

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA

SentryWorld

Brad Lanning

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are with Brad Lanning. You were just talking about your qualifying experience. Give us a short recap of that day.

BRAD LANNING: Yeah, so we live close by. We're about 40 minutes away here from the golf course, and I had had my eye on this championship for a while. Spent my life trying to qualify for a U.S. Open, and turned 50 a few years ago and knew this tournament was going to be right here.

Had my eye on this tournament, and then wanted to qualify as close as I could and in this state. Stevens Point Country Club, never played it, got there, and it's just an amazing golf course. Really fit my eye. Felt really comfortable right away.

Just went out and did my best. Hit the ball really well, but I did make a few mistakes, especially coming in. I knew I had to probably make a couple birdies, and lipped out on 17, my 17th hole, and then flew the green right over the pin, probably the best swing of the day on 18 and made a bogey.

I just felt like, well, probably miss by one or two, and that's okay. I did my best.

Gary was right there, and he said, oh, you'd better stick around. The scores are really high today. I was the first group and I'll be darned, did it hold up.

It was pretty emotional, I'll be honest. I was pretty emotional. I've been trying -- my father passed when I was 15 and had a lifelong dream of playing golf in an Open on Father's Day and was always short, always came up short.

Did my best and got to the sectional three times, and was the first alternate another time. I've been at four sectionals and been close and never made it.

This is pretty special, especially being in my backyard. I hope I play well.



I'm not delusional to think that I'm just going to show up here after not playing professionally for most of my life and think that it's just going to happen. Anyway, long answer, but gave you some more probably that you're going to ask right here in a few minutes.

Q. What is your familiarity with the golf course here at SentryWorld?

BRAD LANNING: Yeah, so been coming over here ever since we've lived here. We've lived here in two stints. It's always been a special place because it's right in the middle of the state, and every time I've been here it's just absolutely immaculate.

When we can play matches here -- I'm a PGA member, Wisconsin PGA -- and whenever we can get a match here it's a place to go because it's perfect and the greens are always just lightning and perfect.

Had some fun matches here over the years. My son actually caddied in some of those matches, so he's caddying for me this week.

I do have a familiarity with the course. It is comfortable for me.

However, you add the Senior Open on top of all this, but if I were anywhere else, I would be grossly uncomfortable for sure. I'm pretty comfortable here, to be honest.

When I get out on the golf course, I'm very comfortable with the golf course.

Q. How did you celebrate qualifying? Was there a couple Spotted Cows, nice dinner?

BRAD LANNING: Of course, yeah, we're in Wisconsin. A few beers and some cheese. I've got to keep the weight up. Just went back to work.

That's honestly what I said after I holed out because I thought I missed. I told the guys in my group, because the other two guys in the group, they weren't playing very well and they were kind of rooting for me because we knew I was pretty close.



I bogeyed that last hole, and I'm like, well, you know, back to work tomorrow. It's okay.

Q. Given your connection with Wyndham, what was it like on Father's Day sitting on your couch watching this kid that you knew as a teenager? Probably knew he was going to be pretty good, but I don't know if you'd imagine him winning the U.S. Open. What was that like personally to see somebody that you know so well win our national Open?

BRAD LANNING: I mean, just so happy for him. I just feel lucky that our lives kind of connected there for a while when he was in high school. Just lucky to be a little piece of his life for a little bit, and I have kept in touch with him casually.

I'm so happy for him. He is such a good kid. He's had some struggles and he's just worked -- he works his tail off, and he did it.

It's kind of like all the kids I've coached over my lifetime that have had success. I've never hit a shot for them, but we all have those people in our lives that have been there along the journey that do their little part.

That's just kind of -- I got to sit there for a while and have my little part with him. I'm just so happy for him. He's a super kid, and I know he's going to continue to keep going.

Q. Was there anything that flashed back? Any little things you worked with him at or any advice that you gave him as he's going through winning this thing?

BRAD LANNING: Well, I have said that I tried to get him to calm down. I told Gary this. But in hindsight, I think about it, he just won a U.S. Open, so maybe there's something I can take from him. You know what I mean?

I'm a pretty high-stung person underneath it all, and I think the takeaway, the learn for me is you've got to be yourself on the golf course. I think your strengths can also be inherent weaknesses, and I think I've seen that in my lifetime for myself personally and for a lot of kids that I've coached.

Then obviously when we're young, we all sort of make our mistakes, right? I was a very -- had a very bad temper when I was young, would throw clubs, and honestly not really be much of a gentleman. But as I've gotten older, I've learned how to use that and become a better player.

I think what's happened is when I've coached kids like that, it's allowed me to kind of see that in them and help them sort of grow themselves, and at the same time, I'm

growing, as well.

It's been great to see him mature. Every day, watched the coverage, and he was just a rock. Greatest short game I've ever seen and the most competitive kid I've ever coached. He was just a rock mentally.

There's a lot I can learn from that for this week, so I'm going to try. I'm going to do my best.

Q. You said you're comfortable here, but I'm wondering what parts of your game really fit this course. Why do you feel like you play this course well?

BRAD LANNING: So I played a practice round with Mike Weir today, which was awesome. I mean, he might win. He's hitting it great, and he hits it like nine miles in the air and he's got this 7-wood that is just -- just hits it to the moon, and he's hitting it really well.

I feel like I got to see somebody that can really compete and do well. For me, I'm long enough. I was right there with those guys. So I hit it long enough.

I think the key is you're going to have to hit drivers on a lot of these holes. There's some long holes out here. You've got to get it in the fairway.

I've always been a pretty good putter. I'm a good lag putter. I'm going to try to get it in the middle of these greens, and like they say in a lot of U.S. Opens, you've got to be a good lag putter. Tiger always talked about that. Hit it to the middle of greens and lag for it and get lucky here and there with some makes.

Q. Obviously you're pretty humble and a modest guy, and you're having sort of a 15 minutes of fame here with TV interviews and coming in here. What was it like for you to be in the spotlight at this event?

BRAD LANNING: Well, we haven't teed it up yet. (Laughter.)

I'm a substance guy. I want to play well. To me, I mean, this is great. I'm not going to not show up or say no. I think it's great. I'm going to enjoy the week.

But I want to play well. I want to be talking to you guys because I'm playing well. That's what the week -- how the week is going to go.

But I understand. It's a great championship. It's just a dream come true for me. I've literally dreamt of this with my son caddying for me in a big tournament, and it is a

dream come true. It's awesome.

Q. We talked about Wyndham Clark, but there's a lot of layers to your story, and one of the layers is your time at Stanford. I think you're going to play tomorrow with some of the guys you played with when you won the '94 national championship. Can you talk about that a little bit.

BRAD LANNING: Yeah, so it's been great. Today got to see Will Yanagisawa, and then Notah is not here yet. He's showing up late, so he'll probably win because he's just coming in this afternoon.

It'll be great to see those guys. I was roommates with Notah, and obviously we won the championship in '94. We haven't had a chance to play too much golf over, whatever, the last 25 plus years, but we've all kept in touch and we're very close friends.

Notah was in my wedding. He's just one of my closest friends in my life.

It's just fun to be able to have the three of us. We're going to tee it up in the morning and then go about our way for this tournament, see where we end up.

Q. We say everything comes full circle, but also Casey Martin was on that team, and then you worked with him, and then Wyndham Clark is involved in that, too, so can you explain that to everyone.

BRAD LANNING: Yeah, so I coached Wyndham for two years at Valor. Casey called me and was like, hey, tell me about Wyndham, and then he was recruiting Wyndham. We went on the recruiting visit together, and Casey at the end of the call was like, hey, have you ever thought about coaching?

At that time I was getting my Masters in counseling at Denver Seminary, and my intention was to hopefully be a guidance counselor at Valor Christian High School. That would have been my highest goal there.

We went on the visit. I ended up -- Casey ends up hiring me. I worked there for two years. Wyndham ends up going to Oklahoma State. I get the head job at Loyola Marymount University and I obviously leave Oregon, and then we end up here.

So I was three years at LMU and then I resigned on great terms with the school, but for other reasons.

So then Wyndham transfers to Oregon. They have a great final year. He has his best year there at Oregon,

graduates, and then Casey hires me back the year -- that following year.

The cool thing was Wyndham would come back to Eugene multiple times and we'd tee it up every time he came back, and we just had a great time just kind of talking about how our lives had crisscrossed and how I was there just rooting him on at that point.

He had turned professional and just was there to kind of root him on and see how far he could go.

Q. What do you currently do now? I know there's been a lot of transition in your life.

BRAD LANNING: Yeah, so I started recruiting, this recruiting business to help lead kids, shepherd kids through the recruiting process that want to play college golf. It's cool that I'm getting to use my degree finally in counseling, and my original intent was to be a guidance counselor.

So I'm doing a lot of that stuff and I'm starting to build sort of a stable of families, which the kids will then graduate high school, go to college, and then I intend on, you know, keeping those kids along and really sort of helping with some of the mental coaches and some of the things.

I've got a really good player right now named Aiden Cudney who's a good player in the state, and almost probably eight or nine families and kids that I'm working with on different levels. It might get a little more after this. There's only one of me, so I will see how that goes.

I'm excited for the future. It's fun to work with kids. It seems like I'm going back to that high school age, which to me is -- naïve is maybe not the right word, but just innocent, that innocence of they really approach the game still with that innocence and just joy, and I'm helping them kind of put the pieces together and what it takes to be an elite, high-level tournament player.

It's a lot. So I'm not doing a whole lot of swing coaching, but I'm kind of doing all the other stuff.

Q. You've coached, you've counseled people, you've given advice to other people. How are you going to do that to yourself this week?

BRAD LANNING: That's a great question. I mean, I talk to myself a lot. I've heard that's okay. Like we had this guy, Ryan -- I forget his last name -- but they did a study on the top most successful 100 athletes, and one of the highest things, the criteria, the correlations that they came up with, was that great athletes talk to themselves.

They say, I said to myself -- so I feel like I'm trying to be my best coach this week. My son is there, so I told my son, okay, I'm not going to be crazy this week. I'm going to be talking to him. Talking through shots, staying in the present tense, breathing well.

Those are all competition day-of things that I've majored in for the past 20 plus years, little tournaments to pretty big tournaments for kids, and just getting them to slow down, breathe, stay in the present tense. Just hit this shot. Just answer all the questions for this shot and have a target and commit to it, and that's all you can do. Then just go do that again on the next one.

That's what I'm going to try to do. Just stay calm, breathe and execute.

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