

U.S. Senior Women's Amateur

Quick Quotes

Thursday October 11, 2018

Lara Tennant

Q. Lara Tennant, the 2018 U.S. Senior Women's Open champion. So just talk about the week. Before we talk about today in particular, just the highs, lows, how you got to this point.

LARA TENNANT: So, you know, overall this week I played very consistently. I think what gave me confidence is my second nine of the second day of qualifying. I was the last tee time; the wind was blowing; it rained four times. It was really tough conditions, and I shot 35 on this side. That gave me a boost of confidence that, Okay, I can play this golf course even under the toughest conditions.

I had my father on the bag all week. That was a joy, but also so helpful, because we hit the ball about the same distance, especially with our irons, so he clubbed me perfectly.

There were a lot of variables out there. The wind, the grass, just a lot of variables. So with him giving me that confidence in my club selection, really helped swing the ball even better.

Q. Talk about the match today. You got off to a quick start. Made about a 9-footer for birdie on the 1st hole.

LARA TENNANT: It's always a really helpful thing to start off with a birdie or make a good putt on the 1st hole; gives you a little boost. But it's also important just to keep going because there is still a lot of holes left.

Q. Do you think that was bigger, or the fact that hole No 3, Sue Wooster, she makes a 40-footer for birdie and then you answered and managed to stay ahead.

LARA TENNANT: Oh, that was critical. That was critical because it just helped me have more confidence in my putting and just knowing that I still had some birdies in me.

So to make it on top of your opponent is a really sweet feeling.

Q. Sure. You never looked fatigued today. Curious what your physical regimen is that allows to you play ten rounds in eight days.

LARA TENNANT: Can you turn this off? (Laughter.)



No, I think I faked it well because I was very tired. I was aware that my legs were tired, and so I rode in the cart. As guilty as I felt having my dad walk most of the way, we both decided my legs were more important than his legs.

So I think, again, I really tried to think about one shot at a time the entire tournament and just go with the next shot. So that probably helped me physically as well as mentally. I never got too far ahead of myself.

Q. Your dad take the cart at all throughout the match?

LARA TENNANT: He did. He would take it around the greens and I was approach the greens. I always like to approach the greens to look at the break of the putts.

But for the most part I was sitting in a cart trying to rest. It was a long week. I would say not necessarily the walking part of it, but because of the heat and humidity it really made me -- I think everybody out there was fatigued. That's part of golf. That's part of playing.

Q. You're 4-up with four to play. Hole No 15, talk about that putt.

LARA TENNANT: Oh, gosh, you know, the only thing that made me feel better, I felt like I hit it not as far as I wanted to, but it wasn't as bad of a putt as it turned out to be.

Made me feel better, because Ellen Port told me, she said, Lara, I would've left that short, too. Telling everybody she was going to leave it short. I just misread it. I thought it was going to get to the peak and just trickle down and it didn't.

Again, I'm like, Okay, I made a mistake. Just get some pars. I figured with the holes coming in - they're very difficult holes - if I could just par in I would win. And if Sue made some birdies, (indiscernible.)

Q. At what point might nerves have come into play on the last holes? Did you keep those out of your head pretty well?

LARA TENNANT: I was pretty calm the entire week, but today I was more focused than any other day and I was aware of that.

And, yes, when you -- again, you try not to think too far ahead, and you never want to think, Oh, maybe I'm going to win. That's not something you want to think, but how could you not when you're 4-up with four to go?

So, yes, nerves always play a part. Hopefully you funnel those into something good. I still hit good shots when I was nervous, so I was really pleased with that.

Q. You mentioned just make pars. Does your approach change, 4-up with four to play, when you're 3-up with six to play. Do you start thinking about killing holes at that point?

LARA TENNANT: You start thinking about just parring in and then letting your opponent play really well to beat you. So I wasn't as aggressive in my approach shots. I made sure on 16 I had plenty of club to get over the water. So you just play a little more defensive, smarter golf.

Q. I saw you did the hat change before the ceremony. Just curious to hear that explained.

LARA TENNANT: Oh, because I like to wear the big hats and I couldn't with the wind, so I just wanted to have a Waverley hat. That's my home course. I am a member, and I'm very proud of that. That bill was larger, so that's why I wore it. So I usually wear these big-brimmed hats and I couldn't because of the wind.

So I just want to represent Waverley.

Q. How important has that been? I don't know if that's where you learned.

LARA TENNANT: My dad grew up there. Well, Waverley is my home, and my husband grew up at Waverley on the 12th hole, so his family has been a member since he was born.

So it's very special to me and my family. Years ago they asked me when I was turning 50 because they wanted to host the Senior Am, so and they hosted it the year I was 50. Of course that's very special.

So I just want to do them proud.

Q. Sure. Prior to this week you hadn't made it past the round of 32 in a USGA championship. We know about last year being the medalist and the early exit. Did something click this week when it came to match play?

LARA TENNANT: Well, one thing to be aware of is I would say except for last year, all the other USGA championships I played in I probably prepared two weeks before. You know, with five kids I was never prepared like I am now.

So since I turned 50 I was able to have the time to prepare, as well as I would say I have a new passion for golf. I love to practice, but I have the time to practice. Again, with my family that's always been my priority. Golf was never a priority. It's still not my top priority, but it is something that I enjoy doing. I put a lot of time and effort in.

So I look at my past records in a different light.

Q. Sure.

LARA TENNANT: Last year I wouldn't, but the others.

Q. Right. You're able to go back home to your kids now and say, Look, mom is a USGA champion.

What do you think they're going to do with that?

LARA TENNANT: Oh, they're so happy and so proud. They've seen how hard I've worked, and I think it's just such a wonderful example. Last year when I lost in the first round they were so disappointed. Of course I was too, but I have to say I took it as a teaching moment as a mother.

You know what? You have to teach your children how to be a good winner and how to be a good loser. I hope I did that. I think I did. Sometimes you work really hard and things don't work out. Other times, probably more rarely, when you work really hard things work out like they did this year.

Q. Going back to talking about teaching the game, I assume your dad taught you the game.

LARA TENNANT: Yes.

Q. Give us a tidbit there.

LARA TENNANT: I caddied for my dad a lot growing up. All of my siblings, four siblings, all played college golf, so golf was a thing we did as a family.

I learned the game from my dad by watching him compete. He's a great competitor. Was a great amateur. So I learned so much from him just by caddying for him.

Q. What kind of events?

LARA TENNANT: Like state amateurs and senior events and other regional events.

Q. Play in any USGA championships?

LARA TENNANT: He did, he played in the U.S. Senior Open and he played in the -- I think he played in the (indiscernible). I don't really know. You guys might want to -- I know he played in the Senior Open because he played a practice round with Arnold Palmer.

Q. Very cool. So have you always had your eye on

50? You talk about being able to prepare more. Five, six, seven years ago did you start talking about it?

LARA TENNANT: I had rotator cuff surgery in -- what year is this? In '14 -- in '16, and basically that was to prepare -- I knew I needed to have them done, but I wanted to be ready when I was 50 to play golf.

Q. To put things into a different perspective, you join the likes of Annika Sorenstam, Jim Furyk, as USGA champions from the University of Arizona.

LARA TENNANT: Oh, University of Arizona. Yes, okay, I'll go with that.

Q. What does that mean to now a part of this community of champions?

LARA TENNANT: I'm humbled and I feel so blessed. I still keep in touch -- I just got to a text from my golf coach, and many of my fellow teammates. Arizona, I couldn't be prouder of being an Arizona grad. To put my name in the same sentence with Annika Sorenstam and Jim Furyk, I think that's overdoing it a little bit.

Q. Who do you work with for a swing coach?

LARA TENNANT: Jim Wilkinson and Dave (indiscernible). Jim is in Palm Desert and Dave is in Portland, Oregon. I've never been one to take too many lessons, but both of them have never changed my golf swing.

I have a golf swing that probably many teachers wouldn't teach, but it's athletic and I repeat it. They have done me a great service in just trying to teach me how to fix my swing rather than make it a perfect golf swing.

Q. Just to go back to the match quickly today, what would you say was working the most for you? Which facet of your game was sharpest?

LARA TENNANT: Oh, my ball striking. My ball striking all week long has been pretty solid. My dad told me at one point I hit 23 greens in a row. I don't know if that's true, but he probably is keeping track. Is that what he said, Patty? Yeah. So today I missed maybe a couple, but they were like this far off the green and I putted them.

Oh, know, 9 -- yes, I didn't miss many greens all week long. I probably 15, 16 greens all week long.

Q. Sure. And you saw that was the same thing today?

LARA TENNANT: Yes, absolutely.

Q. Great.

LARA TENNANT: Absolutely.

Q. You get to play in the U.S. Senior Women's Open again. You had a pretty special moment there last year, right, hole in one? So means a lot to you.

LARA TENNANT: Yes.

Q. So having experienced that before, what does it mean to get to play in that championship?

LARA TENNANT: Oh, that is the best of the best. I felt like this year it was just such an honor to be there kind of being a fly on the wall and watching these women come together for such a unique, wonderful championship.

It was just amazing to be there. I really felt just overwhelmed just being there, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Q. Ellen Port, seems like you guys have a pretty good friendship. Curious to know what she said to you on the 16th green after you won.

LARA TENNANT: Can I go back to tell you what she said to me yesterday? Yesterday she came up and she saw me win my match on 18 and she said, I'm so proud of you. Tomorrow you can do something special.

Go out and hit one shot at a time, but just know you might not have this opportunity again. I do know that. To make it to the finals of any golf tournament is tough, and you have to take advantage of that. Sometimes it works; sometimes doesn't work.

So today she basically said, you know, I don't know if she said, Welcome to the club, but she just said she was proud of me. Ellen and I know that golf is -- it's just a sport. It doesn't define us. This doesn't change anything for me. It's just a huge bonus in my life.

Q. Congratulations. Fantastic week. Great to watch you compete.