday.

So you have the opportunity to take a look at how people are playing and make adjustments accordingly.

Q. I have a non-golf question for you. It's football-related.

JOE THEISMANN: Oh, no. (Laughter)

Q. Just curious to get your thoughts on the Commanders and Jayden Daniels and what you think of him so far.

JOE THEISMANN: I've had a chance to go to a little bit of the mini camp, some of the training camp -- they haven't started yet, but the mini camps and OTAs, I like what I see a lot in Jayden. I think he has a lot of athletic ability. He gets the ball out of his hands quick.

I tried to compare him, looking at him as an athlete, and you don't know because he hasn't played at this level yet, but CJ Stroud, I think, was somebody that I look at and say he could potentially be that type of a player, and we saw the year that CJ had last year.

There's going to be a lot of new faces. We've had a lot of change occur, obviously, in the organization, but I like what Jayden is doing as far as preparing himself to get ready. In the conversations I've had, although they're brief, I'm very impressed with the young man.

Q. As you look at the Commanders this year, how do you look at them this season and how do you evaluate them as they progress throughout the year?

JOE THEISMANN: I think it's going to be one of those years where we as fans of the Commanders have to sort of, again, have patience. But we've heard that time and time again. But in this case it's a little different because we really don't know all the players, we don't know where everybody is going to fit in.

Dan have added guys, veterans. We're still a very young football team. Probably everybody looks at the football team on the offensive side and saying, well, wide receiver probably the area of strength where we are. Offensive line was an area they wanted to improve and they did.

I would say, on opening day, there could be as many as seven or eight new players that haven't been in this uniform before, which newness means you have to be a little more patient.

But they're going to be ready to play. I've been out to practice, watched them go. They're an enthusiastic group. And sometimes when you're young and enthusiastic and things change a little bit, you get a little more excited and things go your way.

I think this football team's given everybody a chance to get excited again. We had to take Jayden as a quarterback. The expectation was so big in the city and our fans, they said this is the choice we had to make. They did, and I think that wave is going to continue going forward.

Q. In your limited interactions with him, do you think he has the right mental makeup to handle the inherent pressure that comes with this job?

JOE THEISMANN: I think so. You talk about the mental pressures, but it's also the aptitude to be able to handle adjustments. Remember, he started at Arizona State. He was there for a couple of years. Then he went to LSU, different system change.

He handles it so well. Handled it so well, became a Heisman trophy winner. Tells me a lot about his aptitude and his ability to handle the big moment, to be able to adjust if necessary, to be able to comprehend and learn as they continue to put in plays and he grows in this offense. I'm very impressed with that element of him.

Q. Do you like the approach Adam Peters has taken and really starting to remake the franchise on the football side?

JOE THEISMANN: I think what he's done, Adam has identified areas of need. I like what Josh and the ownership did a year ago, okay, let me see what I have; let's see what's there, and we'll modify accordingly going forward.

And the fans were very patient last year. We struggled through four wins last year, but I would have higher expectations, certainly, this year. And now they're starting to put together the team that they believe can compete, and that's the big thing.

In the division, it's not going to be any easier. We know what Dallas has been able to do. You see what Philadelphia did. The Giants again -- all of us seem to have questions one place or another. I think for the Commanders it's a question of how quickly can this group get together and be able to understand what they need to do.

They'll play hard. They'll play enthusiastically, and they'll be ready to play. The question is, will they fit all the pieces of the puzzle together in a way to be able to get the wins they're looking for.

Q. First of all, what do you think it is about fantasy sports, whether it's golf or football, that makes it so attractive to people? Why do people do that?

JOE THEISMANN: I think in some cases it's pressure in the office. You're in an office, well, I'm not really a golf fan, I'm not really a football fan, I'm not really a baseball fan, but, hey, those three people over there are playing, let me try it.

And so it basically is introducing a different extended group of people to the game itself through the world of fantasy, where they don't have to get hit. They don't have to try to hit a golf ball. They don't have to go through the pain, but yet they can participate.

And I think it's a very galvanizing thing for so many people. I think what we've done with the accfantasygolf.com the competition, is given people a chance to look at all these different individuals and be able to rate the team and put their team together. That's the thing that's sort of neat. You become an owner. You don't get a chance to own organizations like football teams or baseball teams or play maybe the game of golf the way it is, but you find the right kind of people, good things happen.

So I think a lot of it is the camaraderie you create in an office and the opportunity to have something in ownership.

Q. Charles Barkley again, the bet this year -- the last few years it was to break the top 70. This year the bet is top 75. So they've given him a little more leeway.

JOE THEISMANN: I think they learned over the last couple of years.

Q. I think so. He's come close a few times.

JOE THEISMANN: I think the modification was made -- no offense, Charles -- the modification has been made, you earned this number, remember, you earned that 75.

Q. So he finished 81st out of 93 last year.

JOE THEISMANN: Tough year. Was bouncing back off injury. That's the way I look at it.

Q. Top 75 in a 91-player field this year, do you think he makes it?

JOE THEISMANN: Oh, gosh. I think he'll be close. I mean, it could go either way. You know he's a friend of mine, that's why I'm saying these things. And I love him to death.

So, it's a struggle out here. I don't care who you are. John Carlson and I, plays for the Caps, I flew out with John -- and we were talking about it. This is his first tournament. He's a solid player. But this is a different environment, with the fans, with the cameras on, with the competition.

And Charles is the kind of guy who is going to grind, going to keep on going. I think that number is probably a pretty fair number. Could be within one or two of the number either way.

Being a Washington guy, I tried to be a politician for a change.

Q. Erik, I understand, talking about fantasy golf, it's free, right?

ERIK SCHNEBERGER: Yeah, absolutely, it's free to join, and easy to play.

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