

U.S. Adaptive Open

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Newton, Kansas, USA

Sand Creek Station

Larry Celano

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're here with Larry Celano. You are one of our bigger personalities each year we love to see here. How does it feel to be back?

LARRY CELANO: I am ecstatic. It is a great honor because not only did I get to come back, I had to earn my way back, and it was the greatest time.

Two weeks before I had this pit in my stomach just waiting and waiting and waiting, and once I got there and I was playing lights out, then I was just perfect. Then the pit went away and then I get to play the rest of the season.

Q. How is this course different than Pinehurst the last couple years?

LARRY CELANO: Like I was telling everybody, this course -- I'm not saying the word easy, but I'm saying it's easier to hit off because the fairways are squishy, that bentgrass, and that ball just comes off so nice. I've got my new Pings here - thank you Ryan - and the ball just goes. I'm ecstatic.

I just played No. 10, The Beast, and I got on in three, so I'm like, oh, my God, what's going to happen this week.

I'm from Arizona, so I know good golf courses because we have some of the best golf courses in the world. This golf course is right there with them. The greens are great. The fairways are great. The staff is great.

I've met the superintendent, talked to him. It was just a great pleasure to talk to him just to see how he's getting ready for us because no matter what anybody says, we appreciate that you guys do this for us, and I know everybody says while you guys are inspirations and all that, but you guys have to do this to get us out here to be inspirational.

Like I was telling Stephanie the other day, I'm amazed I get to come out and do something I love, that I got good at, and people get inspired. That's just amazing. I never in my life -- I got hurt at 20 when I was in the military, in the Army, in Division Panama, and I never looked at myself as a hero or any of that, but since adaptive golf and the



Adaptive Open, it's just exploding, people coming up to me saying, Larry, you're amazing, you're an inspiration. That's not why I've set out to do this. But if I can come out and play good golf and you get inspired, it's a win-win.

Q. You touched on it a little bit there, but what about this week makes it so special? You're around all your friends, others in the adaptive community. You guys are really a tight community.

LARRY CELANO: Yeah, like I said, I get choked up every time I come to these things because everybody is working so hard to get to this point and to get this good, and then once we come here as a family, we all hug each other, we all encourage each other. There's that competitive edge and all that, but it's still a big family, and like I said, I get all teared up because I've met so many different people. Even the volunteers and the staff that I got to know from the USGA, it's just heartwarming. It's just so great that we got our championship and we have to earn it to be here, and I made it.

Q. Last year we saw a celebration from you, a little birdie dance. Do you have any new moves for us this year?

LARRY CELANO: Well, the birdie dance, I was telling people on that one, I saw the camera and I told my caddie, his name is John Cleetwood, the greatest caddie name ever, I told him, we're going to make this putt. We got up there, and five feet out, I saw it, chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp. I will be hollering, yelling, and I tell people the reason I get so emotional and so energetic out there is because I work my butt off to get to this point.

When I hit a good shot, even in practice, I do the same thing. It's just me, who I am, and it's exciting. It's fun to just let people see it. I'm just ecstatic that people even care about watching me play this game that I got good at.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about getting into the field this year via qualifying. It was the first time the USGA held qualifying for this event and you were the medalist in your qualifier. Can you talk about what that added to you, what that meant to you to go through qualifying in terms of the overall championship feel of the Adaptive Open?



LARRY CELANO: With the qualifiers -- I made it the first two years based off the GHIN and the index and all that. I'm not a GHIN person. I don't play for net. I work too hard for that. But when we decided it was going to be qualifiers, that opened up a whole new realm. Just to be able to go and actually work hard, because I had my home course Whirlwind at home that lets me get good, and then to come out and play and earn your spot, it's the most amazing thing.

The one thing that I made sure of that I was at the first one and I was the first seeded player to play because that meant a lot to me because just being a young kid getting hurt in the Army and all that, and just to be the first -- not too many 55-year-old disabled men get to do that, and you guys gave me that opportunity, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will always cherish this one as much as the first one, but this one a little bit more because I had to earn my way into it.

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