

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Friday June 30, 2017

Kenny Perry



THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome Kenny Perry into the Media Center. Kenny with rounds of 65 and 64 for a 36-hole total of 129, 11 under par, and that ties the 36-hole record for the U.S. Senior Open. It was set just about four and a half hours ago.

Kenny, great playing today. It didn't start out great with bogeys on 1 and 2, but, boy, you turned it around pretty quickly.

KENNY PERRY: Yeah. I was really looking forward to playing this round today. I really felt good about what was going on. I guess I was too anxious, too amped up, and I hooked it right off the 1st tee. Then I hit a terrible drive right off the 2nd hole. I thought, oh, my goodness, I'm not going to break 80 today.

I just started thinking, I've got to figure out a way to settle myself down. Slow down, slow the swing down. There's plenty of holes. On the 4th hole, I hit a 7 iron to about a foot, and that calmed me down. On the 5th hole, I hit a good 3 wood off the tee and hit a hybrid to the middle of the green and two-putted for a birdie there. So got it back to even after 5, so I felt the game was on.

I was able to make six birdies from then on. So I made eight birdies. Putted beautifully today. I probably made four putts outside of 20 feet, which I haven't been doing all year, which is very nice to finally see. I felt like Bernhard Langer out there for once.

So, yeah, I got it back. After I bogeyed the first two, I went from six behind to, what is it, eight behind. I'm thinking, good grief, I've got to get it to 8 or 9 under, 7 under somewhere get back in the mix here and not fall too far behind Kirk.

Fortunately, made a couple bombs and got right back into it and was able to make some coming in before the storms got here, and I was able to get in at 11 under and tie him.

THE MODERATOR: You birdied three in a row, 5, 6, and 7. But it seemed like one of the big putts you made was on 8 to save par and really kind of keep that round going. Can you talk a little bit about that?

KENNY PERRY: Very much so. You're right, the 8th hole is a tough hole. That green, like I said yesterday,

if you have any vertigo, you'll roll right off that green standing on it.

I hit a pretty good drive down the left side, and it bounced off into the heavy cut, and I had a pretty heavy lie from 107 yards. I tried to muscle a 54 degree, didn't come out, and it just hits on the front and rolls back down.

There is a lot of pitch on the front of that green, and I'm thinking, I could bump it up there and putt it. I knew if I putted it, I was going to putt it by the hole somewhere. I just told Ryan, my caddie, let's just get it six, eight feet past the hole and see if we can make it come back. I ended up hitting it 12 feet past the hole. I killed it going up that hill and made a killer second putt. It probably broke -- I played almost two foot of break, and I probably hit it about a foot. I tried to hit it a foot off my putter that two foot of break.

It's one of those kinds -- you're looking this way, and the hole is over here. You try to hit the straight line. You just kind of ease over and get the straight line, and it ran right in the middle. Like you said, that didn't stop my momentum.

Then I was able to birdie the 9th. Hit a beautiful drive, a 9 iron in there pretty close and made a nice putt. Then the round just kept going.

THE MODERATOR: If we could go through your back nine, just the shots you had in and putts starting on 11.

KENNY PERRY: 11, that was a bomb I made. I hit a 4 iron off the tee. I had 158 to the hole, uphill into the wind, hit a 7 iron in the middle of the green. The pin's far left. Probably had a 35-, 40-footer.

But what was nice about it, Bernhard was on the exact line behind me. So he putted first so I actually saw the line of the putt. But that doesn't mean you're going to make a 40-footer.

Shoot, I just laid it out there, and, shoot, it just snapped right in the middle of the hole. Thank goodness it hit the hole. I think it was running pretty fast when it went in that hole. Good catch. So that just kept me going.

THE MODERATOR: And then birdied 13 as well, the

par 4.

KENNY PERRY: What is 13? What hole is that?

THE MODERATOR: A little dogleg right.

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, hit a good drive. I only had 81 yards to the hole. Hit my 64 degree sand wedge. It spun back to about 10 feet, 8 feet, and I was able to pour it in from under the hole.

It didn't have much speed so that was -- we all birdied the hole in the group. So everybody birdied that hole. So I was still hitting last off the tee box.

THE MODERATOR: And then closed with birdies on 16 and then the very difficult 17.

KENNY PERRY: The finish here is unreal. 17 and 18 are tough holes. 16, I hit a good drive. I only had 90 yards to the hole. I hit my 60 degree. I wanted to hit it past the hole and spin it back, and I kind of hit it a little heavy. It didn't have much spin on it. So it stayed right in the middle of the green.

Probably made a 20-footer there coming back with about three foot of break in it. It was hooking hard, and it hooked right in the hole, kind of similar to the way I made on 11.

17, I hit a beautiful drive with a 7 iron, middle of the green, and it was probably 15, 18 feet. It was only breaking six inches left or right, and it was up the hill. So I was able to give it a good, aggressive roll, and it went right in the middle too.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned you're playing with Bernhard and Jeff Maggert as well. All played pretty well. Bernhard is up there at 8 under. Jeff Maggert finished, I think, at 4 under. Does it help you if the other guys in the group are playing really well?

KENNY PERRY: Oh, yeah. They always pull you along if everybody's playing well in the group. If you can beat Bernhard, you have a chance to win the tournament. That guy's in there every week. If you can hang close to him, you're going to be the leader. He's a tough guy to beat. That's the guy you're after.

Q. Fair to say that throughout your career, marked by streaky putting, and most of your wins have come when you got hot with the putter?

KENNY PERRY: That's my career. I've always been fairly decent tee to green, which shocked me at how I got going today. I was wondering if I was going to find anything. And I just told -- I told Ryan at the beginning of the week, I played pretty good in Wisconsin, and we didn't make nothing. I just said, if we can ever figure

out a way to get a little rally going with the putter and get a little momentum on our side, it may change and may start going in.

That's been the story of my career. When I get hot, I'll win two or three tournaments in a row. I did that on the regular Tour twice. I won three times in a row, or a couple at least. That's happened out here. When I got hot, when I won here in '13 in Omaha, I did the same kind of thing. I was rolling them in from everywhere.

Q. Obviously, the rain's going to soften up the golf course. Advantage for you perhaps with your length, or is this course not long enough to really matter?

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, I don't think it's really going to hurt anybody. I really don't. The rough's tough. If you hit it in the rough, you still got it -- if you can get it in the fairway to where you can get ball control with your irons and kind of control it on these greens and be very patient out there and try to keep it to where you're under the hole, you can attack this golf course a little bit.

But it is a tough golf course. It's amazing how old this golf course is, and you just think about what they were using when they built this place. It's a pretty amazing golf course.

Q. Just going off of his question here, how does the approach change now that you know the rain's coming down?

KENNY PERRY: Well, it won't change. I'm always -- my first priority is to get it in the fairway. If I can get it in the fairway, and you can kind of control the flight of your golf ball, you know, you got a good shot at positioning yourself to give yourself a good birdie shot.

I really don't look too far ahead on these things. I don't say I've got to shoot super low or whatever. I don't really put a number out there. I just try to -- if I can stay in rhythm and stay consistent with my ball striking and then hopefully make a few putts, then a lot of good things are going to happen for me.

Q. Kenny, have you felt comfortable on the greens all week, you know, as soon as you got here on, say, Tuesday?

KENNY PERRY: Well, not really. I mean, I could spend a year here and still not feel comfortable on these greens. I mean, I had two days to figure out -- I played Tuesday and Wednesday practice, 18 holes each day, and I hit a lot of putts. I mean, I was putting from all areas of the greens.

And it's still uncomfortable because you don't want to take an uphiller and hit it three feet by the hole

because those are tough to make coming back. So you end up coming up short all day. So that's frustrating in itself when you leave everything short.

You know, you just got to somehow be patient. My speed was better today. I had better speed today. The ball was getting to the hole nicely, and it wasn't going much by the hole.

So yesterday, I was short a few times, but I don't think I'll ever be -- I don't think anybody can be comfortable on these greens. I really don't. I think if you've been a member for 20 years, you're not going to be comfortable on these greens.

Q. Just getting back to the weather and so forth, would it be fair to say perhaps that it might help you off the tee, as opposed to into the greens because it might keep it in the fairway --

KENNY PERRY: Definitely. Yeah, definitely. Length will play a factor if the ball's not rolling tomorrow. I've been driving it nice until today. I actually drove it better after 2. From 3 on, I drove it -- I mean, when I hit the driver on 7, 8, and 9, I hit it nice, and I was off and going, and I was able to hit fairways.

Q. Do you know why you hit those couple of squirrely ones?

KENNY PERRY: I was just amped up, man. I was ready to play. I was just firing at it. I felt like I was 20 years old out there all of a sudden. I was swinging at it. My golf swing does not work well when my transition is fast like that. I need to slow it down. I need to gather it up at the top, pause, and then off we go.

It was not there early, but thank goodness I was able to kind of -- I think that's experience. I was able to realize that in my head, what was going on, and try to process what I was doing out there. And I knew there was some birdie holes coming, and I just needed to be patient and slow down.

Q. You talked about being streaky with the putter. Have you ever, in your experience, been able to turn it around that quickly like that, where you start off so poorly and you snap out of it?

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, I've started off poorly before and been able to make six, eight birdies coming in, but not a lot. Most of the time, you take off poorly, you kind of stay in that funk and you kind of stay around in that area.

I was really, like I said, I was really looking forward to playing today. I had a lot of good feelings about today. I really like this golf course. I really like how it sets up for my golf game. I just didn't need to let two holes determine the outcome of my tournament.

I'm sure a lot of guys have gotten in a lot of trouble out there on other holes. Thank goodness I was able to play very steady golf from then on and able to get it back together.

Q. Can you recall another time where you were so amped up that you just kind of --

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, the Masters, the Ryder Cup was when I was so nervous, I couldn't even hit the ball hardly. I was just all over the place. Poor Jim Furyk. But we ended up winning, so that was okay.

(Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: Kenny Perry, 11 under par.

KENNY PERRY: Thank you all.