

Senior PGA Championship

The Concession Golf Club

Bradenton, Florida, USA

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Henrik Stenson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Henrik Stenson is with us now, the 2026 Senior PGA Championship. Henrik, your thoughts on your game and the golf course as you head into your first Senior PGA?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I even took a picture yesterday. I signed the pin flag in the locker room. It's like there's a first for everything, right, so it's the first pin flag we sign as a senior.

So new chapter in life and in career, but excited for the week. Seeing a lot of familiar and friendly faces I haven't seen for quite a while. Some guys that have been out here for five, ten, 15 years now that I haven't seen much of over that time.

Yeah, the first couple of days has been a lot of stopping and chatting and catching up with people that we played a lot of golf with over the years. That's been neat.

Golf course is in very good condition, but also quite a tricky second-shot golf course. There's quite a lot of runoffs. Greens are all kind of elevated. I think definitely emphasis on fairways and greens this week. That's kind of the main starting point, for sure.

If you start missing a lot of fairways, you're probably going to start missing greens. When you're missing greens, there's going to be bogeys around the corner. Yeah, really try and get that long game solid and going this week. I think it's going to be key. As always, any golf tournament you need to roll a few in at the right times if you want to be there and thereabouts.

Yeah, looking forward to it. I was down here about ten days ago and had a practice round and then drove over from Orlando on Monday, Monday afternoon. Yeah, I've been around the course a couple of times. Yeah, just light practice of nine holes today, and hopefully we're ready to go tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You mentioned reconnecting with these guys. I mean, you've been playing some Legends Tour events.

HENRIK STENSON: No, not as of yet. This is the first one.

Q. This is your first. How does it feel to be with these guys again, being a senior, and also being part of this family in a way?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I don't know. You never want to turn 50. It beats the alternative, but yeah, time flies, right? I never saw myself playing a whole lot of senior golf, but I'm probably not the first one that says that, and here we are.

So, like I mentioned there, it's been fun to reconnect. Also got a couple of Swedes in the field this week that I haven't seen much of for a long, long time as well. You know, we started out traveling the world and traveling Europe back in the day, and everyone remembers some other stories and so on, people that we commonly know and so on that you start getting into and talking about and reliving some of those times.

I mean, it definitely feels like getting kind of the band back together in a way. Yeah, I've enjoyed these first couple of days, for sure. I'm sure there will be plenty more of them in the years to come.

Q. How far are you hitting your drive now, your average?

HENRIK STENSON: My average? Yeah, I've trimmed it down to about 360 to go easy on the guys. No, I think for distance thankfully I feel like I'm pretty much hitting the ball the same distances as I have done for my career. There might be a yard or two, but I wouldn't say it's a lot more than that, at best.

My carry distance is probably about 290 I'd say with the driver. If I got a picture of you on the golf ball, I might be able to squeeze another ten out of it, but it's around there.

That's pretty much -- I never had more than 300 at any point really in my career. So if I can hit it 290, 295 now, I think that's a pretty good testament to where I am physically. I'd hope that will be a little bit of an advantage over the next couple of years.

Q. When is the last time you took this amount of time off without an injury, and how comfortable are you with your game coming back not having had a lot of reps lately?

HENRIK STENSON: Since I started playing golf in 1989 I believe it was, I've never had this long of a break I guess. Back in the old days growing up in Sweden, it would have been probably five months maybe over the winter months, right, but I've had eight and a half months not completely away from golf, but it's the longest break I've had in my professional career.

I haven't had a score card in my head for eight and a half months. Other than COVID I think it was four and a half months back in 2020 that I didn't compete. Yeah, it's the longest break.

I've enjoyed it. I've been home. I've made some good use in terms of practice, not so much golf. In particular, not the first four or five months, but played some social rounds and some charity events and things like that. So we still kept up, but of course, you always looking forward to a little bit of guessing on how rusty are we.

I don't think you forget how to compete, but there might certainly be a little bit of rust to shake. Given that we're at a senior major, it would have been nice to maybe have a few reps in before, but that's fine. We'll just do the best we can.

I think expectation-wise, I mean, I'll try my hardest, but I don't think it would be fair to expect to be 100% in terms of form and game readiness maybe, but we'll go out there and do the best we can for this week and hopefully we -- we're certainly going to get some answers on where I stand with the game and what to dig into going forward and that whole process.

Yeah, I'm excited to see where we're at and to compete with these guys.

Q. What kind of schedule do you expect to play going forward after this?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, this year it's a bit of a hybrid playing here this week. I got European Legends event next week in Barbados. Then I will most likely play the regular U.S. Open qualifier in May in London, and then July

is two senior majors, the U.S. and The Open, senior ones plus The Open. That will be a pretty busy month.

Then we'll see come end of August. I'm eligible to play Champions Tour. Yeah, so then we'll kind of wrap up the back end of the year for me will be some of those events. We'll see how that goes and make a plan going into '27.

It's still, yeah, some questions I can't really give you answers on how the future going to be and how I decide after having this break and how I want to kind of position my schedule and seasons going forward.

I might choose to have a smaller window again. Say I'm playing golf over these months, and that's kind of my season. Even though it might be a longer season in terms of tournaments, I might still kind of pick a smaller portion of the year that I decide to play golf during, and we'll just kind of make it up as we go along and see what's what.

Q. Can you sort of summarize what went down at the end of your LIV season? I'm guessing it was maybe a little awkward in that you're kind of fighting for a spot with guys that you're friendly with, guys that were on your team. You know, it's been a while now, but I just wonder just what that whole thing was like.

HENRIK STENSON: I've never been friendly with Ian. Yeah, I mean, we were basically three guys really hanging on in the back waters. Yeah, as it turned out, it was one shot on the final round, the final day.

I was disappointed with my performance, at the same time as Ian did a really, really strong finish. I think he birdied four out of the last five or five out of the last five or something like that to beat me by a shot. That was me done for the year and in the individual standings.

That's the way it goes, but I had it all in my own hands, and I didn't finish it the way I wanted and should have. Yeah, I mean, it is what it is. It doesn't really matter who's the one that knocks you out or over-jump you by a shot. That's just the nature of the sport. I got no one else to blame than myself for not playing better in the final round there.

Q. Other than casual rounds, how does a professional golfer fill eight and a half months of no competitive golf?

HENRIK STENSON: Relaxed, refreshed (laughing). I've toured the world for 28 years, and I felt during COVID that it was kind of nice to have -- you feel like you can kind of land a little bit and have that extra bit of time. I've felt the same now.

I probably needed it even more so this time around. I was definitely run down, and I think being in your own house eating well, sleeping well, working out, just like getting back into a good day-to-day rhythm has really helped me, and I'm in a much better place now than I was six months ago.

Yeah, I'm feeling like I really needed the time. In terms of the golf, like I said, I don't think after 30 years you forget how to compete, but you might need a couple of rounds to get back into it. Also, it wasn't like I played my best golf when I went on kind of this longer break either.

I've got some work to do, but that's part of the process. That's part of what we do, and I've got some really fun tournaments coming up this summer and this fall that I look forward to.

Like I said, it's a bit of a new chapter in my life, in my career. As a competitor and as a pro, if you're out there and you're going to compete, you want to do well. That's always in the back of your mind how to get things back to either where they were or to improve. So we've got some work to do, but as of now, I'm up for it and look forward to that journey.

Q. You just kind of touched on it too. A lot of people look at this as a new chapter of their careers, but nobody has perhaps closed the old chapter as definitively as you did eight and a half months ago.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, at the same time I'm qualified for The Open. I've had last year, and I feel like I still got some good golf in me. I've still got some to give. I felt at Portrush I didn't have my best week, but after two and a half rounds I was lingering around top-10 at that point.

I didn't finish as well as I would have hoped, but I still felt like if I could be competitive at one of the majors nearly at 50, that still kind of keeps that spark going. I know if I would have come to an event like that in better form and in better game, I hope to be up there and be in the top part of the result list.

That kind of always in the back of my mind. Of course, if I strive for that, I hope I can put some good scores on the board out here.

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