

**Zurich Classic of New Orleans
English Turn Golf Course
New Orleans, LA
April 30, 2006**

Final-round tournament quotes:

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS COUCH

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Chris Couch, 2006 Zurich Classic and New Orleans clamp. Congratulations. First of all, why don't you just take us through your final round.

CHRIS COUCH: It was awesome. I got off to a great start birdieing 1, 2 and 3. I just missed the green right on 3 and chipped in. So I had 2 chip-ins today which is unbelievable for me. I don't remember the last time I did that. But it was just one of those days the last two days. I hit it great. I made some good putts and didn't make a whole lot of mistakes. Other than 18 yesterday and 17 today, I played really solid.

Q. What's the strongest part of your game today, or the whole tournament, in fact?

CHRIS COUCH: I think my, off the tee and iron play was excellent this week. I hit a lot of fairways and a lot of greens and it seemed like when I hit a green I hit it pretty close to the hole. I gave myself a lot of good birdie opportunities.

Q. Take us through getting ball in the back of the bunker on 18 and essentially winning the tournament, what you were you thinking?

CHRIS COUCH: First off, I had 153 yards to the pin, I was talking to my caddy, I said I'm a little pumped up I better hit the wedge. Normally that's a 9-iron for me. I caught a bit of a jumper. I got a little bit of a bad break there. I hit it on a down slope and shot it across to the back of bunker. These bunkers are definitely firm. I didn't want to skip into the ball. I tried to dig at it. And left it short. Going through my mind I was thinking I knew Fred Funk was in at 18. I knew Charles Howell had a putt to go 19. I was thinking just give yourself a chance here. Let's get this ball up and down, try to chip it in, get it up and down. Worse case scenario, you can get in a playoff, it happened to go in.

Q. How far roughly?

CHRIS COUCH: How far was the chip?

Q. Yes.

CHRIS COUCH: I'd say it was about 50 feet.

Q. Did you know it was in, Chris? At what point did you think it had a chance? What was your thought when it disappeared on you?

CHRIS COUCH: When I first hit it I landed it exactly whether I wanted to. When it started rolling about six feet from the hole I was like that thing is going to go in. It was almost unbelievable. When I was over the shot. I was thinking this would be a great way to win the golf tournament, chip this thing in here. It would be something to remember always.

Q. The first shot in the bunker, how far away from the back wall was that?

CHRIS COUCH: It was very difficult shot. As firm as the bunkers are, I thought I had no chance of getting it close. I was trying to get it on the green and get myself a shot at par. I didn't even manage to get it on the green but it worked out perfect.

Q. Chris, did you switch clubs out at the sand?

CHRIS COUCH: Yes, I hit the lob wedge out of sand. Hit a pitching wedge on the chip shot.

Q. How about the pressure on 17, when Charles was looking at a birdie putt, and you were looking at a double, a putt for bogey, how big a putt was for bogey in your life?

CHRIS COUCH: That was a huge putt. I was just trying to stay calm. The bunkers were very firm. I happen to hit it into last two bunkers. Three out the last four holes, I hit it in the bunker. I didn't get any of them up and down. Actually I did on 18.

But they're playing difficult because they're so firm. It's like hitting off of a cart path. You got to be real careful. I caught it thin on 17 and had a difficult chip. But that putt was huge. I knew that was to keep the lead after Charles missed his putt. And I just grinded it out and somehow made it.

Q. How long was that one, 17?

CHRIS COUCH: It was about 12 feet, 12 or 15 feet.

Q. Chris, talk about chipping cross handed, when did you switch to that and why?

CHRIS COUCH: I almost been doing that now for two years. I was chipping so bad for four or five years. You know my coach and I were working on chipping over and over again. He said, you know what, he is from South Africa, he said there is a lot of great chippers in South Africa and they all chip cross-handed, why don't you give that a shot. We tried everything else. I thought yeah, right.

I tried it out. I worked on it for about a month. I just went to it one tournament, and I thought I'm going to try this. And I got 8 up and downs that day and I thought to myself I'm never turning back. So I have been doing it ever since.

Q. Chris, 2 out of 9 cuts this year, where does 19-under come from in this equation?

CHRIS COUCH: I've been playing a lot wetter than 2 out of 9 cuts. I've been hitting it really good this whole year. And it just seems like would be part of my game is missing every week. I've missed some cuts by one and 2. It's been frustrating knowing that I'm playing so well and not making any money. And this definitely made up for it this week. It all came together. I was trying to stay patient and positive all year. It's worked out.

Q. What about the confidence to bring it all about, where does that come from to fend off a Charles Howell and Fred Funk and people like that down the stretch?

CHRIS COUCH: You know, those guys are my peers. I think we are all considered each other equals out here. And I wasn't thinking, you know, wow, this is Charles Howell or Fred Funk. I know Fred Funk pretty good. He is a great guy. One of the friendliest guys out here. It was nice playing with Charles out here. He is a great guy also. I think we pushed each other today. I would make a birdie, he would make a birdie. We kept each other going. Joe Durant mentioned something today. He said, I can't get the tee from you guys. He shot 4-under. I don't know if he had the tee one time.

Q. You didn't look at Charles and say, wow, this guy used to caddy for me?

CHRIS COUCH: I mentioned it on the second hole. I said remember when you caddied for me back in the college tournament there at Forest Hills, and he said yeah that was fun. We lost that tournament and finished second. We lost to Justin Leonard by one. Then I mentioned how time flies. He is 26 now. I'm 32, getting ready turn 33. It just seems like yesterday it happened. It's been, you know, 12, 13 years.

Q. You reminded him or he reminded you?

CHRIS COUCH: I reminded him.

Q. When you got to 19 under early on the back 9, did the nerves start working pretty good, the putt at 15 especially?

CHRIS COUCH: 15, I just misread that terribly. But, you know, the nerves were there all day. I mean I think you can let nerves bother you, or have them help you. I think today they helped me. They helped me focus. And they helped me keep my mind on what I was doing shot by shot. And I think they helped me overall.

Q. Chris, talk about some of low times in your career, some of the valleys, what are the toughest times you got through?

CHRIS COUCH: I've had a lot of ups and downs in this game. In 2003, early in 2003 on the Nationwide Tour, I missed the first four cuts and completely ran out of money. I was thinking about giving up the game. That was probably the lowest point. I just couldn't play anymore. Because I couldn't afford it. I called a buddy of mine Brendan Pappas, who was playing on the PGA TOUR at the time, he was doing good. I said is there any way I can borrow \$3,000 for the next three tournaments? He said sure. I went out and finished 25th, 2nd and 5th those three tournaments and kind of took off from there. God has blessed me since then. I prayed hard and says if this is what I'm to do, show me. If it's not, I'll do something else. I think this is God's plan for me, is to play this game, and I just try to glorify him out there.

Q. Chris, did you ever think that maybe this moment wasn't in the cards for you?

CHRIS COUCH: I never thought that. No. I've always thought I could win out here. I've always believed it. And I definitely believed it this year. Even when I was playing and missing cuts earlier in the year, I still knew I was playing good enough to win. It's just a matter of everything coming together this week and it's happened this week.

Q. What would you have done if he hadn't given you that 3 grand?

CHRIS COUCH: I probably would have gotten a job because I didn't have any money.

Q. Do you think he may call for you a loan tonight?

CHRIS COUCH: I'll definitely give him one if he needs one.

Q. Chris, putt it in perspective, what this means to you, not only just to win out here, but you won coming to have cut line, you made a magical week here?

CHRIS COUCH: Yes, I got fortunate yesterday to tee off early because that wind got harder and harder as the day went on. I'm sure the greens got firmer and first information. The guys struggled in the afternoon.

It was a fortunate break there and I just, you know, I played great. We had wind too, but I played fantastic. I played flawless. This means so much. It hasn't sunk in yet. But this is something for a guy who has come from nothing to now have a million dollars is absolutely incredible.

Q. Did you have any friends or family here this week?

CHRIS COUCH: I had one of my best friends back there, my caddy, the first tournament he's ever caddied out here and we won. So he's one for one.

Q. You going to keep him?

CHRIS COUCH: I think so.

Q. What's his name, Chris?

CHRIS COUCH: Ron Benner, B E N N E R.

Q. Have you ever chipped-in before to win a tournament in college or pro?

CHRIS COUCH: I can't say that I've. I can't remember. So I'm definitely thinking I haven't. I've made some big putts to win tournaments, some long putts, but never a chip-in. That was the last thought that went through my head is that this will be remembered always if I can chip this in. I just, you know, unbelievable it went in.

Q. Chris, back to Friday, did you have any close moments there? You had to finish birdie two of the last 4 to make the cut. How close did you come to not making the cut on those last two holes?

CHRIS COUCH: I went for 15 in two and hit a great shot in there and made a birdie and I knocked it 2 inches on 16 and made birdie. 17, I pulled it in the left bunker where I was today and I hit a great shot out of there to about three feet and made it. It was pretty close. 18 was just a simple par, but I definitely, there was a chance that I could have missed the cut. That just shows you are never out of it out here, you know, if you make the cut you still have a chance.

Q. Talk about a long journey to where you are now, you must have had pretty high hopes when you made the cut at the Honda Classic back a long, long time ago, age 16?

CHRIS COUCH: Yes. I think I used to play baseball and golf at that time. That gave me the taste. I was like you know this is what I want to do. You know I saw Tom Watson, my idol on the putting green, and Payne Stewart, and all of these guys I watched all my life. I got the taste of it when I was 16, and I started working really hard at golf and gave up baseball and it's paid off.

Q. Chris, this has been a long week for you beginning with last Sunday night, obviously we know the story about it, is there anything in there that you want to fill in the holes for us?

CHRIS COUCH: I haven't seen what was written, but I'm sure it was all the truth.

Q. We assume will you not celebrate the same place tonight that you celebrated?

CHRIS COUCH: Yeah, I don't know. You never know. You might see me down there. I kind of like Bourbon Street. I like the City. It was unfortunate what happened.

Q. I'm curious, did you ever locate the cell phone? Did you call --

CHRIS COUCH: No, I haven't. I've another one though.

Q. Can you put this whole week into perspective, can you imagine any other week of this tournament has ever had a week in the City like you have?

CHRIS COUCH: I doubt it. It's been an adventure. But it couldn't have worked out better.

Q. Have you played here before?

CHRIS COUCH: I believe this is my third year playing here. I missed the last two cuts here. I love the golf course. I always love the course.

Q. When the tournament came back here?

CHRIS COUCH: I was happy. I've never played the other course. At least I knew this course. I had some good memories out here. I haven't made the cuts. I played decent and made a lot of birdies out here, just made too many mistakes. I tried to stay away from the mistakes this week.

Q. What is your instructor's name?

CHRIS COUCH: McCann.

Q. Winning the tournament is special, does it add to the specialness for you, this is the first major sports event since the hurricane?

CHRIS COUCH: Yes, I mean, the City has come a long ways. I saw some pictures of what it looked like and still got a lot of rebuilding to do here. It feels good to be the winner here after everything that's happened. For this tournament -- I didn't even think this tournament was going to be happening this year. From what I heard last year, I thought there was no way there was going to be a tournament here this year. I think they've done a great job at the course getting it ready and the town is coming along. I think it's great.

Q. Did you play in Majors before?

CHRIS COUCH: I haven't.

Q. Qualifier or anything?

CHRIS COUCH: No. I actually forgot to sign up for the U.S. Open qualifier. Because I'm in the second stage whatever it is called. Regional or whatever. I forgot to sign up. I missed the deadline on Wednesday. Maybe I can work my way in there.

Q. Play hard the next few weeks?

CHRIS COUCH: That would be nice.

Q. How long have you putted cross handed?

CHRIS COUCH: I don't put cross-handed. I go long.

Q. That's what I meant?

CHRIS COUCH: I started using that putter in 2001. That's been my main struggle this year is the struggle. It came alive this week.

Q. What prompted you to go to that style?

CHRIS COUCH: My Coach told me he wasn't going to Coach me anymore unless I went to it.

Q. Do you like your Coach?

CHRIS COUCH: Yes, it was best move I ever made. I've been in the Top-20 in putting the last four years I believe. This year I have been struggling. It's usually the best part of my game. It showed this week. I putted very well. I missed a few short ones but not many.

Q. This weekend it was the approach shots that were making the difference?

CHRIS COUCH: I think so, I hit a lot of close approach shots and gave myself a lot of chances. Started making a few putts and the confidence came along. It just seemed like it was simple the last two days. Sometimes it feels like that, sometimes you feel like you're playing great and you shoot 72. It's hard to explain.

Q. What's the length of your putter?

CHRIS COUCH: It's -- I'm not sure. I'm not even sure.

Q. If you go out this morning and thought about how you are going to win this tournament, you certainly couldn't have envisioned something like this, to win it like you did with a bogey at 17 and up and down on 18, is incredible, isn't it?

CHRIS COUCH: I will tell you what it couldn't have been a better finish. I would have liked to have made it a little easier, I will tell that you. My heart can't take many of those. It couldn't have been a better finish. I'm sure the crowd loved it.

Q. Was there any part, grant it, you got hosed pretty good with a couple of bad breaks on 17 and 18, was there any part of you that was, that you could feel the pressure caving in like, geez I'm blowing this thing?

CHRIS COUCH: I definitely felt like I was leaking oil. I didn't feel like I hit that bad of a drive on 18. It went to the fairway there. I just got a bit of an unfortunate breaks catching a flier there. Normally that ball wouldn't fly because I had a pretty good lie. But, yes, I did feel like I was leaking oil for sure. But I tried to stay positive, like I said.

Q. That must have been hard?

CHRIS COUCH: It was, it was.

Q. Was there any point especially on 18 where you are wondering maybe this wasn't meant to be especially given the lie you had in the back bunker?

CHRIS COUCH: No, I just kept praying, I kept praying and asking God to help me pull it through.

Q. What iron did you hit on the second shot at 18?

CHRIS COUCH: I hit a wedge. It flew about 170 yards.

Q. Where would the 9-iron have gone?

CHRIS COUCH: Probably would have been better off. Would have hit the back stands and bounced on the green. I didn't think about that though. I maybe should have thought about that.

Q. Chris, Charles described the greens and bunkers as firm, can you elaborate more, Charles described them as concrete like?

CHRIS COUCH: It was. It was like hitting off a cart path. With all of that rain we had last night and this morning, I don't think they had time to rake the bunkers. And they were just all padded down. It was like concrete.

Q. Were they wet?

CHRIS COUCH: Wet, hard. There was no sand underneath. It was like hitting off a cart path.

Q. A lot of players pledged money, have you thought about how much you would give if you were planning?

CHRIS COUCH: I haven't thought with it yet. I also didn't think I was going to win in the beginning of the week. That's something I will think about for sure.

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