



August 6, 2007



### Southern Hills Country Club

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total
Yardage	464	488	451	372	653	200	384	245	374	3,631	366	173	458	537	223	413	507	358	465	3,500	7,131
Par	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	4	35	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	35	70
Score																					

An Interview With:

## DENIS WATSON

KELLY ELBIN: Denis Watson, ladies and gentlemen. The 2007 Senior PGA champion joining us here at the 89th PGA Championship at Southern Hills Country Club.

Denis, this is your seventh PGA Championship, but it's been a long time since you've been here. Your last time was the 1988 PGA Championship at Oak Tree in Edmond. It's been a while. Welcome back.

DENIS WATSON: Wow, I couldn't remember that one. I played at the PGA Championship here. When was it here before that?

KELLY ELBIN: In '82.

DENIS WATSON: That is correct. It's changed a little bit.

KELLY ELBIN: Had a chance to play what eight holes?

### Q. You say it's changed?

DENIS WATSON: It's long. They had added some yardage to a couple holes. I think the second hole was the surprising one, 250 to carry the bunkers. That was a tough hole before. Then they got it shaved over the back of the green. I don't remember seeing that before where you hit it out of the green; could run down into the water.

Then the next hole, the third hole, that was always like you got a bit of a tough start and then

you felt like you got a bit of a break. You could hit a different club off tee, shape it and position it in the right place and hit a wedge and try to make a birdie and maybe recover from your start. Now that's a really hard tee shot at 3.

And then 8 is no bargain, from back there. I think they lengthened that one out, 245. If you get a bit of breeze into you, that's going to be heck of a hole.

The greens are absolutely perfect today. But I remember them being like that when I was here in '82, they were extremely fast. You have to really work at keeping the ball underneath the hole. It looks like the same thing still.

So that part didn't change too much.

Q. The perk that the Senior PGA Champion gets in getting a spot in this tournament, I guess whoever gets here can approach it in different ways. And as recently as I guess '99 Hale had a pretty good tournament there. But what's your goal this week relative to how well you think you can compete on this course with it being longer and all.

DENIS WATSON: That's a hard question. Personal goals, you know, to try and do the same thing. Play one shot at a time and see what I can come up with.

The key to this golf course is driving the ball in the fairway, like any major championship. But there's no getting away with any wayward shots here by the look of things.

Unlike other tournaments where you see guys hitting it far off the fairway and getting it into the trampled areas and hitting it on the green, that's not going to happen here. And you know for me to compete, it's going to take just having a good week. If I play well, obviously I think I can make the cut. But I do think that's all predicated on how well you can hit it off the tee to be able to get it on the greens.

It's going to be very difficult to get it up-and-down from 30, 40, 50, 100 yards, because the greens are so tough. I mean, they're perfect, but they're not easy. You just have to get it to the right spot. I feel like I'm getting close to playing well again.

I had a tiny bit of a struggle for a couple of weeks. Got a little tired, because I haven't taken a week off since the PGA. I've played in Europe twice, once in the British Open. And the week off I had before the British Open, I went to Ireland and played golf every day.

So I haven't taken any time away from golf. Last week, Monday and Tuesday, I went to a water park with the kids and on Monday, and went fishing on Tuesday, and that's about the only down time I've had.

But I feel really good. I feel strong. I hit the ball just fine out there today. Hit in the rough a couple times. If you hit it a foot off the fringe in the thick rough, you're really dead.

If you hit it a couple of yards into the rough, it's still dense but it's not quite as thick and you can have a chance to advance it forward with some sort of idea that it will go towards the green.

So, that's it. Drive the ball really straight, you might have a chance of being here on Saturday and Sunday. So my goal is to be here on Saturday and Sunday. My wife's never been to a major championship before. And it's an exciting week for me to be back with the young kids. And some of the guys that have been out for a long time; I've just played in a practice round with Woody Austin who has been playing really well. And I didn't feel any different. I hit the ball with -- who was the other kid, somebody Vaughn, Vaughn Taylor. Really nice kid. I think he's been doing all right. So I felt like my game's around the same sort of level as they are.

It was a bit of a shock coming from last week. We played probably the widest fairways I've ever seen at a tournament site in the majority of the holes; some of the narrowest fairways I've

seen in a while. They've got them pretty tight. I don't remember them being quite that narrow when I played here in '82. Somebody got a measurement?

**Q. What are the characteristics of a PGA Championship that stand out to you, and do you recall much about the '88 and Oak Tree?**

DENIS WATSON: You know, Oak Tree I remember it was windy and I remember the greens were fast. The PGA is very consistent. The rough is very consistently thick. I think they do a good job of getting it like that.

They choose great golf courses, so they're all similar in their makeup. I think they've done what looks like a wonderful job here of trying to make it consistent. You've got this issue that the rough just off the fairway, an inch to two feet, is much more dense than when you go further in.

So to me it's a shame they can't have a fringe cut and then an intermediate rough cut where you can advance the ball forward if you're a yard out of the fringe, and then the heavy rough after that. It would seem to me that would be more fair. You see so many guys that drive the ball through the fringe and go an inch into the rough and they're totally screwed; and there are guys five yards into the rough, sometimes into a slightly trampled area, and whacks it out onto the green. I felt for a while that's poor.

I understand they have to make it tough, but it seems like they should be trying to grade the rough more where if you're only a yard off-line, you can advance it; and if you're four or five yards off-line, you should be in the thick of stuff.

Of course this seems like a cakewalk after Muirfield. Muirfield is the thickest rough I think I've ever seen, but it was a little inconsistent. You could see some guys could hit it deep in the rough and whack it on the green and the same thing, other times you're a yard off the fairway and you could take a full slash and advance it 50 yards.

I played with John Ross. Last week he was playing beautifully, pulled a shot at 15 with his second shot, tried to hit it once and then took an unplayable, just in the rough, 10 yards left of the green. So that was some brutal stuff. So that's not going to happen here.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record, Denis missed the cut at the '82 PGA here at Southern Hills and was tied for 48th at Oak Tree in '88.

**Q. In retrospect, winning the Senior PGA a few weeks after now or a few months maybe, does it still mean the same to you now as it did back then? Have you maybe developed some other feelings about that victory since then to this point?**

DENIS WATSON: You know, it's pretty great. The thing that I've had a hard time doing is putting myself back in the same place of having sort of lower expectations. And now I want to play well, because I am playing well and I want to contend more.

So I've maybe been playing and trying harder than I should. So I've been working hard again at trying to get back to going back to that simple one-shot-at-a-time attitude. Not that I've been trying to do that; I just haven't been doing a good job at it. I've been pressing a little bit because things haven't quite been happening, and I felt I've been playing relatively well.

So I haven't had much time to really think about it. I haven't taken a week off. It's really great. I haven't seen the trophy back at home yet. I'm looking forward to going home. And I think when I get to spend a little bit of time and soak it in, I'll get to really enjoy it.

I haven't looked at any of the film, looked at any of the pictures. I'm looking forward to doing those things. And it's been such a wonderful thing for me and my family to hear from people, pretty much all over the world that I hadn't heard from that I've caught up with, saw the PGA. And so it's been a wonderful thing to be able to share that other people have shared with me. They all know what I went through, my friends.

But now I get great messages, like, "Where the hell have you been? If you can play like this, why weren't you playing 10 years ago?"

So I get other messages from my other friends like saying, "Keep taking the Advil; it seems to be working!"

But it's been a good thing. Obviously. It's been exceptional. And I'm trying to remember it more. It was a tough week, and you tend to forget how tough a week that was because I played extremely well.

And any time you win, like I did, after there's only a few of us that have had this sort of long break and been through all these things and then come back and had a win, people have been kind of respectful of that. Fans everywhere keep

coming up to me still now and saying: "Great win. We watched every minute of it, and it was great."

So that's a gratifying thing. It kind of -- what did I say back then? It kind of validates everything that you've done and try to do in golf. Every golfer wants to win. There are 150 guys teeing up here that want to win. And everybody knows how difficult it is to win, especially after not playing.

So I've had a lot of like real appreciation from players and fans all over the place. And I'm appreciative of it, too. It's really a gratifying thing to know that people actually do remember and they do care about what other people do.

**Q. How will you beat the heat this week?**

DENIS WATSON: There ain't no beatin' the heat this week. You just suck it up. Try not to do too much. I'm a practicer. I like to go hit balls. So it's very difficult for me to step away from the driving range. It's like step away from the golf balls; go back and take a break. That's what I'm trying to remember, just kind of take it easy. Go take a swim with the kids this evening.

I don't think I could -- I don't really think I could win this week or contend, but I do think that I could play some good golf and show well for myself if I keep it together. But, you know, you never know. Phil Mickelson struggled at the last major. Everybody was talking about him winning, and I'm sure he was thinking about winning, but he didn't even get to play the weekend. There's a guy at the top of his game and you never know quite what's going to happen.

You kind of have to suck it up here. You've really got to focus our shots here. I mean, I just missed the fairway by a couple of inches at the 7th hole and I tried to slash it out, and I mean, it just went 20 yards right into the trees, instant double-bogey. And I hit a beautiful shot off the tee. Kind of bounced a little right and went through the fringe and ran into the grass instead of on top of it. So it was like underneath five inches of heavy, heavy bermuda. And you don't have much chance. You're pretty dead if you're just off the fairway.

It will be interesting to see how the strong boys get it out of there, because there's no controlling it. No telling what it's going to do if you get it up and out.

KELLY ELBIN: Would you mind offering a condensed version of the medical travails you've gone through.

DENIS WATSON: You really want to hear all that nonsense? I broke my wrist. I broke the cartilage in my wrist in December of 1985 playing in Port Elizabeth and I won that golf tournament. It was during the last round. I won that golf tournament pretty much playing with one hand. I had 22 putts; I think I beat David Frost by a shot.

I don't think I played a decent round of golf for quite a few years after that. It was misdiagnosed by several doctors, and I ended up with Keith Kleven, who I think you all know works with Tiger and Mark O'Meara and several others, and he took me to a guy that diagnosed what was going on.

And I was told I would never play golf again. But I had to have the surgery. I had lost the use of my fingers in my hand. I had some nerve damage and the cartilage in my wrist was kind of destroyed. So I lost all range of motion. I lost all the strength in my right side. I was down about 70%. So I had a triple surgery, decompressed a nerve, reattached a tendon and took the cartilage out of my wrist.

And Keith had me in rehab 10 days after the surgery and normally it's a month in a cast. So 10 days after the surgery, they took the cast off and I started rehabbing. I was in rehab for a year.

Why a human being would do that, I don't know. But I was just kind of following what I was told to do, and he said I would be able to play golf again. So I just did it.

And I've said many times in hindsight, if somebody would have told me that's what you're going to have to go through, these eight surgeries and do these things before you play decent golf again, I would have said I'll pass. But I feel pretty fortunate to have somebody like Keith Kleven, who has been a great encourager. He was the one guy that said to me, "If you stay with me, you'll be able to play golf again."

So I lived in Las Vegas. I lived at the Golden Nugget for a while and I stayed with Keith sometimes. And I rehabbed six hours a day for months on end. And I would go three hours on Saturday, take Sunday off. And so it was grueling.

And then it was frustrating on top of that, because I came back and played well about my third tournament back out and I had more problems. And I ended up having neck surgery. I

had the same accident; I had whiplash the side of the neck because it was such a severe trauma. I hit a root that was underneath the ball, so I took the whiplash. I got a hole in my disk and they couldn't figure that out. So it was leaking fluid onto the nerve root and that's what caused all the shoulder problems. I lost all the muscles in my tricep and a lot of the rotator cuff area.

So what surgeries were after that? I had to have a knee surgery. That's sort of standard if you're a rugby player, which I did as a kid. So I eventually had to have both knees done. And the neck surgery was tough. They told me that was going to be a routine deal: Neck brace, six weeks, you'll be hitting balls. Well, I was in a full body cast thing, a body brace, where they strap this plastic thing around your back and you tighten yourself up around your chest and you have a plate on the back of your head and you walk around like a robot.

So that was frustrating. They went in there. They said: Okay, it was worse than we thought, and so you're going to be in this thing for six weeks. And then after that, then you can wear the neck cuff for six weeks and then we'll see how you're doing.

So that took a long time to recover from that. '93 I finished second at the B.C. Open. I hadn't played a lot of golf; I finished second, thought I was on my way back. By January of the next year, I lost this little finger again. Still a little numb. Had to have surgery done again on my arm because the nerve studies showed things weren't working too well.

And so it's been a big, long, sad story. But that's all over. I keep saying I had a lot of other great things happen. Because I couldn't play golf, I met my wife because I was teaching. And we have five great kids and I've been all over the world doing a lot of great things. Wouldn't have done that if I had been playing the Tour.

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