

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW: JOHN DALY (-14)
May 7, 2017



THE MODERATOR: We would like to congratulate our 2017 Insperity Invitational Champion, John Daly. I know, John, it's been a long wait. You made your debut here last year. Share your thoughts winning here just almost a year to the day after making your debut here.

JOHN DALY: Well, this has always been a golf course that I've loved and felt like I could play it really well even when the Shell was here. I had some really good finishes. The first year I played it I think I finished third or fourth to get me into the final 30. It boosted me up.

I think that might have been the first year I played it and fell in love with this golf course and the fans. It's not a long golf course, but for me there are so many left to right holes that favor a cutter that everything sets up good for me on the tee, whether it's a 2-iron or a driver. I feel really good about the greens, and I've always putted these greens pretty decent.

To win, it's to another level of course, but at least coming in I know I'm going to play decent. I've got confidence, and especially when you have confidence, you feel like you're going to putt greens good when you come to a tournament. It helps a lot.

Between the driver, I hit it so good, and the putter these last two days, it was incredible. The first round, ball striking was probably one of the best that I had in my life and didn't make anything. And then the last two days I didn't hit it as good with my irons, but I putted really good. This course makes you feel that way. You don't have to hit it great to score well on it.

You just have to hit it good enough, if you feel like you're going to make putts, and I had confidence in the putter this week, and like anybody else that wins, if you're putting great and you're hitting it somewhat decent, or really good, you've got a really good chance to win.

Q. To get you off to a fast start, you made that eagle on the first hole. What was the shot sequence on that, driver?

JOHN DALY: I hit an 8-iron in there, 173 yards a little down wind out of the right, and it was just a perfect club. Yesterday and today, besides that shot, everything was so three-quarters, and if you don't connect and execute on the three-quarter shots with the fairways as good as they are, they're a little firm, so the ball can bounce on three-quarter shots.

Like you saw, I failed a few right, but it was just a perfect number, perfect yardage and that 8-iron went about six, seven feet and made it. Then making the birdie on 3, getting off to that kind of a start after 3, I was on my way to gaining confidence throughout the rest of the round.

I'm just glad I could bogey the last three holes and still win.

Q. What was your putt on 3? How long was that?

JOHN DALY: It was probably about 12 feet.

Q. What did you hit?

JOHN DALY: I hit wedge. Tees were up, and that pin was on the difficult spot on the right there with 8 or 9 feet of green there and hit a really good wedge shot in there and spun it back a little bit and made about an 8-or 10-footer.

Q. I know you were playing with Kenny. How aware were you of Tommy Armour during the round?

JOHN DALY: Not really until I heard he hit his tee ball in the water on 16. But I was making the 18-footer on 16 for bogey. That was a big, big deal for me. Knowing that -- I heard he hit it in the water on 17, and it was just -- I thought it was going to be between me and Kenny, because Kenny just doesn't miss a golf shot. It was a thrill to watch him hit a golf ball.

He hits everything so solid, he putts it well, chipped it well. I think I made a few more putts today than he did, and that's usually what happens when you win. He kept me going and I thought it was just a two-man race until -- we didn't know about it until 16 that TA was playing that good.

Q. Did you have family here? People, friends?

JOHN DALY: My sister, a bunch of friends, Lance Awe, Monty Kist, David Aldridge, who we call "the dude," he was the one in the robe. We had a few people out there today. It was cool.

Q. How about Esteban and Michael coming out to give you bathe there at 18?

JOHN DALY: That was great. That's what's cool about this tournament. I look at these guys, a lot of these guys -- we're all friends out here. We're big competitors, but we like to have a good time. I look at this Tour kind of an older European Tour. The guys do that in Europe as well. I've got a lot of great friends out here. We've played a lot of golf over the years together, and we love hanging out and playing golf.

This Tour, they'll go out and have a beer with you or they will go to dinner with you, and it won't just be one or two families, it will be six or seven. We all stick together. There is a lot of love and friendship on this Tour.

Q. I know you mentioned on TV that you visited the volunteer party last night, and you made some food for the staff here?

JOHN DALY: Well, me and Esteban went over and -- I like to thank the volunteers. Brian came and got me and Esteban. It's always great. These volunteers are great. They're all special everywhere, but taking their time to do this all week long. I know someone probably took a week's vacation to do it, and without them it's very difficult to run a golf tournament.

I love to cook. I love to cook steaks, pork chops, lasagne. I made Brian and them a Mexican lasagne there at The Shack, and they actually liked it.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN DALY: Yeah, it does. It's not the 146 guys make a cut and win a golf tournament, but it's special. For me it's like, you know, some guys come out here and win right off the bat, get the monkey off their back, but now I can say I'm a champion on the Champions Tour, which is really cool and hopefully I can keep this confidence going.

Bernard has a pretty good lead, as usual, but you start thinking about maybe trying to chase him. I'm a little far way from that.

Last year going into Birmingham I think they said I made 19 birdies and 3 eagles or 4 eagles that week and shot 7-under. I made some big numbers on that golf course, too. At least I know I can hopefully go in there with confidence and make a few birdies and give myself a chance.

It feels really good, I mean, just to get the monkey off the back.

Q. You said yesterday you were in an unfamiliar position, and of course you have been for quite some time. When you eagled the first hole, that had to be, okay, I'm all right, good shape, let's go.

JOHN DALY: Yeah, Kenny made a good par on 1, Kenny birdies 2, and then I birdie 3, and we're kinda off. It was one or two shots all day long, until I got a great up and down on 15, and I got a 3-shot lead on him, and then that happened on 17, where I got a bad break. I didn't hit a very good shot, but standing in that bunker trying to chip this much of club. I was very surprised I hit it that hard and that solid, and I made a good bogey there.

The whole round was absolutely as solid as it could be, 16, 17 and 18 to me are very, very difficult three finishing holes. It's so hard to get the right club in your hand. For me, I just told Peter make sure we have enough in case I flail them right, which I did a lot this week. That actually helped. Those holes, if you play 'em even par you're kind of beating the field.

Q. You said the finish wasn't that pretty, three straight bogeys, but weren't you also playing defense?

JOHN DALY: I was a little bit. Those holes are so easy, especially 17 and 18, to make a big, big number. It doesn't take a bad shot to make a big number on those holes. On 17 I just told my caddie, I'm just going to try to hit it as far right, get it up there, within 10 feet, have a chance at par. I still knew I had a 2-shot lead, and at 18 I heard TA knocked it in the water, and then it was up to me to -- do I really want to go at that flag? I know Kenny Perry, as good as he hits it, he could make birdie here, which he killed that shot over the flag and he had that 25-footer down the hill to the fringe, but he makes that, we're in a playoff. So I decided to go conservative with a 5-iron left, and it really didn't come out the way I wanted it to, but luckily I hit it straight enough that it curled down. I know I 3-putted, but it was enough to win.

Q. Were you surprised with the champagne bath?

JOHN DALY: I was surprised, I figured Michael and Esteban would be out there, but I didn't know they were going to do that, but, hey, I love it. I can't wait to get them back.

Q. And probably can't wait to have a full bottle then.

JOHN DALY: I just want a Miller Lite. That's all I want.
(Laughter.)

Q. Before you even hit a tee ball on Friday, did you have a feeling this could be your week?

JOHN DALY: Well, playing -- you know, most of the time the Pro's-Amateur teams don't win both Pro-Ams, and I think Peter said I had 17 birdies in two days in the Pro-Ams. I think we shot like 21 or 22 in the first one, and 20 in the second one. My amateurs played really, really good, but when they needed me I made birdies for 'em. I said, "Wow," did I make that many birdies?" and he said, "Yeah, because you had to putt 'em," because the amateurs were out, and wow, okay. I said, "So we're playing pretty dang good," and he said, "You're putting better than I've ever seen you putt. Keep doing what you're doing."

I think the only thing different with the putter this week I got more up on it, over it, and I read my lines, and my speed was so much better. It's amazing how something that small can make you putt that good, but hopefully it can continue.

Q. Your first shell here, probably that fall tournament that was a rain make-up, is that possible?

JOHN DALY: It might have been. Don't hold me to it but I think we went to Pinehurst, when I went to the top-30, which was the final Fed Ex.

Q. That wouldn't have had anything to do with qualifying --

JOHN DALY: Right, but I think it was later in the year or something. All know is it helped me get in that. I finished third or fourth, and I top-10'd it and it got me in there, and I was lucky to finish third or fourth. That wasn't the \$10 million Fed Ex thing they play for now. It would have been nice, but it was still nice. I can't remember if Payne won it that year or Craig Stadler won that, one of those two. They played really, really good.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN DALY: Second. Well, at the other one, the first Redstone Vijay beat me in a playoff. I had a few thirds, sevenths, sixth. There was a four, five, six, seven year in a row that I think it might have been, or maybe in ten years maybe seven top-10s there. Not on the one they play now but the Redstone they played before that. I always played decent here.

Q. You probably never played the current tournament course over there --

JOHN DALY: One time.

Q. Do you remember what year you brought Thomas Anderson here with you?

JOHN DALY: I think it might have been '93, '94.

Q. I remember talking to him.

JOHN DALY: Yeah.

Q. Been a long, long, strange ride.

JOHN DALY: I still talk to Thomas. He's just a -- I'm so proud of him, and what he's done. He's such a great guy. That guy, what he put his body through and what he did to himself and now he's been clean for 20-something years. It's just amazing.

Q. Congratulations.

JOHN DALY: Thank you.