

DOUBLE MAJOR-WINNING LANGER JUST WANTS TO HAVE FUN

FOR Bernhard Langer life really has begun again at 50. In a glittering career spanning almost three decades on The European Tour Bernhard Langer won 42 times, including two Masters in 1985 and 1993.

He won more than €12million between 1974 and 2009 but since turning 50 in August 2007 the German has already earned over \$6m as a Senior golfer, thanks to his two back-to-back Senior Major wins and 13 Senior titles.

He's right on course for a third successive Arnold Palmer Award for topping the Money List on the U.S. Champions Tour and nail a hat-trick of Jack Nicklaus Awards for Player of the Year.

In his first full season on the Champions Tour in 2008 he won three times and carried off the Jack Nicklaus Player of the Year Award, the Arnold Palmer Award, the Byron Nelson Award as scoring leader, and the Rookie of the Year Award, with three victories.

In 2009 he had four wins and this year he broke

his Senior Major duck with successive victories at The Senior Open Championship at Carnoustie and the US Senior Open in Seattle where he overcame home favourite Fred Couples to win by two strokes.

Langer defeated Corey Pavin by one shot at Carnoustie to put the two runner-up finishes he had at The Open Championship in 1981 and 1984 behind him before jetting off to the West Coast of America to overcome another American Ryder Cup star in Couples at Sahalee Country Club.

Before going into another Senior Major in the United States, the Jeld-Wen Tradition, he's once more leading the Money List, with earnings so far this season of \$1.7million.

His victory in the Senior Open Championship still has him at the top of the European Senior Order of Merit. Now, on the eve of The Ryder Cup, Europe's Captain, Colin Montgomerie, even talked about the possibility of making Langer one of his wild card picks for Celtic Manor. ➔

MIKE GALLEMORE TALKS TO BERNHARD LANGER – TRIUMPHANT RYDER CUP CAPTAIN IN 2004 – ABOUT THE RYDER CUP AND HIS CONTINUED SENSATIONAL SUCCESS AS A SENIOR GOLFER ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC



very similar to playing The European Tour and the PGA Tour – it's very competitive.

We play slightly shorter courses and the layouts on the Champions Tour seem to suit my game. There's no half-way cut and only three competitive rounds. It's easier for me to plan my life and my travel schedule so I can often return home from the tournament on Sunday night.

Q: Topping the money list for two seasons running is quite an achievement. What's the secret to your success on the Champions Tour?

A: Well, on any given day, when you look at the statistics I'm right up there in the driving stats and up there, too, in hitting greens in regulation – which helps. I'm even up there in the putting stats and other things.

So if you're fairly good at everything, you should be eliminating some bad scores. I think that's one of the reasons I'm having a lot of success and I'm finishing in the top 10 a lot. I'm pretty consistent in all those key areas.

Q: You have always kept yourself very fit but are there limitations when you pass the age of 50?

A: I've always been a strong believer in preparing very well. If you don't prepare, you can't expect to win anything. I have high expectations, so I try to prepare accordingly.

I'm not working as hard as I did in my 20s and 30s because my body can't take it. I can't handle pounding balls for four or five hours a day any more.

I've spent a little bit more time on my short

Q: Looking back on your career, what would you say the highlights are?

A: I've had such a long and wonderful career and so many good things have happened to me since I joined The European Tour in 1976 it's difficult to name them all.

Obviously, my two Masters wins were the highlight of my career, next to The Ryder Cup. Every professional golfer wants to win Majors and to have won the Masters means I'm invited back for the rest of my life.

To be introduced on the first tee as a U.S. Masters Champion and to be in an elite group of people who have achieved that feat is something that will always stay with me and something I will always be known for.

It also had a big financial impact on my life. I became known around the world once I won a Major and people recognised me a lot more than before.

Winning my own tournament (*the Mercedes-Benz Championship, formerly the German Masters*) four times and the German Open five times is also very special for me.

Q: Looking ahead, 2018 will see The Ryder Cup return to a Continental European destination, 21 years since it was held at Valderrama in Spain. Do you think it's about time mainland Europe hosted the event again?

A: It has been a long time. As we always talk about The European Tour as being part of the

Bernhard Langer kisses the replica Claret Jug after winning the Senior Open Championship at Carnoustie. "I know it's not THE Open Championship but it's the same thing at Senior level – It was a real thrill to finally win that replica Claret Jug." – said Langer.

Q: Winning one Major is hard enough – but two in successive weeks and with such a huge time difference and subsequent jet-lag to overcome is an outstanding feat. How highly do you rank your victories at The Senior Open Championship and the U.S. Senior Open?

A: It's hard to believe I won back-to-back Majors with an eight-hour time change in between on two very challenging golf courses. I probably played some of the best golf of my career during those two weeks from tee-to-green, as well as on the green.

To win The Senior Open Championship ranks very highly. It's always fantastic to win a Championship on an Open Championship course like Carnoustie, which is rated by many players as the toughest in golf. It was very special. I have always wanted to win an Open Championship.

I know this is not THE Open Championship, but it's the same thing at Senior level. Winning it comes pretty close to my two Masters wins and some of my Ryder Cup achievements. It's definitely in my top ten. It was a real thrill to finally win that replica Claret Jug.

Q: How much of a challenge was it playing against home favourite Fred Couples in America – did you have to draw on your past experiences in The Ryder Cup to help cope with the situation?

A: It's never much fun playing against a home favourite in the United States – but I've had to do it before. The galleries were definitely against me and totally for Freddy.

When you play in the same group with Tiger Woods or Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer or any of the big names in America, it's tough. In fact, as an international golfer, whenever you play in the U.S. it's always a challenge.

I played five times in The Ryder Cup on American soil and it doesn't get any tougher than that. So playing against Fred, I knew what was coming, although it still doesn't make it any easier. When you play against Fred you have to stay focused and play quality golf, play solid shots and, hopefully, make some putts – and I did just that.

Q: What has the transition been like from the regular Tours to Senior golf – did you expect so much success so quickly?

A: Playing Senior golf is good for me. It suits me. The Champions Tour is a lot of fun because I'm in contention on a regular basis – not just three or four times a year. When I joined the Tour I was hoping to be one of the dominant players. I was trying to win tournaments. That's what we practice and work for – to have a chance to win the golf tournament on the Sunday.

Winning never gets old. Life on Tour is still



Bernhard Langer and fellow countryman Boris Becker at the 2009 Mercedes-Benz Championship. Langer, a Mercedes-Benz Ambassador, has won the Championship four times and the German Open five times.

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game and in the physio truck working out and stretching, which seems to work for me. Mind you, I'm not Gary Player. In terms of fitness, for a 74 year old to be as fit as Gary and play golf like he does is phenomenal.

Q: Do you ever suffer from nerves when you're playing in the bigger events on the Senior tours?

A: I still feel nervous a little bit, but I'm at a stage in my career where I really want to enjoy my golf. I just want to have fun and enjoy the few more years that I have on Tour.

I don't feel I need to grind away like I used to. I have nothing to prove any more. I've been very blessed. I've won a lot of golf tournaments and achieved a lot of my goals, so now I just try to have fun.



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whole of Europe – I think that it’s high time that The Ryder Cup came back to the Continent because it is truly a European event and not just a ‘Great Britain and Ireland’ event.

Q: Do you think Germany has a good chance of hosting The Ryder Cup in 2018?

A: I think it’s great that The Ryder Cup Committee has already made the statement that they will definitely come to the Continent with the tournament next time.

I think if we get The Ryder Cup in Germany in 2018 then it will be down to the fact that we had a very strong bid and we really want The Ryder Cup.

I would like to think that we might get the nod because I’ve been involved in The Ryder Cup ten times as a player and once as Captain; I was one of the leading, dominant players for a number of years, and, obviously, I got a lot back from golf – but I’ve also given a lot back to European golf.

Bernhard Langer proudly holds the U.S. Senior PGA Championship trophy aloft after clinching his second Senior Major on each side of the Atlantic in the space of two weeks.



QUICKFIRE Q&A

Q: Who would make up your dream Foursome?

A: Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, Tiger Woods and myself – that would be perfect.

Q: What is your favourite club in the bag?

A: I try not to have one! I like to keep

them neutral so there are no negative thoughts in my mind. If my swing works then so does the club!

Q: Outside the ropes what do you like to do in your spare time?

A: I like most sports. I enjoy cycling, playing table tennis, snow skiing and going to church.