

2015 US Open Championship

Monday, June 15
Press Conference

Lee Janzen



An Interview With:
LEE JANZEN

BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon. Welcome from the 2015 U.S. Open Championship at Chambers Bay. We are very pleased to have with us two-time U.S. Open winner Lee Janzen this afternoon. Lee qualified for this year's Championship by capturing medalist honors in Purchase, New York last Monday. This will be Lee's first appearance in the U.S. Open since 2008 and his 20th overall. He has a victory on the Champions Tour earlier this year and last week had a top 10 finish in the Senior PGA Championship. Lee, welcome to Chambers Bay. I know you've just arrived this morning, do you have any initial impressions about Chambers Bay and being in the Pacific Northwest?

LEE JANZEN: Well, I think the golf course isn't really going to portray the Pacific Northwest. It's so unique to itself that I don't know if anybody has played any course like this, from what I've read and what I've seen in print. And I tried watching -- I watched most of the fly over with the drones on fox.com. So everything I've read, I just figured any information I could look at prior to getting here would help. So that's all I know about. Driving in down the hill, I thought it was quite a scene, seeing all the tents and all the people scattered around, quite a backdrop. And then the elevation change, too, immediately. So it looks very interesting. I can't wait to get out there to look at.

BETH MAJOR: You have to be pleased playing very well coming into this week.

LEE JANZEN: Yeah, I'd like to be playing a little bit better, but I managed to get decent scores the last week or so, which is good. My putting has been really good from inside ten feet, which I think is very important, if you're only -- if you can't do everything well, that at least will help you save strokes in a lot of ways. And just try and be a little bit better in other parts of my game. I'm going to be at a disadvantage off the tee as far as distance goes. But having not played the course, I can't say that if the course is playing super fast, that that will be a big problem, because the big hitters may have to not hit driver in order to keep the ball in the fairway. So that will give me a chance to get down the fairway just as far as him.

Q. On courses that you weren't very familiar with or maybe not very comfortable on, how many times over the course of your career would you come in the week before and see it and play it and practice it and particularly on Sunday before the U.S. Open, before you get into practice rounds?

LEE JANZEN: Well, I can only think of twice that I skipped the tournament before the U.S. Open over the years. Once was Olympic Club, that was the first time I ever did it. I just thought it was hard trip to go from Westchester to Olympic, get home late Sunday night or fly in Monday. I think there were weather delays that year, too, so it was a good move. Try to cram everything into three short days is not easy, so I arrived on the Sunday before. I already played Olympic Club prior, but I wanted to make sure that I didn't overdo it in a shorter period of time trying to get prepared for the tournament and time. I did it again for Pebble, because Pebble you have to connect or drive. So it's an all day trip again from wherever you're coming from. That was 2000. I didn't play the last time at Pebble Beach. So generally I like to play myself in ahead of time. And I guess I've gone and played the course early a couple of times. Baltusrol, I never saw the course until that Monday of the tournament. And looking back, I didn't really map the course out or look at it like I would today. So I think that I just happened to be playing the best golf of my life at the time and that probably helped me more than anything. Execution always makes you look smarter, no matter what your game plan is, if you can execute it, you look like you know what you're doing.

Q. First, congratulations on being here. Let me ask you, was there ever any doubt that you were going to try to qualify to play here? Everybody knows how tough it is. I was just wondering if there was any doubt ever in your mind?

LEE JANZEN: Like why would I try and qualify for an 8,000 yard golf course, because I'm playing with old guys now? No, I wanted to qualify all along. I know there will be a day when I'll just say that's it. It's not even -- I'm okay with not playing, I'm okay with not even trying to qualify. So, yeah, I am here on purpose. I actually tried to get here. Most of the guys -- I would say more than half the guys last week, they said, hey, congratulations qualifying, and then added a comment, and it was usually like what were you thinking? Why do you want to go play against all those flat bellies that

hit it 350 yards on a course that you have to hit it 350 yards. But ultimately they all said I wish I was going, too.

BETH MAJOR: Have you paid much attention to the buzz from the Tour players about Chambers Bay and the comments over the last few weeks.

LEE JANZEN: I know I've seen just quick little things on Twitter where players have come early, but I haven't really -- I guess I haven't paid that much attention to it, I've been busy playing. Last week was a very busy week, 36 holes Monday, and then we drove to Boston. I didn't even play Tuesday, just walked the golf course. That was the first time I saw that golf course. I've been on a string of seeing courses for the very first time lately. To me it's at least an extra day of preparation. After you played the Tour a long time, you're going back to places you know a long time, so it's really just one day to kind of get back to where you feel comfortable, familiar with all the things that you're going to face during the week.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your experience playing firm, fast golf courses and both the challenges and the opportunities that those kinds of conditions present and if you can draw on any British Open experience?

LEE JANZEN: Yes, you know, the weather over there, they seem to get a good pattern going and it stays that way over there. So you can get an idea before you ever get to the British Open that it's going to be fast or going to be lush. It always seems to play pretty fast. But just stopping the ball is very difficult and I feel like to be successful on a links course, you have to shape the ball both directions because you have to go around things, instead of over them. So that will be an adjustment for a lot of players. But these guys are the best players in the world, they'll figure it out, especially if they're on their game, so it won't be a big deal.

Q. When Greg Norman was here six weeks ago, he said it was unlike any course he'd seen in the world. And he also said the biggest shock will be elevation change. And I wonder how that's going to impact your game, and how influential you might imagine it will be in your experience compared to other courses?

LEE JANZEN: I know we have played courses with elevation change, maybe not as firm and as fast as this one is going to play. So I know what problems I had with my game, playing an uphill hole in my swing. It's not so much the strategy of the course. For me I'll just have to figure out a game plan and stick to it and be content with that. I think there's going to be a lot of chipping and putting from off the green, from around the green, and maybe even aiming to a spot that you're

not even trying to hit the green because you're going to be content to give yourself a good chance to make par, rather than hit a heroic shot and bring double into play. I guess downhill shots into the wind can sometimes be a challenge. So U.S. Open, middle of the green or -- I watched some of the 2010 U.S. Amateur on -- we have a link that was sent to us for qualifying, so I watched some of that. Middle of the green is not always a good idea, I guess, on this golf course. So you're going to have to aim for the right quadrant, I guess, to give yourself the best chance to get the ball in the hole.

Q. Do you see any irony in the fact that you, the guy who got a great break from the tree to win in '98 on the Olympic, here you are at another Open and there's only one tree and you shouldn't be anywhere near it?

LEE JANZEN: Where is it (laughter)? Actually, I sent some guys out here a few months ago to try to chop it down, but they didn't get it done. No, I heard that somebody tried to chop it down.

BETH MAJOR: That's right.

LEE JANZEN: I usually play courses with trees because they frame the hole. But on links courses, with the dunes and the hillsides and the background can also shape the hole really well, too. So the tree, yeah, it would definitely be unique that there's only one tree on the course that's really not in play, at all. Just something to look at.

Q. Now that you're on the Champions Tour, do you intend to play the Boeing Classic in August here?

LEE JANZEN: Yes, I do.

Q. What did it mean for your career to win a U.S. Open?

LEE JANZEN: Regardless of how many wins I have, that is always the one that is mentioned first when my career is talked about, if I go somewhere and they want to announce you. Golfers are always working, presently, they're staying in the moment each round and they're always working on their game for the future. So often we don't think about things, the impact that they have until much later. Today's classic players, it's just a different game today than it was 20 years ago. So I feel like I'm fortunate that I played in the era I did then. The equipment also changed quite a bit. The thought of swinging as hard as you can with a driver never came into our minds 20, 25 years ago, because the heads were so small you might miss the ball. But there's no fear of that now.

Q. For a guy that's played his whole career on traditional, tree lined U.S. Open, that's what we envision when we think about a U.S. Open. What is

your thought about the USGA bringing its national championship to something so different?

LEE JANZEN: Well, I guess in one way it's good that they're not just set by this formula, that we're only going to play this type of course, we're only going to go to these courses and have a rotation, when courses are constantly being built that can test the players game. I don't know exactly what the mission statement is to find a U.S. Open course and how to set it up, but I would imagine that it would be to provide a challenging test so that the best players in the world are challenged, and hopefully bring out the best players and the best in the best players for that week.

BETH MAJOR: Thank you so much for joining us. We wish you well this week. We look forward to watching you play the course and hope it's a wonderful experience.

LEE JANZEN: Thank you.