

Charles Schwab Challenge

Sunday, June 14, 2020

Daniel Berger

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome our 2020 Charles Schwab Challenge champion, Daniel Berger, into our first-ever virtual media center. Thank you for joining us. Congratulations on stepping into the PGA TOUR winner's circle again. If we can get your comments on the victory today.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, it was a hard-fought battle today, and I just kept telling myself, why not me today. From the beginning tee shot to the end, and some things went my way, obviously; a couple missed putts here and there for Collin. But in the end, it was a great week, and I've been playing some great golf for the last couple months, so I'm just excited to be back in this position.

Q. Talk a little bit about the emotion of winning again after all you've been through from a health standpoint.

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I think when I won my first couple times, I took it a little bit for granted thinking that every year it was just going to be easy and you'd have that chance to win, but it's tough out here. It's cutthroat, and the best players in the world every week are showing up. I worked my butt off the last year to be in this position, and I'm just glad it all paid off.

Q. I know you're a little bit removed from it, but you talked about some things going your way. With Jordan's chip-in at Travelers, as well as you played there, it didn't go your way. When you look back at that, obviously you handled it very well at that time, and nothing is owed to anybody in golf, but do you feel something special about this?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I've been on the other end of that, have been in playoffs. I was 0 for 2 coming into this one. It was tough; obviously it was a three-footer, but it was a sliding left-to-righter and by no means was it a gimme. If I was at home playing with my buddies for 20 bucks I'd be making them putt it.

You know, it is what it is. You've got to get the ball in the hole, and it's unfortunate that it ended that way, but it's just the way golf goes.

Q. In terms of this week, what were your expectations of it, whether there were some apprehensions or not, and do you think this entire



week, aside from your win, of course, could have gone any better just in terms of the TOUR pulling this thing off, first event in three months, of any mainstream sport?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I think the PGA TOUR did an unbelievable job. The staff at Colonial, the greenskeepers, everyone involved with making this tournament go did an unbelievable job. It was a little different without fans, but it didn't feel like it wasn't a PGA TOUR event. You still felt that pressure. You still felt like there was so much on the line.

Like I said, it was a little different, obviously, being five, six feet apart from everyone and not shaking hands at the end of the round and obviously following social distancing, but I thought they did a fantastic job, and the tournament was a huge success in my opinion.

Q. You just mentioned the fans and it being a little bit different. What do you think was most profound? Was it on the 18th green or when you finished up with the playoff? Was that when you felt it the most?

DANIEL BERGER: You know, you definitely making a putt on the 18th hole to tie the lead and not hearing any roars is a little bit different, but there's some holes where you get the crowd standing on the left to right side of the tee and where you kind of spray one, they're kind of there. It just wasn't like that. Certain areas that are usually matted down from thousands of fans walking through weren't there, and certain holes where the grandstands weren't there, just gave you a little different feel than in years past.

But overall the golf course was fantastic. The atmosphere in my opinion was fantastic, even though there weren't any fans out there. You knew that millions of people were watching at home, and that was just enough for me.

Q. Does this feel historic after everything we've been through with the quarantine coming back?

DANIEL BERGER: It does, especially obviously with the pandemic hitting and taking so much time off in the middle of the season. But I think it went off without a hitch, and everyone did a great job. I'm just very lucky and blessed to be here as the champion.

Q. Just kind of going off the atmosphere, can you

explain what that felt like walking up to 17 for the playoff and kind of -- I guess were you used to it after four days? Was it a weird feeling?

DANIEL BERGER: It was a little bit of a weird feeling. You know, I think it was a little bit of an advantage to go second after Collin hit that tee shot because right was probably the only spot that you couldn't hit it on the green from. I knew there was a little bit of an opening there, and I stepped up there and hit a great shot, and my approach shot I hit a great shot, it just was a little long, but I left myself in a good spot. Collin hit a great chip shot, and like I said, it was unfortunate that it ended that way, but golf is golf.

Q. How nice does it feel to wear the plaid jacket, and I don't know how much of a student of the game you are, but what does it mean to you to be Colonial champion?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I think I took it for granted a little bit in years past when I came here and you stand on the first tee and you see all the names that are on the wall, some of the greatest to play of all time. Now my name is up there, and I feel a real sense of honor having my name up there along with so many other great players.

Q. I wanted to ask you, what were you asking Mark Russell there on the playoff just before you finished up your par putt?

DANIEL BERGER: You know, I hit that chip shot to about two feet, and I was just curious whether could I finish out or did I have to wait for Collin to go ahead because I wanted to knock that one in before Collin had that three-footer coming up. So I just wanted to clarify before I did do that, and Mark said it was okay, so I went ahead and did that.

Q. I did want to ask you about your putt at 18. A lot of guys had putts there to either force a playoff or to even take the lead and they didn't make it. With or without fans, there's obviously still a lot of pressure on you guys and everybody feels that pressure, doesn't matter if there's fans or not, correct?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, you still feel that pressure. You know exactly where you stand. You know, I dreamt of a putt like that to get into a playoff or to win, so it was kind of just like repetition going through my mind. I hit a great putt, and it went in. It was a great way to finish the day.

Q. What were your emotions? What was going through your mind there actually out on the 18th green, you getting the plaid jacket, you get the big Leonard Trophy, obviously holding up the big check. It was a little weird, wasn't it?

DANIEL BERGER: It was a little different for sure, but

in the end I was holding the trophy, and that's all that matters to me. I've got a nice jacket to go with it, as well, so very cool.

Q. I was wondering, were you one of the players that stayed in a hotel this week or did you rent a house? And at any time during the week did you feel safe about what the TOUR was doing, and every time you entered the ground did you feel good about the protocols that were put in place?

DANIEL BERGER: Yeah, I felt a hundred percent safe. I actually rented a house right in the neighborhood. I mean, I almost could have walked to the first tee, and I had my uncle with me here cooking me breakfast, lunch and dinner every day. Other than going to the golf course, that was the only time I really was out in public. I didn't go anywhere, so it was basically golf course, house, golf course, house, so I felt really safe with the protocols they had in place, and I thought they did a great job.

Q. Did you think much about the virus this week, and if you did, what made you think of it?

DANIEL BERGER: I thought about the virus very few times this week. You know, it's been such a big part of our lives for the last two months, and I feel like I just tried to do everything I can to be safe, and that's all you really can do. You wash your hands, you don't touch your face, you wear a mask when you can, you social distance, and obviously we got tested early in the week, so I knew I was healthy before I got here. We had the temperature readings before we got on-site every single day. I knew that all of the employees and staff that were here were doing the same thing. I felt completely safe. I felt very comfortable, and I thought they did a great job in implementing their plan.

Q. What do you look like with a mask on?

DANIEL BERGER: About the same I do now, gorgeous.

Q. You've had a couple of long layoffs in the last couple years, one from the pandemic, the other one from your wrist. Was there a difference in returning? I realize they're different with injury, but in terms of just getting back to things?

DANIEL BERGER: I would say I was nervous on the first tee both times, more nervous with the wrist injury because I hadn't actually played competitive golf in such a long period of time. But you know, any time you step -- I don't care what any golfer says; you step up to the first tee of a competition, whether it's nervous or excitement, you have some butterflies going, and I felt that way from the beginning of the week, and I just tried to really focus on staying calm and sticking to the things that I've done so well in the last couple months.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Daniel Berger,
our 2020 champion.