

## **Oak Hill Country Club ~ Rochester, NY**

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total		Yardage
452	401	214	570	428	170	461	428	418	3,542	429	188
372	598	323	181	439	460	469	3,459	7,001		Par	4
4	3	5	4	3	4	4	4	35	4	3	4
5	4	3	4	4	4	35	70		Score		

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

### **DENIS WATSON**

KELLY ELBIN: Defending Senior PGA Champion. Denis Watson with us at the 69th Senior PGA Championship here at Oak Hill. Denis won his first Senior PGA Championship last year in his first try at the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf Resort. Denis, I guess considering everything that you've been through in your career to hear the words "defending champion" must have a nice ring to it.

DENIS WATSON: Yeah, really. Really, really great. I have to tell you, it started sinking in last night at the Champions Dinner. It was really a fun event. And I started to really get to see that this is a big deal.

KELLY ELBIN: And obviously your play has carried over this year with a couple of wins and five top-10s you must feel, I would guess, pretty good about your game coming into a great test like Oak Hill.

DENIS WATSON: Yeah, I was feeling pretty good. You know, it's, you obviously, it's good for you when you're playing well coming into a Major Championship. And I played relatively well last week, good enough to win, it just didn't happen.

And this is a little different this week. I've heard guys saying this is set up tougher than when they were here for the U.S. Open. And it's going to be very interesting to see how it plays out. It doesn't take very much to get you off key here and I found out yesterday that it's quite difficult.

So you have to have all aspects of your game intact here. The rough is brutal. I think maybe tougher than what was planned. They're saying three and a half inches, but honestly I measured some of the stuff and the blades were five, six inches long. And it's laying over and it's the poa annua has gone to seed and so it's tough. It's very, very thick. We get any rain tomorrow, it's going to be really brutal. So straight hitting will be rewarded.

KELLY ELBIN: Thanks. Let's open up for questions.

**Q. You were going back to how you were relatively more upbeat about this course maybe two weeks ago when you played it. What's**

**changed? Is it the weather, just the fact of being here, just what is it?**

DENIS WATSON: Two weeks ago they said they had the rough pretty much where they wanted it. And it's probably at least two to three times that.

There's some situations where it's hard to advance it. I had one shot today that the club just got smothered and the ball went about 25 yards. And you have to be pretty careful.

So obviously you had some unusual weather with 80 degree weather and then rain and so the stuff's really jumped and it's growing crazy. I watched the mowers out there cutting, they're not cutting, it's just moving the grass, laying it over. There's nothing coming up.

So it's, to me it's a lot longer than three and a half inches in a lot of places and I'm hoping they can get in there and get it where it's reasonable and make it fair. It's a brutal test anyway, the greens are so tough.

**Q. When you're getting ready for a day like tomorrow, and I think they're saying high temperature in the 50s, is it a mental thing going into that first round, do you just say to yourself how you're going to approach it, dealing with the weather and the first round, not shooting yourself out of something in the first round. Does the weather get into anybody's head that way?**

DENIS WATSON: I think it does. Guys are, here I just come from the practice tee and guys are talking now gee, I tee off at 7:30, 8 o'clock and it's going to be freezing. And it will be tough.

I feel fortunate that I'll tee off just after nine. But it seems like the guys that are teeing off in the afternoon might get a little bit of a break depending on how fast it warms up tomorrow.

You go out and you try and you try to survive. You just have to play awfully solid. And there's not going to be a lot of knocking the flag stick down. It's being very defensive. Aggressive, defensive golf. You try and make sure you get it in the fairway and make sure you try and get it in the green where you can putt. And if you don't, it's going to be, it will be tough.

So you do go out with this mental attitude that you need to survive more than you're going to go take on the golf course.

**Q. Is there a pressure that -- obviously there's a pressure that goes with being the defending champion, but do you think there's more pressure on a hometown hero like Jeff Sluman or Tom Watson, who won eight Majors, where does the pressure fall tomorrow and during this tournament?**

DENIS WATSON: It's an interesting question. You talk to your psychologist about this stuff and the pressure is a self imposed thing. It's how you deal with it. And obviously guys like Tom Watson and Jeff have dealt with all of that stuff. And Jeff may put himself under more pressure, but he just had a great round on Sunday last week too. So he's got to be feeling really good about his game.

He obviously knows the golf course well. He's played here a few times.

And any time you're home it's pretty comfortable, pretty comfortable thing.

So as far as I'm concerned this is a whole new different place for me to be. It is my first time defending in a long, long time. And hopefully I go back to that old adage one shot at a time. It's all you can do, really. And last year is gone now and I have to focus on this year.

The golf course is so damn hard that you'll be, you got all your attention focused on every single shot that you have. So I'm looking forward to it. It's a wonderful place to be. I had an absolute blast last night and to be associated with all those great players in the past. And the way they put it over last night and you see all the great players that have won the PGA and the Senior PGA Championship and I feel pretty good. Whatever happens, happens.

I'm hitting the ball well. But golf is a funny game. I was a lot over par after 10 holes yesterday wondering what the hell I was going on and then I played great. I didn't play a whole lot different, but I shot a couple under for the last eight holes and I thought this place can really get you if you get it in the wrong place.

I heard a few guys saying the same thing, man, it doesn't take much to get over par out there. You hit a couple a little long, you can't 2-putt, you know, you turn around you're 5-over par.

**Q. Playing a lot obviously serves you well, as only three other guys on this list that have played as many tournaments this year. How does that work to your advantage do you think?**

DENIS WATSON: Oh, gosh, I don't know. I don't know if there is an advantage playing more. Obviously I think a lot of guys took, what, a few guys took last week off. Sometimes you come in fresh. You can get a little worn out.

But I feel great. I don't feel like I played a whole lot. We don't have a grueling schedule. We played, I played Austin and then I think we had a week off after Austin. So I feel pretty fresh myself. But I don't see an advantage or a disadvantage.

You look at the greatest players in the world they didn't play very much. They were always fresh. So Tiger doesn't play that much. He wins every other team he plays. Jack did pretty much the same thing late in his career. I don't have that luxury of skipping tournaments.

**Q. But I wonder if maybe it's an indication that you take the Champions Tour maybe a little more seriously than some of the other guys who are out here.**

DENIS WATSON: No, I don't think so. I don't think the other guys take it lightly. I think Jay Haas had a commitment last week with one of his kids and Jay plays almost every week and he's pretty serious about competing. And Andy Bean plays almost every week. And there are a lot of guys that go at it pretty hard and they really want to win.

Everybody talks about this as the Champions Tour as a little more casual. The only thing that's casual about it is there is no cut. It's pretty damn competitive and the guys really go at it pretty hard. And you see a lot of guys

practicing hard on their games. I was surprised. I had heard that guys didn't practice that much and it was kind of easygoing. But I didn't see it that. Bruce Lietzke is the only guy that doesn't practice that much and he practices more than he used to.

KELLY ELBIN: Any specific holes stand out in your mind here as really terrific maybe more so than any of the others?

DENIS WATSON: There are some really good golf holes here. But the back stretch there where you go 5, 6, 7, those are very difficult. 6 is not too tough a par-3. But 5 and 7 kind of stand out as really difficult holes. Yeah. But you, when you start going through them, every one is a tough hole.

3 gets your attention. 9 gets your attention. 9 was brutal today.

On the back nine 18. 17, 18, that's pretty demanding anywhere. So, and then 14 is one that I have been trying to figure out what the heck you do there, but I've heard all kind of stories saying, man, I tried to lay up and I got frustrated so by the end of the week I hit driver. So you start out with a game plan and end up doing something else on the weekend. So I'm planning on laying up at 14, but I'll see.

KELLY ELBIN: Defending Senior PGA Championship Denis Watson. Thank you, Denis.

DENIS WATSON: Thank, guys.

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