

U.S. Senior Amateur Championship

Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Marion, Massachusetts, USA

The Kittansett Club

Doug Hanzel

Quick Quotes

Q. Just talk us through that round this afternoon.

DOUG HANZEL: Well, I was focused. I was playing pretty good. Made a lot of pars on the front nine. Only blemish is I three-pointed 9. I drove it on the green and three-pointed and shot 1-under. Made one birdie on 7, knocked it on in two.

But in match play, it's difficult. When you've got an eight or 10-footer and you think your opponent is going to make bogey, sometimes you're not going after those putts, and he made a couple bogeys, and I won a couple holes with pars. I was cruising pretty good.

Then 11, I tapped one in for a 2. He was most likely going to make bogey, so I was probably going to win anyways, with par, but 3-up, I'm doing pretty good. He hits one pretty close on 12, but I've got 30 feet and I know he has a tough putt because the green is tough back there. He misses and I miss, and you give him a hole. Then obviously a fairly short one, and we both parred the par-3, and then right in front of the par-5 on 14 and putted from off the green to about eight feet, misread the break, and I leave it literally a quarter of the ball is hanging over the cup in the middle. You just want to kill yourself, because I was only eight feet. I don't usually leave those putts short.

Made a good par on 15 after a drive down the middle to 85, 75 front, hit it right on the front, suck it back down the hill. We both get up-and-down. So 2-up with two to play, you think no big deal. I have a little problem with 16 off the tee. I carry a 3-wood and a 5-wood. My 3-wood goes pretty far.

Q. 16 or 17?

DOUG HANZEL: 17. I just lost concentration. I flat out skied one. Horrible shot into the monster rough, couldn't get it down the hill. So I make double and lose to a bogey, which that's a tough hole. If you're 2-up, you want to make par, you're going to win the match, and you make bogey and you still may win the match. To make double was



pretty concerning because you don't want to go to 18. You never want to go to 18, 1-up. It's a birdie hole. He had enough length that I knew he could get there in two. I definitely had enough length to get there in two. Tugged a drive in the left rough. Still could have got my 5-wood there, but had a funky lie, funky stance. Had an okay shot. I thought the wind would bring it left to the fairway, stayed up in the rough and luckily I got a decent lie, and I just hit a wonderful pitch shot to about five feet, and he knocked it up there very close, and I'm standing over it, and I said, it's time to turn out the lights, and I just hit it right in just like when I was playing Sean Knapp I had a five-footer to end the match right in the center. So there have been shades of brilliance and other times where it's been a little suspect. The suspect has really been my focus.

I think I've had some good tournaments this year. I've had ones that weren't so good, and the ones that weren't so good, it was all about focus. Having done this for a long time, sometimes you lose focus, and I think I'm going to concentrate on keeping the blinders on tomorrow and focus on what I need to do. I'm pretty much a self-taught golfer. I know my swing. I know what I need to do, and I need to stay focused with it.

Q. You were the champion in 2013; how good does it feel to come back and be in the finals again almost a decade later?

DOUG HANZEL: Well, you know, it's interesting because the 2022 Doug Hanzel would give the 2013 Doug Hanzel a really good match. I think I'm a better player now. I may not hit it quite as far, but I think I can score a little better. I definitely drive the ball better, and driving is everything in this game. I haven't lost a lot of distance, but I'm driving it more consistently.

So I think that would be an interesting match.

Q. What about kind of the wedge game and putting?

DOUG HANZEL: Oh, I'm much better with my wedges now. Every year you kind of analyze, how can I get better, and one thing I know from playing with guys like Paul Simson, I've got to get my wedges better. In senior golf I hit a lot of wedges because I drive it pretty good and I hit it pretty far. So I've worked on hitting my wedges, controlling the distance, so I think I'm a much better wedge player



now.

That's what was disappointing on 16. I have 85 yards hole, 75 front, don't hit the ball hard enough to get on the green. That's disappointing. I hit that wedge 30 feet too short.

Overall I think I'm a better player, overall. It's just nice to be competitive, to stay competitive.

I think I'm pretty -- real competitive on the senior level. I'm a little competitive at the Mid-Am level. I made match play in the USGA Mid-Am last year, lost in the round of 32. So I can compete on certain golf courses with Mid-Ams because they hit it so far.

But I can still compete, especially now I think that my short game is a little better, wedge play and putting.

Q. The Mid-Am at Erin Hills, were you in the field already?

DOUG HANZEL: You know, I didn't enter, but I think I was exempt. I was close to the Top 40 World Amateur Golf Rankings, but I wasn't going for two reasons. Number one, the airline industry just sucks now. I've had three trips this spring that were just disasters. Sitting in airports for 12 hours, flights canceled. I just wasn't going to do it.

I know Erin Hills from seeing it on TV with the majors that have been there, whatever. It's a big golf course. Nothing against the USGA, but they've made the Mid-Ams a lot of mini amateurs, making 7,200 golf courses, making par-5s par-4s. They've made it a big boys' golf course, and I'm not sure I want to do that.

Last year in Nantucket, the golf course wasn't that long, it was fast and firm, windy, you had to flight your ball. A mid-am like me, senior am, could score. I'm not sure I could score at Erin Hills hitting hybrids into holes. These guys are hitting 6-, 7-, 8-irons.

At the Mid-Am last year I played with four mid-ams, two in medal play and two in match play. I hit it pretty good. I hit it 260 to 280. They're hitting it 40 by me every time. Sometimes into the wind I could get up because I can flight it a little better. But it's hard to compete against people like that.

But this is exciting because I get into the U.S. Amateur and I get into the --

Q. Senior Open.

DOUG HANZEL: Yeah, and the Mid-Amateur next year. So that's interesting because July 1st I retired. I was a

physician for 33 years, and I retired.

Q. It's a nice little present, retirement present.

DOUG HANZEL: Yeah, so that's nice.

With that said, after I announced my retirement, at the end of the year the group called me and said, hey, can you retire in July; we've got someone to replace you. I've only been doing sleep medicine for the last three years. My training is pulmonary critical care and sleep, but I've only been doing sleep medicine, office-based practice, very nice, no big deal, no emergencies, and they said, well, she wants to start July 1. Would you retire early. I said, twist my arm.

About a month after they had that conversation with me, they called me and said, you know, can you fill in some in the fall? Dr. Bishnoi is pregnant. Can you fill in while she's on maternity leave? I said, yeah, I can do that.

Q. So you're going back?

DOUG HANZEL: So I'm going to go back for probably six to eight weeks. But again, it's on my schedule because we've got a lot of events going on, and I don't mind helping out.

I never mind working, and I worked a lot doing critical care and whatnot. Between residency, medical school, fellowship, I probably took 15 years off consistently.

I might play some events here and there and I might have played some USGA events, attempt to qualify, or if I made it, then I would play possibly one event a year, but I couldn't do two or three because of work schedule.

So it's nice to have now the ability to know that I'm in, schedule it, and I always bring my wife. These are like vacations. She likes to watch. She likes to go to different places. There is nothing better for a senior than the USGA Senior Open. There is nothing better. I played five straight. There is nothing better. Being low am twice was pretty neat.

I think actually at this point in my career, I'll be a little more comfortable there, because amateurs are never comfortable there. You're playing with pros. They're really good. I'm not going to compete for the title, but I can compete to make the cut, no question there. And it's neat to see the guys you watch on TV up close, and they've all been so nice. I've played with some really neat guys. Had a round with Tom Watson, Peter Jacobsen. Guys are just phenomenal.

Q. Rusty, you've got him tomorrow, two Georgia guys. Have you played against him a fair amount?

DOUG HANZEL: Last time I played with -- well, played Rusty was in the Georgia Senior Amateur Match Play. We played together in the last round. We tied and went to extra holes, and I nipped him. That's the last time.

Rusty is just an incredible competitor. You don't get impressed watching him, but he just works around the golf course, a really good short game. He's going to make some putts. When you add it up, it's usually a pretty low number. So he is a very good competitor.

I think he's taken his game to a different level in the last two, three years, so I'm expecting a very good match. Well, I'm expecting to have to play a very good match to be in the game.

Rusty is such a nice guy. All the Georgia guys get along great. The guy from Amateur.com called us and exed us and said, what about it. We have a lot of camaraderie. It's golf. It's not the end of life if you win or lose. It's golf. So we all root for each other. We enjoy playing in the state events, going out to dinner and having a beer with each other and commiserate.

I want to beat his brains in. He'll want to kill me. But at the end of the day I'm going to congratulate him if he wins. He'll congratulate me if I win. We're happy for each other. It's a game. Again, there's a lot more to life. When you find out your wife has got cancer, it'll give you a reality check. Golf is not that important. In '18 my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. I took about six months off. It's not a problem. It's one of the most important things to life.

So we'll have a good time. It'll be intense, but it'll be cordial. We've got a lot of good players in Georgia. You've got to stay on your toes or you get walked over.

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