

U.S. Adaptive Open

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 6)

Dennis Walters

Quick Quotes

Q. We're here with Dennis Walters and his trusty pal Gus. What are your takeaways from this historic week in golf?

DENNIS WALTERS: So many positives. I said this before, I think this tournament has the power to create a real movement for people with disabilities in the direction of playing golf, because a lot of people with a disability I'm guessing would say, I don't think I could do that.

But I think if enough people see this, then it can. I think it can change lives.

For me personally, I'm exhausted. I've only played three rounds in a row one time in the last -- since I started on this journey. Not six and a half hour rounds and not in 100-degree weather. This ol' boy is tired.

Q. You certainly battled out there. How rewarding is it to share the course with so many other inspiring athletes with stories similar to yours?

DENNIS WALTERS: I met so many wonderful people who -- all these years, everyone says I'm inspiring them. But I couldn't help but be totally amazed and inspired by the sights I've seen here. If you were here, I don't think you would ever forget this. If you haven't come out this week and you're in the golf business, you'd better come and watch this. I'm saying every single aspect of golf, from -- I wish some PGA TOUR players came out here. I wish LPGA Tour players came out here, manufacturers. Every part of the golf industry should come to this. This is so enlightening, and it is so revealing of the character that the people who played in this tournament. It's amazing.

Q. You touched on this briefly, but how do you think this championship has and will amplify the adaptive community and stories like your own?

DENNIS WALTERS: Well, for me personally, one thing that bothers me a lot is that the word "diversity" is used when in almost every case that's not what they're talking about. Most things that are called "diversity" or "diverse,"



it's usually based on the color of one's skin or their sex. I think it's terrific. It's awesome.

But if you look up the word "diversity" in Webster's dictionary, it includes all people. Many times my community gets left out.

I think that as long as it's called "diversity," let's include everybody and live up to the dictionary, the definition in the dictionary, because I'm sure they have it right.

I don't mean to make a political statement, and I hesitate to share my opinion because in today's world, it's very hard to have an opinion because half the people will love you and half the people will hate you. But I feel so strongly about -- and I am not a political person. I don't make statements on Twitter or Facebook or any of this other stuff. But to me this is so important.

I'm willing to go out on a limb and take a chance and make a stand that I'm urging the people who are calling the word "diversity" to include everyone, and that's businesses, it's schools, it's the golf community. If you were here and saw what went on and you didn't want to include us, come on. That's not right. It's not good business, and it's not good human behavior.

I'll get off my soapbox now.

Q. How has playing competitive golf again changed you?

DENNIS WALTERS: This is very difficult. It's extremely difficult. I was saying to myself the other day, I watched the PGA TOUR events, and I see these guys walking around, some of them, and they're very stoic and they look like they're not having a good time. I say to myself, wow, these guys are playing in a \$10 million GT, PGA TOUR; you should be out here smiling and -- not yukking it up, but I can tell you, I can relate to them. Man, I was as stoic as I could be. I don't think I had a smile on my face the whole three days except when I made a couple putts.

But I'm telling you, this was a grind. It was a grind. I didn't have a level lie all week except on a tee box. I'm telling you, if you're tied to a golf cart and you're trying to hit a shot off a hanging lie, I'm telling you, it's murder.



I don't think I have the skills to do that. Everybody told me to go out there and have fun. I didn't have any fun. I had fun when I got done, and I tried to look back and see the challenge that I faced, and I said, well, it wasn't really fun, but now that I'm finished, I think it had an element of that, just based on the immense challenge that all of us were given.

I don't know, it's -- I don't think I've ever tried harder at anything, and I don't think I've ever had anything that was more difficult. I proved it today by the way I played.

Q. Do you think this should be held on a flatter course, and will you play again?

DENNIS WALTERS: Without question, for the seated golfers, and I would say probably for the blind golfers, yeah, 100 percent. It should be played on a course that's a little more friendly. My own -- I'm going to give another opinion.

My opinion is the seated golfers and the blind golfers need to be on their own course. I think that we have to have a little bit more help.

I also think there's at least one rule that I'm going to fight for to be changed because I think it's extremely unfair. Will I play again? Probably. (Laughing).

Probably depends on how much golf I play between now and then. I don't play golf, but I've worked so hard at trying to get decent at this, that why let all that work go to waste, and I'll probably be playing a lot of golf with my friends, playing some of the courses that I've never played but I've performed at.

Q. So what's the rule that you want to see changed?

DENNIS WALTERS: The rule is -- this happened to me two or three times. Actually four times. Twice I was next to a bunker and I couldn't play my shot because there wasn't enough room for the cart to get there. I'm right by the green. So I don't think that's fair. A person standing could have played it, so that's one part of that rule.

Q. So what did you have to do?

DENNIS WALTERS: I had to take a one-shot penalty. Not good.

Next, when you're in the bunker -- now, if you don't want to do that part of it, okay. But -- because one time I was up against a bunker and I couldn't play a shot that I wanted to. I putted it because I putt from the side facing forward. So if the cart could get there, I could putt it. So I putted.

Okay, that I kind of understand.

But what I don't like and what I don't understand is if you're in a bunker, a bunker is not completely circular. There's indentations here, there's lips like this. If I am going to lobby the USGA to change that rule, because if you're playing -- only for cart, seated players. If you're in a bunker the only time you can play it is if you're in the middle of the bunker where it's flat. I had three or four times where I could not play it because it was on an up slope or my ball was at the bottom but I couldn't get the cart far enough forward to play the shot. That's unfair. Let me create a lie in a bunker -- I don't want to take it out of the bunker. I want to play it. So let me create a lie, still a challenging shot. I'm going to lobby for that. I think that's right.

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