

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Thursday June 29, 2017

Kenny Perry



THE MODERATOR: It is my pleasure to welcome Kenny Perry here to the Media Center. A 5 under, 65 today. Kenny playing in his sixth U.S. Senior Open. Of course, the winner in 2013 in Omaha.

Kenny, let's just go through your round a little bit. You started on the 10th hole and made a birdie to start on 12.

KENNY PERRY: Yeah, I was off to a good start. Hit it pretty close on 10, 11, didn't make it. And then 12 I hit a nice shot in there, made about, I guess, six-, eight-footer there to get the round going and get the momentum going.

So I was fortunate. I played nice all day. Drove the ball beautifully today. I had my chances to make some really good scores, but those greens are diabolical out there. I mean, they're tough. You can hit it two or three feet -- like on 18 coming in, which was my ninth hole, I probably hit it six feet left of the hole, pin high perfect. I hit a pitching wedge in there. Probably had to play two feet of break and hit it really easy, and I didn't make it.

That's kind of what you find out here. It's almost better to have a 20-footer straight up the hill than to get it pin high and play a big breaking putt.

But played nicely both par 5s. I made birdie on both the par 5s. You know, I probably made a couple 12-footers there for birdies. But all in all, it was a pretty steady day. I think I hit -- I probably missed two fairways and probably missed two greens.

You know, we didn't have much wind out there. It was very calm. It was a beautiful day to play golf. Had a little overcast, the sun wasn't beating on us, and there wasn't a lot of wind. So we were very fortunate.

And I think the rain the other day softened the golf course enough to where it allowed us to get at it a little bit. Bernhard in my group shot 67, and Jeff Maggert shot 67. Our group was kind of tugging at each other. We were all playing pretty nicely. So we were all kind of pulling each other along there. So it was a good opening round for us.

THE MODERATOR: And you have the ability to take it low. I know out at Omaha, 64 and 63 over the final two rounds. Today, a 65. When do you kind of know

during the course of the round that you sort of have it going, or is there a point?

KENNY PERRY: Well, in Omaha, that was four years ago. What was that, '13? Man, time flies. My golf swing was a lot freer back then. It's not as free now.

I don't know. I don't really think about that. I felt in the zone in Omaha. I really felt that feeling on the weekend. I really felt like good stuff was going to happen, where today I was just kind of plodding along. I was kind of playing point A to point B, you know, stay patient out there and try not to force the birdies, and I made a couple.

But I hit it close and took care of the par 5s on a couple holes, and I was able to shoot 5 under. So it was just a smooth round.

THE MODERATOR: And you typically play a draw. How does this course fit your eye for your ball shape?

KENNY PERRY: Very good. The 9th hole does not. It's a dogleg right with kind of some overhanging trees. That's a tough tee shot for me. But other than that, most of the golf course is pretty good for me. I hit a lot of nice drives. I hit a lot of fairways. And felt very comfortable out there.

That's one of the things I said when I got here. I said, I didn't feel claustrophobic on this golf course. There was more room on this course than, seemed to me, than most U.S. Opens, the way they set them up. To me, I felt freer out there on this golf course.

But then the second shots, I feel more pressure because of the greens. You know, the greens are so severe. There is a premium on your iron shots and where you position your second shot. You've really got to do a lot of thinking. And it's hard to figure out a golf course in two days, a course you've never seen.

This golf course is very challenging. It really messes with your mind where you need to hit that ball. So you really need to pay attention to where you put it and place it on that green. So it's definitely a second shot golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up to questions.

Q. Is this the premium, ultimate second shot golf course? Your swing, you described it there.

KENNY PERRY: Definitely. Because, to me personally, you need to position that -- it's kind of like Augusta. You got to keep it under the hole a bit where you can kind of free your putter up.

When you're putting two- or three-footers back down the hill -- it's so funny, you see a lot of guys leaving that first putt short, that uphill putt, because they don't want to race it by two foot. They don't want it coming back. With the poa annua greens and the speed of the downhill putts are double compared to the -- there are slow uphill, there are fast downhill.

So you're never really comfortable with the pace of the putting out there to me. I never really get comfortable out there. I'm always wondering, I'm trying to knock at the ball on the uphill, but you've got to give it a little bit of a hit to get it there, and you're just kind of lagging the downhillers.

So you've got to somehow figure out a way to keep it under the hole and give yourself opportunities to make birdies.

Q. Just how different is that than, say, a regular Tour event?

KENNY PERRY: Most of the Tour events we play, you'll have a 15-, 20-foot section that's fairly flat around the pin. And the speed of the greens are all -- they're pretty constant for every hole. Fairly flat. You'll have some tiering on some of the courses, but here there's just a lot of rolling. It's just everything rolls off.

Like I told people, it's like a helmet upside -- like the helmet that you wear, it's kind of upside down. Everything rolls off right, left, short, long. So you've kind of got that center section you're kind of shooting at.

Most guys will try to -- if you hit it 18 greens and put it in the middle of the green for 18 holes, you're going to do pretty good out here.

Q. Kenny, when you look at all you've accomplished in your career, where does winning a U.S. Senior Open rank?

KENNY PERRY: It's about as high as it gets for me. I mean, this is our tournament. I never did well on the U.S. Open on the regular Tour. I think third was the best I ever finished there so I was never able to get it done out there.

Then to finally get a Major attached -- from the USGA to attach to it was one of the biggest wins of my career.

I mean, I don't have any Majors from -- I lost the Masters in a playoff, lost the PGA in a playoff, and never could get it done on the regular Tour. So it was nice to finally get something done on this Tour.

Q. You joked with Paul when he came in, how much you guys have played together. How would you describe his game? He doesn't overpower anything. He just kind of plods his way around. What are your observations of his game?

KENNY PERRY: That's a good way to put it. You know, we've been paired together -- I've played in ten events this year. The first round, I've been paired with him in eight of them. So Paul and I have had a history this year. We're paired together.

Today he was in front of me, and I was watching him from behind. So he's a great guy. He's funny to be around. He's a very smart and intelligent guy, and the stuff he says is mind boggling. So we have a lot of good banter going along out there.

I always enjoy playing with him. He never misses a fairway, and he's a good iron player, and he's a good putter. You know, he doesn't have the length that I have but, you know, he's that tough out. He's the guy that's always going to get the bat on the ball. He's always going to be -- in match play, those are the guys I didn't like playing in match play. I'd rather play the big hitter that might spray it a little bit than the guy who's down the middle on the green.

He reminds me a lot of Jeff Maggert. I played with Jeff Maggert today. He's down the middle on the green, very patient, very steady. Those guys are hard to beat.

THE MODERATOR: Kenny Perry, 5 under, 65.

KENNY PERRY: Thank you.