

2015 US Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 24
Press Conference

Lee Janzen



Why does playing in your national championship mean so much to you?

THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. Welcome back to the interview room of the 36th Senior Open. We're here with two-time U.S. Open champion Lee Janzen. Won in 1993 at Baltusrol and 1998 at the Olympic Club, playing in his first Senior Open. Lee just turned 50 last August. How does it feel to be the young guy again?

LEE JANZEN: I got to be the youngest guy in the field on the Champions Tour for one week, and Guy Boros and Skip Kendall started playing a week after that. I scolded them a lot. One week is all I got. But I'm sure there's a few guys that are a little bit younger than me here this week. This Tour, in particular, that age is significant. The younger, the better chance you have.

THE MODERATOR: And you're reunited with some of your old friends you played with on Tour. Who were some of the guys you were looking forward to competing against that you hadn't seen in a few years?

LEE JANZEN: The Champions Tour is a reward for having a long career on the regular Tour so we all know each other for the most part. There's always a couple guys that didn't play golf professionally starting out and then near 50 they decided they wanted to play the Champions Tour, and they get out there and do well. Mike Goodes is one. Roger Chapman, coming over from Europe. So there's two or three guys usually every year that didn't play the regular Tour with the rest of us. But it's very hard to get on the Champions Tour and stay. It's a challenge. And then coming here, there's a lot of guys I don't know. But Rocco Mediate and I were schoolmates. I'm very much looking forward to getting to hang out with him again. Things haven't really changed much from when we hung out 25 years ago, 30 years ago in college. So we're having a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Now you've played in 20 U.S. Opens, and after a six-year hiatus, you played again this year at Chambers Bay. For almost two decades, you were exempt into the championship. After that ran out, you easily could have said forget it, but every year you tried to go back and qualify and played 36 holes.

LEE JANZEN: Well, getting to play in it every year from 1991 to 2008, I was used to having it on the schedule. So when I missed the cut at Torrey Pines, I knew that the next year I'd have to qualify somehow, whether move up the money list, win a tournament, whatever. I just knew. So it started out the immediate next year I wanted to get back in the tournament. I didn't want to miss it. So each year ensuing, I continued to try and make it. There will come the day when I'll say I've had enough. I'm not even going to try anymore, but it won't be next year. I look forward to playing Oakmont.

THE MODERATOR: How was your experience this year at Chambers Bay?

LEE JANZEN: I enjoyed most of it. I had an opportunity to play well and make the cut and be in position to play well on the weekend. The mistakes I made weren't even caused by the golf course. So I was disappointed with that, but I also knew that those things happen, especially in major championships. Slight mistakes get compounded and exaggerated. Once I knew I had no chance of making the cut, my focus was basically to make sure I didn't do any damage to my game heading into here. I'm hitting the ball very well, swinging pretty well, doing everything pretty well. Hopefully, when I wake up tomorrow, everything will still be the same.

THE MODERATOR: Everyone coming in here is talking about the rough being very difficult here at Del Paso. Throughout your career, you've been known as someone who can make a few putts, and it seems like that might be something that can be done out here on the greens that are very pure. What do you think of the course after playing a few practice rounds out here so far?

LEE JANZEN: I like the course a lot. Everybody that I've talked to has said great things about it. The shape of the holes, where the bunkers are off the tee. I think everybody especially likes the fairways are mowed right into the bunkers. It's a great look. The rough is very challenging. I think there might be a few spots out there that, if you hit it in the rough, you'll be fortunate enough to get to the green, but it's doubtful. But the

fairways are big enough that, if you're driving the ball straight, you should not have to worry about any particular hole being in the rough. I mean, they're not super wide open, but they're not so narrow that you can hit a good drive and miss the fairway. Par 3s are pretty stout. The greens are very nice. Quite a few of the greens seem to bank towards the middle of the green. So I think that, if you get used to just getting towards the middle of the green on a lot of the long holes, you shouldn't be too far from the hole. Two-putting shouldn't be too hard. The greens have some slope, some tilt in them, but not like a course that you might see from the early 1900s before green speeds got to be what they are, before technology helped with drainage and the new grasses and everything else, like a Winged Foot or an Oakland Hills or Oakmont.

THE MODERATOR: You've been on the Champions Tour since last August, played a half dozen events last year, and this February got back in the winner's circle. Exciting eight-foot birdie putt on the 54th hole to force a playoff, which you won. How did it feel to get back in the winner's circle again this year?

LEE JANZEN: It was exciting. I can tell you, it never gets any easier, but it's worth it. All the challenges I went through personally, just the low points, where am I ever going to get my game back to where I can even contend? Then you contend and don't do well at the end. So the great thing about it is it was recent enough that, if I get in contention again, I'm not going to worry about whether I can or not. But ultimately, when you have a chance to win the tournament, it's still the same formula, just one shot at a time. Whatever you did to get yourself there, just keep doing that.

Q. This is the third major championship you're playing in the third week, correct?

LEE JANZEN: Yes. And five in a row, actually.

Q. Five tournaments in a row?

LEE JANZEN: Yeah. There was a two-week break for me, but we played at Regions in Birmingham, which is considered a major, and the senior PGA in French Lick. Then the Senior Players in Boston, U.S. Open, U.S. Senior Open, so --

Q. Have you ever done anything like that?

LEE JANZEN: I remember watching on TV where Nicklaus and some of the others who were playing on Tour were playing all these consecutive majors.

Q. Is there a fatigue factor for you at all?

LEE JANZEN: I was quite tired for a few days in Boston after the 36-hole qualifier. And then driving across the country, I seemed to recover fairly well. That wasn't too bad. Yesterday I had an early tee time. So I made sure that, with the benefit of having Wednesday to do

whatever you want, I personally like to sleep in on Wednesday just to make sure I'm rested the day before the tournament, rather than trying to wait until Wednesday night. So I feel like I'll be fine as far as fatigue goes.

Q. Finally, from what you've seen of the course, can you project a winning score?

LEE JANZEN: Good question. I don't have any experience on how the course might be set up. I knew last week at Chambers Bay, I played all my practice rounds from all the way back, but the tees would get moved around. Someone asked me, and I told them 5 under. So I don't know that I could accurately do that this week. How about 9 under, wins by three. Eleven guys under par.

Q. Just kind of following up on that first question, when you're playing so many different tournaments, major tournaments, championships recently, is there a benefit to that for you, or is it tricky going from a place like Chambers Bay to here a week later?

LEE JANZEN: Well, I think if I was in my early 30s, all the preparation leading up to the U.S. Open, that takes a lot to get ready. So usually right after the U.S. Open, there's a little bit of letdown, but I didn't spend a month preparing for the U.S. Open in Tacoma because I hadn't qualified for it yet. I got asked if I went and played the course early, and it was like, well, I think I need to qualify for the tournament first before I go all the way to Tacoma and play in a practice round. The preparation was a lot different. My expectations were a lot different. Although I did leave last week's tournament feeling better about my chances of competing possibly at a future U.S. Open site where you don't have to carry the ball 300 yards over a bunker, where it's more demanding to hit the ball straight and position yourself off the tee. But, yeah, I guess I'm not putting nearly as much into the lead-up time. Therefore, it's not taking nearly as much out of me.

Q. There's some hot days forecast, particularly tomorrow. I'm sure you've played in hot conditions before. What do you do to prep for that?

LEE JANZEN: Yes. Be hydrated ahead of time. I think waiting until the day of to drink water is usually -- if you're already hydrated, great, but I think you have to prepare. Golfers generally do better when they're prepared ahead of time, and that's one of the aspects. It's going to be hot. That will be fine. I don't mind it being hot at all. 100 degrees here is a lot nicer than 100 degrees in Orlando, Florida. And even when we were at Oakmont in '94, that's as close to the hottest I've ever been playing golf. It was 103 or 104 every day and very humid and just incredibly unbearable. I

actually have enjoyed the heat this week. Once you get on the Champions Tour, the heat is your friend because you can move a little bit better.

Q. Last thing I wanted to ask you, two guys at the top, Bernhard and Colin, seem to be racking up major championships here every other time. What are those guys doing so well? What does somebody have to do to kind of knock them off a little bit?

LEE JANZEN: They seem to just continue to play the same all the time. They both are in contention on a weekly basis. Bernhard, you describe his game from 30 years ago, and it's the same today. Very methodical, thinks about everything ahead of time, prepares himself. He just seemingly never gives away shots by missing the ball on the wrong side of the hole or silly mistakes here or there. And Colin drives the ball extremely straight, which always sets yourself up for easier shots into the green. Moving from the regular Tour to the Champions Tour, the same driving now. He's hitting 8, 9 irons and 7 irons instead of 4s, 5s, and 6s, which definitely gives you a chance to go from hitting it 30 feet to inside 15 feet, and you just make more putts from inside 15 feet. So they have very good, solid games.

Q. Lee, just wanted to get a thought from you on the ability to have the chance to play with a guy like Tom Watson and compete against him again or a Hale Irwin, some guys that you probably played against when they were just sort of leaving the PGA Tour, and now you've kind of caught up to them, I guess, as it were. What's that been like? Has it been pretty fun?

LEE JANZEN: They were very nice to me when I first started on Tour. One of the beauties of golf is careers last so long, and you get to spend time with legends of the game for quite a while. Baseball, football, whatever, the careers are so much shorter. A generation goes by, and those guys might be in the front office or coaches or whatever. But for the most part, the players of today don't get to see the players of yesterday very much, where out here and playing golf, we get to see them all the time, which is great. I got to play a number of practice rounds with Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer in the mid-'90s, which was fantastic. Those were great memories for me.

Q. Lee, obviously, you played in 20 U.S. Opens. You know what it takes to win that championship. Now it's a new chapter. You're playing in your first Senior Open. What are your expectations?

LEE JANZEN: I thought you were going to ask me if I knew what it took to win the Senior Open. I was going to say exactly the same thing. Shoot the lowest score. My expectations? Well, I feel like having gotten to play

last week, it was a great preparation. What it demands of you is to focus on every shot. Just to take your attention off one shot, you pay the penalty generally. So it's a good reminder coming into this week. Hopefully, I can remember the things that have been working lately and continue to do those.

Q. And to follow up, contrast the two courses that you're playing, last week and this week, and what a player has to do to make the adjustment of playing what is basically a totally different course than what you played last week.

LEE JANZEN: Last week there were no trees. So the holes were all defined by the shape of the hole and the bunkering and the mounding. But it was very easy to pick out where you were supposed to aim. You play a course without trees sometimes, it's like a links course over in Scotland. St. Georges comes to mind. It's very hard to pick out a spot to aim. Even St. Andrews sometimes. But last week was very easy to figure out where the aim points were. And then this week, the holes are framed very well by the trees and the mowing patterns. Last week I would describe more like X Games. It's just different. It's still very challenging golf, but it's just different, where this week is much more traditional, where you see old, mature trees, high bunker faces, pushed up greens, good putting surfaces.

Q. Lee, lately, within the last five years or so, there's some been more adjustability to course setup for U.S. Opens and U.S. Senior Opens. How does that affect your preparation?

LEE JANZEN: Well, the elevation doesn't change any here so that won't be that much of an adjustment. Basically, the first few days, you figure out how far you're flying the ball with your clubs. And we've played so many golf tournaments over the years, that adjusting generally doesn't take long. If we were playing in some kind of altitude and if we were somewhere where the wind changed throughout the day, maybe started in the south and always moved around to the west, you might want to spend time with multiple tees just to check it out. But for the most part, we have an idea how far we're flying. If we play it from all the way back and the tournament moves up a tee box or whatever, then generally, the adjustment isn't too much. We figure out how far we want to hit it.

THE MODERATOR: Thursday, 7:42 off the 10th tee, Lee Janzen, best of luck this week.