



PGA

May 22, 2008



Oak Hill Country Club ~ Rochester, NY

Table with 22 columns: Hole #, 1-18, Out, Total. Rows: Yardage, Par, Score.

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

BILL BRITTON

KELLY ELBIN: PGA Club Professional Bill Britton, ladies and gentlemen joining us after an even par round of 70 in the opening round of the 69th Senior PGA Championship.

Bill, congratulations on the round, sounds like everything kind of took a turn for the better on No. 16 with the eagle.

BILL BRITTON: Well thanks. It did. I started off playing good. I hit a good drive on 10, which was a very difficult driving hole.

And 11 I hit a pretty good shot in the bunker and got up-and-down for par.

But anyway I -- 13 I hit it in the rough and was lucky to make a bogey.

And then 15, the par-3, I missed about a 4-footer, I thought I hit a pretty good putt. So I was 2-over pretty quick. Which nobody wants to do.

KELLY ELBIN: What happened on that shot? A 9-iron, 120 yards, is that correct?

BILL BRITTON: It was 120 yards and if you know 16, the fairway slopes a lot right-to-left. And the ball's above my feet and the wind was blowing hard left.

just drew it a little bit more than I really tried to. And then it rolled in.

KELLY ELBIN: Obviously turned it around then on the front, two birdies and two bogeys. Go through that, please.

BILL BRITTON: Well, third hole, which is a brutal par-3, I hit a 4-wood and kind of was trying to hit a low draw to hold it against the wind and I hit a high fade and into the muck right of the green.

Then I birdied 5. Hit a good drive and a good 7-iron about four or five feet and made that.

6, it was kind of back right pin. Trying to hit middle of the green which I did. Had about a 40-footer and I misread it.

Then 8, I hit a very good drive. But I was on the right side of the fairway, the pin was on the right. I was trying hit it into the left center of the green with a 6-iron and I pulled it a little bit into the bunker and hit a lousy bunker shot about probably 20 feet.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record, Bill's eagle at 16 was the only eagle for the day. Let's open it up for questions, please.

Q. Did you think at first that you were better off with an afternoon start and then unfortunately the wind picked up?

BILL BRITTON: Not really. I don't pay much attention to tee times. Whether I play early, late or late, early, I really don't care.

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Sometimes you get breaks with the weather, sometimes you don't. To me obviously it's nothing we have control over so I really don't pay much attention to it.

Q. When you got to 2-under were you aware that you were leading the tournament and is there pressure that comes with that?

BILL BRITTON: Well, for me there is. For sure. Early in the round I saw that -- I was in the fitness van early and I saw that Jay had gotten to 3-under and then when I was out there I saw him at 1-under having finished, I thought. Which wasn't surprising, as difficult as the course seemed to be playing.

So anyway when I did get to 2 I kind of had a feeling that I was leading. So yeah, maybe a little nervous. I think that more nervous, no, I think I would have been a little nervous, I was nervous all day and I would have been nervous finishing anyway.

Q. Do you feel like as a club professional here, and there are many of you in the field this week, but do you feel like you're striking a blow for your fellow club pros when you play around like that and here you are tied with Jeff Sluman and one back of Jay, going into tomorrow.

BILL BRITTON: Not really. I think am I striking a blow for the club pros? I mean, if any of us do any good, you know, that's great. I know last year Jeff Coston who I've known for years, I forget exactly where he finished, but he did pretty darn good, you know. And if I do strike a blow for the rest of us, that's great. I'm just trying to do as good as I can.

Q. In terms of senior golf, I know it's very difficult for the club pros to go play the PGA Championship, playing against that group of guys, do you feel that at the senior level though the club pros maybe are more competitive in this tournament with the regular touring pros?

BILL BRITTON: Well, this would be a guess on my part, but I would guess so, because there are some club pros I've noticed that, I didn't realize it, I mean, but some of the guys, as they

have gotten older they have had, some guys have had very good jobs. And I've noticed like I'm 52, so last year, I played the last two years, locally. And I know some of the guys play a lot. And I think some of the guys are retired and play a lot more.

So I think that in those situations I think that they do have, playing golf quite a bit, you know, where probably 20 years ago when they were starting out in the business, they were probably playing a lot less.

So obviously the more you play golf the better chance you're going to have. And for a guy to get in the PGA Championship, you got to, you got 156 guys, you know, so what do you have? Maybe 130 Tour players. Where here you really have I think, I'm guessing again, maybe 70 Champions Tour players. Or who are on the Champions Tour anyway. So I think that the overall field for the Regular Tour would be stronger is my guess.

Q. Have you thought at all about playing senior, Champions Tour golf at all? Have you given it a try, gone to Q-School and tried that route or are you a club pro who just comes out when you can?

BILL BRITTON: Well, I tried to qualify when I turned 50. Which was two years ago, it was out in California. And I mean I tried. And I was, I left the tour, I played the tour 15 years and I left when I was 40, I think. And that was in 1996. And I was working. It's not that easy to make money I noticed in golf. And I think for any of us, for any TOUR player, you can, you're pretty dedicated to what you do, which I was, I was very dedicated.

And then I was 40 years old and what do you do? And I got a wife and four children. So anyway, once I turned 45, I mean, a good friend of mine did very well on the Champions Tour. Jim Albus. And of course I know the guys that are playing the Senior Tour. I played with a lot of them.

So I did that, I got prepared as best I could. I went to the school. I didn't make it. And at that point I pretty much gave up on it because the last two years they went to where you were not exempt if you went to the school.

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So I wasn't going to, I got no desire to ride around the country and do these Mondays. I don't blame them for doing it, but I'm just not in a position to do it. If my kids were grown maybe I would pack my bags and head on out. But we got a ways to go.

Q. I think you may have answered this just to some extent, but just for the sake of repeating, but you've now worn both hats, one as a tour player as you said for 15 years, and on the PGA TOUR, and then now representing the PGA of America as a club professional here in the last two championships. Is there a different mindset that comes with that? In other words, you mentioned making money. You now have a fall back. Is it easier to kind of relax and let it out and not necessarily think about the paycheck at the end as much so?

BILL BRITTON: I don't know it's easier to relax, but it definitely is different. And I know that I played some practice rounds with some guys and you could, you could see -- I saw frustration in one friend of mine that's playing or trying to play. And when all you do is play golf, it becomes pretty consuming.

I always felt like I had to do everything I could to compete. I had a focus only on golf. And you know in the last ten years or so I have focused, paid a lot much more attention to other things. So I'm starting to think maybe I paid too much attention to golf.

But it's a different mindset I think as somebody that's working, you know, when you play bad, you forget it a lot quicker. When you go to work the next day, it's pretty much done. I know when I used to play if I played bad, man, when I woke up the next morning I felt it. Which is a good thing I think if you're playing golf for a living.

But as a club pro when you play bad the next day you might feel a little bit when you wake up in the morning, but you're right, you just are preoccupied with other things.

So in a way it's nice to have that balance. And I enjoy playing golf now I think as much as I ever have. I think I enjoy it for the same reason most people enjoy it because you're so busy at work, the phone's ringing, people are in your face. And then you go out to the golf course and there's,

you know, there's nobody out there. It's beautiful. And I never enjoyed it years ago for that reason, but I do enjoy it now for that reason.

Q. I'm hesitant to ask but again I will. If your success continues this week as it has here this first day, would you re-assess some of these answers that you've given about trying to make another go of it?

BILL BRITTON: I suppose I would. I love to play golf. But it depends. I suppose if I won, perhaps. If I didn't win, you know, I don't know what, how that would affect me. But I would assess as time goes on, but the clock's running. I'm already 52. But I enjoy what I do.

Q. We whisked you right in here after you putted out and I think once you see just how good your round was, what is your forecast for the rest of the week? How do you think you'll fare?

BILL BRITTON: How do I think I'll fare? Well it's tough to say. I really played very little golf. I didn't play golf over the winter, I didn't go south over the winter. I worked all winter. I've probably played about 15 times. You know, the tournament that got me in this was the National Senior Club Pro Championship in October. And this is my second tournament since then. We had a pro/pro in our section about a month ago, so I played very, I play very little competitive golf. And I play very few rounds really. I hit balls when I can and chip when I can, putt when I can, but I haven't played much golf.

So your guess is as good as mine. But the good news is that I'm hitting good shots and I have for awhile now. So how that translates I guess we'll have to wait and see.

Q. I see by the book that you had the privilege of winning once on the PGA TOUR. That was almost 20 years ago. As I'm sure you know. But how vivid are those memories still and do you still entertain thoughts of perhaps being another winner and how does that fit with how you handled all of that 20 years ago at age 32. 33.

BILL BRITTON: Well I'm 52 now. Yeah. It's a while ago. Hopefully -- can you repeat that

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question?

Q. What do you take from 20 years ago from that? How do you describe that to people who ask you now days, what was that like to win on the PGA TOUR? What do you remember about it most vividly?

BILL BRITTON: To me it was not, it was different than I thought it would have been and I think that I would think that my memory would be that I was jumping up-and-down and all giggly, you know. But really it was a much more sort of some better sense of satisfaction.

A bunch of years ago when Curtis Strange was announcing on TV Justin Leonard won the British Open. And Curtis said after Justin finished, he said, Justin's going to go back to his room with a tremendous sense of satisfaction. And I think that -- and I never won the British Open, but I think that I know he what he was talking about. And it's difficult to describe. Ed Dougherty who is a good friend of mine whose played out here for years, he won on the tour when he was 45. And Ed and I used to room together a lot. We were very good friends. And he won in, it was Annandale then, in Mississippi. And I was in the locker room about a hundred yards away from the 18th green watching it on TV, rooting for him.

And I saw him and I was really happy for him. But it wasn't until I walked into the scorers tent to congratulate him and when I did, he was about crying. And as good a friend as I was of Ed's and still am, I really didn't appreciate it until I shook his hand.

So it's a difficult thing to describe. I'm, my guess is most tour guys feel that way. I played for 15 years, so it's nice to know that I guess you did win. Even if it was just once. And I guess maybe to answer your question too, I won some smaller tournaments since, so I don't, in my mind it's not like I haven't won since.

And I think that one advantage a club pro does have is that pretty much any tournament I play in as a club pro, at least at the section level, I'm going to be in contention. So for what that's worth, it's a nice thing as opposed to when I played the tour, it wasn't real that often that I got in contention.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record, Bill won the 1989 Sen Tel Classic. Questions?

Q. Tallahassee, Florida.

BILL BRITTON: Yes. It was the last year the tour had it. Then it became a ladies LPGA event.

KELLY ELBIN: Bill Britton in with even par 70. Thank you very much.

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