

By Adrian A. Romero, First Tee of Broward

“Fore!” This is not a common word going to be used at the Old Course at Broken Sound this weekend, unless you are in the Pro-Am of course. This fact and much more was made clear to my fellow Junior Course Interviewer and me on Day One of our experiences inside the ropes and conference rooms with professional players and the people who make this wonderful event possible. First off, let me mention the interviews and press conferences I was honored to partake in.

Bernhard Langer is a golfing great who is currently defending his title this weekend at the Allianz Championship. This truly inspirational German player lives near my hometown in South Florida and he seems like one of the most authentic and kind-hearted men on the Champions Tour. Since I have a great passion to get better in the game and understand Langer’s Christian background, I asked him whether he had any sort of superstitions and he said, “I do not believe in any superstitions and every ‘coincidence’ is not that, it is controlled by God.” This Christian follower also seems to have a strong family connection when he has been married to a “great wife” with several children, one who will be caddying for him in this weekend’s golf tournament. During the interview, he focused a lot on the importance of being family oriented and everything being normal at home to be able to play great golf on the Champions Tour and PGA Tour. I must say that it was also quite interesting to learn about his daily routine before a round; he spends “30 minutes stretching and warming up!” Looks like many of us amateurs at home need to extend our warm-up times!

Mark Calcavecchia is a character. “I guess I’m still a rookie, whatever,” the first words Mark said in the interview. Not long after a question arose about Bernhard Langer’s young body and Mark Calcavecchia’s response was classic, he said, “Yeah, if you were to chop off his head and put a picture of it when he was 30 years old, he would look the exact same way!” Only Calcavecchia would say this as I was told by the fellow interviewers. He talks from his heart, off the cuff and just like he thinks it in his mind. With this being said, Mark is a fun and exciting player who I hope does well in this tournament since he is near his home crowd and has yet to win on his new tour. I am sure that if it doesn’t happen for him this week, it will happen soon in one of the 24 Champions Tour events he will be playing this year. He deserves it.

John Cook is currently one of the hottest players on the tour. After his win over at Harding Park at last year’s championship event, he said, “I continued my practicing and became sharp, sharper than ever. I practiced a little bit of everything, trying to make it all come together and it did when I won not too long ago this year.” I had the understanding that many commentators saw him as a late bloomer every year and that he would only win once he is warmed up from the beginning of the year. When the conversation of commentators like Johnny Miller arose, I posed the question of whether it felt good inside to win early and defy the commentators and their incorrect analysis. In response he said, “It really felt good then because they were saying that.” I actually believe he felt indifferent about it because “yes, the commentators make you feel frustrated,” he said, but he still respects and “love’s” them all and knows that each win is for his hard-working success and not for everyone else’s faults. Also mentioned was the importance of family ties and having a stable home for stable mental game, which was said to be key this weekend by not only Cook, but also Langer, too. I wish him great success this weekend.

We can now shift focus to the people who actually make this event a reality, the people who many on the outside of the hard shelled television do not see. When I say this, I also say the people who bring this event to you on the television screen and radio loudspeakers, just like Jason Pugh.

Jason Pugh is a commentator and reporter and cameraman working for ESPN 760 and Channel 5 News. When we first met, he was lugging around all of his equipment and had the time to speak with me on my life and we definitely had great conversation. This ex-defensive tackle for the Florida Atlantic University Owls was definitely a neat person to meet and learn about. After all, I had never met anyone

who was involved with ESPN and can say that Mr. Pugh is hardworking individual with a passion for the sports industry.

Mark Williams is a major part of the PGA Tour Staff that I had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with. Right off of the bat you can tell his New Zealand accent. Right after I made a comment about his background and whether a First Tee organization was created in his homeland, he went into a story about a group of lawyers who wanted to play golf every day and quit their jobs temporarily to raise money for the First Tee in New Zealand. Known as "Pure golf 2010," this comment made it clear to me how important charity is to this gentleman of the game. He seemed very enthusiastic for the game and charity when he said, "It would be great to play golf every day and raise money."

Brian Claar I met in the Media tent at the tournament on Day One. Mr. Williams, who I previously mentioned, kindly brought out the tournament director and head of golf officials. Not knowing much of what his job entails, my partner and I interviewed Mr. Claar and found how strenuous and important his job is to the success of the tournament in preparation and also in day by day tournament play. To even qualify every year and be a tournament official, he must pass a challenging 100 question test, which he passes with flying colors in the 95-98% average every year. When asked about the most unusual ruling he had ever needed to attend to he said, "It would probably have to be the balls near alligators and snakes and things like that." Quite a weird and dangerous ruling if I were to say so myself. Most importantly, this very intelligent ex-PGA Tour professional decides where pins are placed and where tee boxes are set-up. He accomplishes this task with the help of Willis Young from Telvent DTN.

Mr. Young is the main weatherman, or on-site meteorologist, for the entire tournament and all he lugs around are two suitcases and a few laptops. His on-the-go workstation and himself arrives the week before the tournament does. He seeks continuations in weather patterns and has the "big red button" to pull the plug on the tournament due to weather restraints. With the hope of this never happening, Willis Young is always in contact with Mr. Claar and others to make sure the course is playing fair and everyone out on the course is safe. The good thing is that there is a plan if a major lightning storm was to pop-up at random and all of the spectators were to be evacuated. I would like to personally tip my golf hat to this hard-working individual as he plays a key role in our safety on the course.

Speaking with these great golfers and people who make the event happen, I have come to one conclusion. This conclusion may be rather obvious to some, but surely it is quite important to me and my fellow amateurs who need every sort of help to get better in this elegant game of golf. Definitely all of the men and women who I have met on Day One are great at what they do, but what makes them rise above the rest of the people I have met in the golf world is their common characteristic of being humble. This small but large scale trait has made me aware that not even the best of the best think they are at full potential. There is always room for improvement. There is always more you can do. I believe that this message has been instilled in me by this experience in Day One as a Junior Course Interviewer for the Allianz Championship.