

# Charles Schwab Challenge

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Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Colonial CC

## Daniel Berger

### Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: Appreciate you joining us. We'd like to welcome the defending champion of the Charles Schwab Challenge Daniel Berger.

Daniel, thanks for joining us. If I can take you back just a little bit over a year after a couple months off, no tournament play, you were looking forward to the challenge. What was your mindset, and what hopes and expectations did you realistically have on yourself coming into the week.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I had played a bunch of golf in that pandemic time because Florida was one of states that had kind of opened up before other states ended up doing that, but I played a ton of golf in that off-time, so I felt good about my golf game. But you know, obviously it was one of the strongest fields of the year last year so you had to play against some of the best in the world.

So I knew my game was sharp. I had played some good tournaments leading up. Obviously I played another good round at THE PLAYERS before that got canceled. So was feeling good. It's just you never know how your golf game is going to be after taking two or three months off competitively. So obviously it was a huge setup for me for my entire year, and then leading into 2021 was a big momentum change for me.

DOUG MILNE: You went on and had three top three finishes in two of your next three starts after this week, so you really obviously came back strong. Jumping ahead to this year, five Top-10 finishes, highlighted by your win at Pebble Beach obviously, and most recent Top-10 just a couple weeks ago down the road at TPC at Craig Ranch.

Are you still able to take a little bit of that Texas magic and turn it around here this week?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I played well in Texas, which is really nice. But I mean, the PGA Championship kind of kicked my butt a little bit there. It was a rough week.

So you know, I'm just looking forward to getting back to a



course that I played well on in the past and a place where you know what to expect. I think it's not going to be 20-, 25-under par that wins this tournament unless we get a ton of rain in the coming days.

But I like the type of course that it is where you have to maneuver your way around the course and hit a bunch of little Chippy shots here and there and it's a real feel player's course in my opinion.

I'm looking forward to the challenge. It's great to be back in a place you've had success.

DOUG MILNE: And you have had a chance to see the course, and you touched on it, is it in as golf shape as you had hoped, minus the wet conditions.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, it was tough. I know the area has had a ton of rain the last couple weeks. Yesterday we weren't able to get on the course until about four o'clock because of the weather but the grounds crew has done an amazing job to get it to where it is right now and I just expect it to get better as the sun comes out and dries out some of these water spots but overall it's just as I remembered it.

#### **Q. What are you most confident and comfortable with in your game do you feel like is serving you best?**

DANIEL BERGER: I think this is a course where you have to really drive the ball well out here. There's a lot of doglegs and you have to place the ball on the right spot of the fairway and that's a big key from last year. I just need to continue to drive the ball well and make a few putts here and there and take advantage of the holes that are birdieable and it will be a good week.

#### **Q. Your schedule coming up, what are you hooking forward to coming up after this week?**

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, you know, I'm definitely playing in the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines which is in a couple weeks and potentially Memorial. See how I feel. I don't like to take a ton of time off before these majors. It's kind of touch and go at the moment, but maybe next week and then week off and then Torrey Pines.

#### **Q. Interesting pairing this week for the first couple**



**rounds. How excited are you to be playing with Jordan and Phil?**

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, listen I love playing with Phil, I love playing with Jordan. Obviously Phil is going to be riding a huge wave of confidence after playing well and winning a major championship last week.

I expect the crowds to be huge and obviously with Jordan being a Texas boy and being a local favorite here, it's just going to be a great experience. I love those pairings. I love to have the crowds out there. It's going to be a completely contrasting environment than to last year when we didn't have the fans. I look forward to it. I think it's going to be a great week.

**Q. You mentioned the pairing. Talk about how impressive is it what Phil just pulled off? Obviously I think some people were surprised he still came this week but talk about the impressiveness of what he did at age 50?**

DANIEL BERGER: I mean, listen, regardless of the age, just to win a major championship is so incredibly challenging. I think he's won six now, and you just had to be so on your game last week. It was such a challenging course. Especially with a guy like Brooks kind of breathing down his neck who has proven that he can close out those big events.

It must have been very unnerving even for a guy like Phil who has won however many times he's won, and you could see the emotion on his face as he was coming down the 8th hole with all the fans around him, taking a deep breath trying to calm himself down. I can only imagine the range of emotions he was feeling.

I think it's great for the game of golf to see Phil do that, and he's going to -- like I said, he's going to be riding a big wave of confidence coming into this week. I know he'll be exhausted after everything that happened last week, but I expect him to come out here and play well again.

**Q. We talked about coming here, winning after the long break for the TOUR and here we are back to where it all returned and everything had started again. Did things go back to normal a bit, and how has this last the year -- how do you put into words what it's been like? It has been a crazy full year.**

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, it has been a crazy year. I think the PGA TOUR has done a fantastic job kind of navigating us through such a difficult time in the world, and really allowing us to do what we want to do and that's go out there and play against the best golfers in the world and

they set us up for that, and you know, Jay has done an amazing job, Jay Monahan.

It does feel a little bit more like we are back to normal. Obviously everyone is starting to get the vaccines, the testing procedures are working, so it's nice to feel a bit of normalcy in a year and a half stretch that has been anything but normal.

**Q. This is the 75th anniversary of the tournament. Just wondering, 25 years from now when it's the 100th, what will be the one moment you'll probably tell your kids about and say, "This is how I won the Charles Schwab Challenge"?**

DANIEL BERGER: For me it would probably be the shot that I hit into the 18th hole to set up the birdie putt that I ended up making to force that playoff.

But you know, it's pretty surreal walking on property on Tuesday and seeing my name on that champion's wall and looking at the previous winners who have won it: Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan four or five times. To be associated or to be on the same list as a past champion as guys like that, you just -- there's no really way to describe it other than it's just cool. Excited to get back out here this week and try to do it again.

**Q. I was looking at your stats a little bit. You were so good with your short game last year, but you seemed to have been slumping a little bit with that. What do you attribute that to and how are you working on that?**

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I think when I look at -- because I do look at the stats quite often, I think the strokes gained around the greens can be slightly misleading because I'm still getting up-and-down, you know, 60-something percent of the time, which I think last year I led the TOUR in scrambling and I think I was at maybe 65 percent.

So it is a little bit down from where I was last year, but I think, you know, that's one or two weeks of good chipping and putting that will change that. I've had good weeks and I've had bad weeks and it's about being more consistent and doing it day-in and day-out, which has been the difference.

**Q. What's the one thing you feel you need to do in your game to get to the next level of major championships and the like?**

DANIEL BERGER: I think honestly it comes probably more down to experience. I played in a decent amount of majors, but the guys that I feel like show up every single week, they have got a game plan that allows them to play

well on all these different courses that may not suit their game, and for a guy like me, you know, last week wasn't ideal. There's a lot of draw-shape holes and I'm a cutter of the golf ball.

So you have to find ways to navigate that, and I think that I'm just continuing to get better at that and figuring out what I need to do in preparation to play my best golf. When you look at guys like Brooks, he's clearly got that dialed in because every time he shows up, it seems like he has a chance to win.

I feel like it's more about the preparation that be it is anything else.

**Q. Do you have a favorite Phil story you like to tell?**

DANIEL BERGER: There's a lot of good Phil stories. I think that the stuff that comes to mind the most for me is probably the Presidents Cup, just being around him, because it's such an intimate environment where there's 12 guys and a couple captains, and you really -- they are like your brothers for a whole week, which you really don't get to experience.

So you kind of learn about guys more so than you would in a regular golf tournament or just playing with them in general. I would say he's one of the most competitive human beings I've been around, whether it's ping-pong, doesn't matter. Whatever it is, he just wants to win. It's fun to be around people like that. I like to be around people that like to bring you up.

DOUG MILNE: Daniel, short and sweet, we appreciate your time, best of luck this week.

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