



May 23, 2007



The Ocean Course ~ Kiawah Island

Table with 21 columns (Hole #, 1-18, Out, Total) and 4 rows (Yardage, Par, Score, Total). Total score is 72.

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

JAY HAAS

KELLY ELBIN: Jay Haas, ladies and gentlemen, the defending Senior PGA Champion, joining us here at the 68th Senior PGA Championship.

Jay, welcome and thoughts first of all of defending a Major Championship in your adopted home state of South Carolina.

JAY HAAS: Well, I guess I wasn't sure if I would ever be defending a Major Championship. But that's certainly a great part of this week.

We had a Champions Dinner last night and that was a real treat for me to be in that room with all those great players.

KELLY ELBIN: You had a chance to play the Ocean Course yesterday in the pro-am, a little less wind perhaps than what you have seen out there today.

JAY HAAS: Actually, I don't know, I played here maybe a half a dozen times in the past. And I don't know if I've seen it blowing as hard as it's blowing today.

I haven't gone out today, it just seems like in the past I've always caught it on a pretty nice day. Maybe blowing a little bit harder than yesterday, but not like today.

So Curtis and I are going to go out a little bit later and wait until it really kicks up a little bit and give us a little test. But it -- I said five weeks ago when I was here if it blows here the scores could be really high.

It's -- I think it's kind of a second shot golf course. Tee shots for the most part are fairly generous. But up around the greens, if you don't hit your irons well, there's not much gray area.

So the guy who is hitting his irons well is going to be up there. Whether or not the best iron player for the week will win, I don't know, but that's going to be a huge part of this golf course.

Length-wise, it almost doesn't matter. Into the wind, if it's a 400 yard hole, which is a fairly short hole now days, that's still going to be difficult, just because of the wind.

Downwind length doesn't matter because the drives are going to go 300 plus yards if you hit a good drive.

So the length of the course, you can kind of throw that out. It's 7200 yards, but the wind is the story here. And if it keeps up, the scores are

going to be high. If it lays down a little bit like yesterday, I think that you'll see some good scores.

KELLY ELBIN: Open it up for questions, please.

**Q. Do you think if the wind blows like it is now that an over par score might win this week?**

JAY HAAS: It's certainly a possibility. I know when we went last year at Oak Tree we played some practice in some pretty heavy winds there and that was so called toughest course in America when it was built and all that. So I think there were some guys, myself included, having nightmares about the course. And how was I going to play it and all this.

And I think that what we, 4-under maybe we were last year, 5-under, something like that. So I don't know if this course is harder than that. If the wind blows what exactly the score will be. But, yes, I would think even par would definitely be in the hunt. Whether it wins or not, I don't know. But if it stays like this, if I could be even par going down the last nine holes on Sunday I would take it right now.

**Q. Does winning a Major Championship, in your opinion, does it validate your career or does it make you view your place in the game differently?**

JAY HAAS: I'm not hearing great. But you were asking about does winning a Major validate my career?

**Q. Or do you view your career differently because of that?**

JAY HAAS: Not necessarily. I don't know that one tournament can make all that much difference. If I had not won a Major Championship I don't think I would have been disappointed or devastated or anything like that.

Would I be satisfied? No. I don't think any golfer is ever satisfied with what he accomplishes. But I don't think it's changed me or changed my outlook or anything like that. I guess what's changed a little bit is the fact that I have been able to win some **Champions Tour** events here at a higher rate than I did on the **PGA TOUR**. My percentage on the **PGA TOUR** is .0002 or something like that. So I don't know how many tournaments I've played on the **Champions Tour**, but I have eight wins and I've had nine the **PGA TOUR**.

So I think my attitude a little bit, maybe I'm expecting more out of myself, something like that. But the tournaments that I have won, non-Majors

on the **Champions Tour**, I've felt the same as I did last year playing Brad. I wasn't over shots thinking, this is for the **PGA**, this is a Major, you know, nothing like that. I think in the moment I'm just trying to hit good golf shots, trying to win the tournament.

KELLY ELBIN: For the record Jay's winning total was 5-under par 279 last year. Questions?

**Q. Can you give us a chronology of your life, where you grew up, where you went to school and how you ended up living in Greenville in South Carolina for those who don't know?**

JAY HAAS: Starting with where I went to school?

**Q. Where did you grow up?**

JAY HAAS: I grew up in Belleville, Illinois. My uncle **Bob** Goalby gave me my first lesson, my first club, when I was five years old. He taught me the game when I was growing up. Kind of nice to have a built-in teacher at that stage, my early teens there. And I think that at probably 12, 13, 14 is when I really started to focus strictly on golf. And I played every day whenever I could.

He played or he won the Heritage in 1970. And Lanny finished second to him as an amateur. He was maybe a junior at Wake Forest at the time. And I just remember **Bob** coming home and saying, you know, you ought to go to **Wake Forest**, if that's the kind of players that they have at **Wake Forest**, you need to play against the best every day in practice and that's your best shot at improving for the future.

And I said, sounds good to me. So that's kind of how I got to Wake. He knew Jesse Haddock. One thing led to another, Jesse basically took me sight unseen. And if I could tell a, what I think is a funny story, I qualified for the U.S. Am at Charlotte Country Club the last year of medal play. And Jesse just had seen the scores, had never seen me really swing or anything like that.

And the first round of the tournament he was standing behind the ninth green and which he always did in college tournaments, as I found out later on, and he said, "How did you do?" And I had shot 44 on the front nine, at Charlotte Country Club, I had not hit a green, my first green hit was No. 11 that day. And ended up shooting 81. I think Jesse was wanting to pull my scholarship at that stage. But everything turned out okay for both of us in that situation.

But anyway, that's how I got to **Wake Forest**, and then at the Heritage in 1977 I met my wife, a real chance meeting. And she was living in Greenville going to Florida State. We were married about a year and a half later. And lived in Charlotte for five years, '78 to '83. And then we have been in Greenville now for almost 25 years.

**Q. Is she from Greenville?**

JAY HAAS: She is from Greenville, yes. And her family used to vacation down at Hilton Head. That's kind of how she was down there and just fate. Readers Digest version there.

**Q. Can you talk about if you were to win this what that would mean to you, doing it in your home state and just being the biggest win you had or anything?**

JAY HAAS: I guess I've tried not to let myself think of that so much and what it would mean and all that. I guess in the back of my mind I know it's awfully special winning a Major tournament at any stage.

Here I've got a ton of people that are pulling for me and some from Greenville that are going to be down. But I guess I'm trying not to let myself go there. And even -- certainly not try to talk about it, but trying not to think about it.

I played well last week, I didn't score very well, finished way down in the pack, but I'm hitting the ball pretty well. I feel like if I play well -- I'm going to have to play well, no doubt about it, to be in contention. But if I do play well, I think I will be in contention. And that's, I think that's as far as I'm going to take it.

I just, you know, a Major tournament's a Major tournament, and they're a thrill any time. But there's so many good players out here any more, it's just hard to predict and even playing well may not be enough.

KELLY ELBIN: Hale Irwin is the last to successfully defend his championship. He won his third straight in 1998. Questions?

**Q. We all know the history of this course with the *Ryder Cup* and everything. It's been 16 years I guess since another showcase event like this has been out here. Do you think now the *Ocean Course*, with a good showing here, and then with the *PGA* in 2012, this could become a regular venue for these kind of events?**

JAY HAAS: I'm sure the golf course can withstand the best players in the world. Like yesterday there was basically no wind and it was

still a club. 10 or 12 miles an hour is a pretty calm day out here. So you're going to get wind.

I guess it remains to be seen about the staging and things like that. It's a pretty small area here. But, yes, I think that this course has what it takes to be in a rotation, so to speak, of Major venues. It's getting a history.

It's a very young golf course in the sense of historical courses, but with a **Ryder Cup**, you had a **World Cup**, you had the **PGA Club Pro Championship**, now the seniors. It's fast gaining notoriety. I think it's voted the hardest course in America some, in some publication. Which is a little frightening for us this week.

But, yes, I think that it has what it takes for sure. And I love what they have done to the 18th hole. I think it's a much better hole, much more dramatic hole than it was prior to the change. Beautiful clubhouse. The range itself to me as you're standing on the range today, all we need is about 25 degrees colder and you would think you were in Scotland. That range with the tenting and everything. It looks just like a **British Open** venue.

**Q. Just one question on your equipment, have you altered your clubs for this golf course added a wedge or a hybrid iron or anything like that?**

JAY HAAS: I brought a -- I use a hybrid iron pretty standard with a 5-wood and then a hybrid iron which is like my two and a half, 3-iron, something like that. I also have with me a hybrid iron that's more like a 1- or 2-iron and would take out my 5-wood. Because I really don't -- in wind this heavy I really don't think a 5-wood is much of an option.

So I'm glad you reminded me of that. It's in my locker I need to get it out. I didn't use it yesterday and I need to pull it out today. And this might be a great day to test it and see where it's usable. And it might be every hole into the wind might be a perfect place for it. But for me it goes, I basically got it for the **British Senior Open**, I don't know, do you call it the **PGA Senior Open**? Or **PGA Seniors**? Or is it the Senior **PGA**?

KELLY ELBIN: Senior comes first. Senior **PGA** Championship.

JAY HAAS: Okay. So the Senior British open. That's kind of why I had it. But I guess I wasn't expecting to play in too much heavy wind in the states. But it doesn't get very high. So it might be a good club for here. 17th hole maybe it would be perfect for it to hit.

**Q. Just for us who work for the**

**Greenville paper, can you talk about who is from Greenville? Do you have a hundred people here or can you just talk about the entourage that will be following you around?**

JAY HAAS: By the end of the week my entire family will be here with boyfriends and girlfriends and all that. And we have -- a friend of ours has been kind enough to let us use his house this week. It's not too far from here, it's a huge house, a great beach house. So even if I don't play well it will be a fun week in that regard. But a lot of members of my club, they're planning on having a cocktail party here Saturday night. They have hats made up with my signature on them.

So, yeah, all week there should be a steady trickle of people coming in and I think that just in general South Carolina has adopted me, I guess, and I don't know if I could name names, if you gave me some time I could write them all down, but.

**Q. Do you think it's going to be a distraction?**

JAY HAAS: I don't think so. I think all of them are golf fans and know kind of the proper watching etiquette or I don't know what you would say. But, yeah, it's, I guess I can only let it be a distraction if I let it bother me. They're great about it. Ones I'm in between the ropes and concentrating then it's just me and the golf course.

**Q. Do you feel that you're playing the best golf of your career right now?**

JAY HAAS: You know, I get that question all the time. I used to hear it when I was on the **PGA TOUR** to the senior players. And a lot of them said, yes, they felt like they were playing the best golf they have ever played. I don't necessarily agree with that. Because I think that to a man I think that if you said, no disrespect to the **Champions Tour** or the Senior Tour, if I was playing the best I ever played then I would still be playing the **PGA TOUR**. Because when I was playing well on the **PGA TOUR** I was able to win tournaments, I was able to finish high on the Money List.

I don't know if I could still do that or not. I guess I don't want to. I guess that the six and a half seven day weeks that you have to put in, the grind that you have to go through, I don't know if me personally if I want to do that. I think I am as consistent as I ever was.

But with the equipment today I hit drivers farther than I ever hit them. Which doesn't make any sense. I should be getting shorter and shorter, now if we use the same equipment as we used 20

years ago, 25 years ago, I would most definitely not be playing as well as I ever played. But with the equipment, we can hit the ball farther, it's a different game. It's just, I don't know that you can even compare 20 years ago to today in anybody, myself included. I can't compare myself to me in the 1980's, when I had some of my best years.

But I putt, I probably putt better than I ever did. At least I think I do. That's 90 percent of putting. But as far as hitting golf shots and everything, I don't know that I'm better. But I'm consistent.

**Q. I'm trying to gauge the intensity level. I've been here all week and it's kind of laid back on the driving range, the difference between the **PGA** and the **Senior PGA** and the guys out there, I mean do they kind of put their nose down and smile and get to it or what?**

JAY HAAS: I think what I've seen in my time on the **Champions Tour** is that if you're on the range late in the day you're probably one of a few guys. And on the **PGA TOUR** if you're on the range late in the day you're, you can't find a spot on the range almost.

So I think it's -- and I can relate to it when I was in my 20s trying to get a foot hold, trying to establish myself, trying to better my game, you just spent more time on the range. I think that the older guys have to watch it from the back injuries, their bodies breaking down and maybe can't practice as long or as hard as they once did.

But I think what you'll see is when the tournament starts it will get awfully serious on the putting green even, on the range. This is serious business and it's a Major tournament. I think the guys will definitely get their game faces on starting tomorrow. Now on the regular **Champions Tour** we just have three-day tournaments, and it might be a little more laid back than this is, but I think what you just see is that there's not as many people beating balls as they do on the **PGA TOUR**. But for the main reason just their bodies, just trying to protect them and not maybe going to the fitness trailer and getting a band aid on their boo-boo or something.

But to me when I'm in the hunt it's no less intense than it ever was 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago. It's the same.

KELLY ELBIN: You said you perhaps were putting better today than you have before. Any particular reason why?

JAY HAAS: Well I talked about it five or six years ago, I've had a thousand lessons out here or tips or whatever you would say. And about

three of those actually helped me maybe in my history of my career. But Stan Utley is a friend of mine, I don't know if you know this story, but he helped me with my putting about five or six years ago. Just changed my theory on putting, my outlook on putting.

And I think it's just, it helped me play well at the end of my **PGA TOUR** career, I putted much better than I had ever putted. And I think it's just a carryover. So I think I just technically I'm a more sound putter than I was 10 years ago and 20 years ago, 30 years ago. My technique is better. My nerves aren't better by any means, but I think just my technique is a little bit better.

But that being said, I was, I think I was out of 78 guys I was 72nd or something like that in putting last week, so go figure. I feel like I'm going to putt well, I feel like I'm, like I know what I'm doing on the greens, but that doesn't mean anything. I know one thing the greens here are similar to the greens at Turtle Bay in Hawaii where **Fred Funk** won by 20 shots this year. And they're the paspalum greens, and I have just been awful on those for two years. I'm not crazy about those greens. Now I putted well yesterday in the pro-am on these greens, but I wouldn't say I'm overly confident going in to the tournament on the greens. But I think that I stroke the ball better. I know what I'm doing a little bit more on the greens technically.

KELLY ELBIN: Jay Haas, the defending Senior PGA Championship champion.

JAY HAAS: Thank y'all very much.

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