

Chrysler Championship  
The Westin Innisbrook Golf Resort  
Copperhead Course  
Tampa Bay, Fl

October 26, 2006

First-round tournament quotes

### AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL CHOPRA

**TODD BUDNICK:** We welcome Daniel Chopra who shot a 4-under, 67 round one of the Chrysler Championship. Daniel, just the one little hiccup there on 18, other than that it was a nice clean round for you.

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** Yes, it was. I putted beautifully today. I've been putting beautifully all year but I putted really well inside of 10 feet today. I don't think I missed a putt inside ten feet. The greens are just perfect. My stroke just feels as good as its ever felt. It was just a matter of being able, if I got the right read, I wasn't going to miss inside ten feet. That was a great feeling to have. So when I did miss the few greens that I missed, I was able to reduce, take some of the pressure off my short game, and just get it in there, anywhere inside 6, 7, 8 feet, I knew that I had a pretty good shot of making that putt. It was a fun round.

**TODD BUDNICK:** You've had a pretty good fall outside of the missed cut last week, you've got four Top-10's since the end of August.

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** Yes, it's been good. I gradually felt like I have improved, you know. Nothing drastic, really, just the fact that I am just gradually improving every part of my game.

Just statistically if you look, obviously, I'm putting well, so that obviously helps and takes some of the pressure off and keeps the momentum going every now and again when maybe you have a putt for par and you make it or make the unexpected birdie.

I think that is one of the major things. Toward the end of the year I'm getting more and more comfortable with my surroundings;

Being comfortable, being a part of the PGA TOUR.

Now I'm getting to the stage where I feel it's time for me to start winning which is basically where I wanted to be and it took me a full three years to get to that point, and I am now really looking forward to next year.

**TODD BUDNICK:** Questions?

Q. Has it been sort of a matter of just keep knocking on the door, you have put yourself there several times?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** Yes, it definitely has been a matter of that. I think the huge

breakthrough was in Vegas on Sunday. Obviously I've won tournaments around the world before. Obviously, nothing as big a stage as the PGA TOUR.

Those last three holes in Vegas I learned a lot about myself. I learned how much I loved that situation. To be in a situation where you are chasing down the leader, with an opportunity to win, where all of your -- I guess your doubts and your fears over bad shots kind of goes away, and all that really matters your focus just tightens, you are being so sharp, and you know exactly what you have to do and the shot you have to hit, and you go out there and you do it.

It was a really neat experience to be able to do that and feel that. It just shed all of the shackles, so to speak, of the battle scars that I had on Sundays, all of the previous part of this year, where I had opportunities, but I wasn't able to grab onto them.

Vegas just grabbed all of those straight out. I really played quite well there.

I just can't wait to get back into position to have a chance to win again now and just get that feeling. That opportunity, coming down the stretch, those last three or four holes.

Even the back 9, it was just so much fun, and I loved it.

Other pressure situations sometimes you're not really that comfortable, you don't enjoy it that much, you feel like things are slipping away and it's not fun. Having a chance to win really changed that for me.

Q. You mentioned battle scars, was it something where you were having a hard time getting over not coming through in some of those chances?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** Oh, yes, I knew it was just a matter of time. Like I said, I said it the Saturday of Vegas I can't play badly every single Sunday. Statistically eventually you will fluke one. I knew that's all I ever needed. Through my entire past I've always been that way. It takes me a while to get to learn a situation, get comfortable with a situation, and then I just bulldoze right through it.

Sometimes it takes a little longer for me to figure it out, but once I do get it figured out -- I've always said, the best lessons learned are the ones you learn yourself.

I have gone out there and I learned everything myself. I put myself in every imaginable situation, and I've come out the other end now knowing what I need to do.

Every poor round you play puts more pressure on the next round to succeed until you finally get that good round, and then all of the pressure from the previous eight bad finishes goes away, and you start from scratch again.

The next time, hopefully I'm in contention come Sunday this week, I will be totally relaxed with a great opportunity.

Q. It seems like there is a lot of different styles of player near the top of the leaderboard, I don't know if you noticed, Heath Slocum, Chad Campbell, does the course sort of lend itself to that? It doesn't really require one style?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** I think it actually suits them more. Chad and Heath are renowned for being very straight hitters, hit a lot of fairways, give themselves great opportunities.

I kind of don't do that. I hit a few less fairways but I'm very good at recovering and getting the ball onto the green from whatever difficult situation I may be in.

This golf course doesn't really suit my eye that well off the tee. It's very difficult for me, I see, to put the ball in the fairway. I really feel like I have to throttle back tremendously to put the ball in the fairway. All of my driving landing areas are impossibly narrow and if I hit 3-wood on a lot of those holes, or whatever, I feel like I'm not getting quite as far as I should be. And these are the driver holes that I'm talking about.

Then there is 3-wood holes where my 3-wood goes too far, and really I don't have a club that I can put the club in the fairway. I'm always trying to fiddle around with a shot

trying to get the ball in. Hopefully use the wind to my advantage, if it's into the wind, I can go ahead and be fairly aggressive with the tee shot and make sure it doesn't go too far.

The fairways are dry right now, so they're bouncing, and some of them have a little slope in it, they are at weird angles. It's just very difficult. You have to hit the perfect shot to put the ball in the fairway.

It's just something that everybody is going to have to deal with this week and somebody that can do that has won. The greens are so good and the fairways are perfect that if you hit the ball in the fairway, you will have a pretty good shot of making birdie.

Q. You say it's taken you three years to get to this point, how does that compare to your expectations when you first came out?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** Well, I knew. The same thing with the Nationwide Tour my first year I was out there, I struggled trying to learn the ropes, how everything works in my head, not how. Just getting comfortable of being in a new place.

The next year I learned from it and, you know, I was in contention whole bunch. I made like almost every cut on TOUR. I finished 23rd on the Money List but I played really well.

Then I got out here. And then every year I improved. I always improved. That's something I like about what I do. I always find a way to make it better from before.

That's all I ever try to do. Whatever little piece that I've got with me, I always try to improve it; whether it's my driving, my chipping, my putting, my iron play, my bunker shots, my shaping of the ball, I improve. And I constantly strive to do that.

I look at my tournaments and I'll see how I did in those in the past, and I'll go okay. I have all of the scores written down in my yardage books. I go to every event, I say, okay, let's improve on last year.

If I had a really good tournament, for instance, it might not be that great a goal to improve, then I will look at the stats. It might not be that great a goal to improve, then I will look at the stats and say, I've never hit 18 greens, I never hit 17 or 14 fairways, or whatever. Or I never broken par all four days. I never had a bogey free round. Like this week I've never had a bogey free round. Last year I had three rounds with a bogey I came to the last hole and I had that. Unfortunately I got a bad break in the bunker and I wasn't able to do take. That's what I'll be going for the next three rounds.

That's something that works for me. I always try to improve, and I keep raising that bar. Once you look at the next level, staying at the level that you're at is easy because you always trying to improve.

Q. Daniel, I think you are No. 1 in putting on TOUR. Do you think you're the best putter on TOUR? Is that statistic accurate?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** I don't want to go out and say I am the best putter on TOUR. I am definitely one of the best putters on TOUR. I have no problem saying that. I have always been a very good putter. That's one part of my game I'm very proud of. I think I ignored all of the kids as Junior golfers growing up who said good putters are just lucky golfers. Golf is all about fairways and greens and good ball strikers are good golfers. I guess I turned a deaf ear to them, and I was very proud of my putting. My coach always told me, never, ever, say you're a bad putter, even when you're putting poorly. I never have. I've always said that I'm a great putter, and I always will.

The fact that I'm leading the putting stats really doesn't surprise me. I feel like that's something. I don't even have to work on it very hard. It's something that's a mental thing. Putting has always been mental to everybody. I think I have a very good mental attitude when it comes to putting. It's obviously shown this year.

Q. So even as a junior you were --

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** Oh, yes, I was always a great putter. Everybody always used to say, Daniel, what a great putter, what a great short game. I think a lot of the short game came from the fact that I holed a good putt to get that ball up and down. But my short game needs a lot of improvement.

That's another thing that I'm very happy about is when I look at my year. People say, oh, you've had a great year. I look at it and say there is so much room for improvement.

There is so many parts of my game that I can really work on if I can make it better who knows where it can go.

Q. Are you a natural at reading greens?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** I'm very good. I think part of the reason that I'm good is because of the fact that I've grown up, and I played all over the world. You know, I started playing golf in India on very poor greens. I traveled, played a lot of tournaments around India on greens that are not up to professional standards. I played in Asia, I played in Europe, Australia, Japan, America, South America. I played all over the world. So I'm totally comfortable on every surface. Absolutely. It doesn't matter where it is. I go to Pebble Beach, and everybody complains how bad the greens are. I say I putt my best on those greens. One, your expectations go down. Even if you hit a good putt it doesn't go in.

And I say well, okay, let's just give it a good shot. The pressure, you're not expected to make it, and you make more. Improving that's what I'm trying to do, every part of my game. Putting is going to be hard though.

Q. When amateurs ask you for advice, do you have any specific advice on how to become a better putter?

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** There is a number of things. Obviously, putting you need a fairly sound stroke, a putter that goes up and down a path, whatever path it may be. It should be consistently back and through. Then once you get that putter moving back and forth, whether it's a straight line or a slightly curved line, whatever the way you see it to your eye, after that, once you have that technique down, after that it becomes purely mental, and there is a lot of mental tricks that you can play with yourself to make a putt seem easier to you.

I usually tell amateur golfers, I'll explain to them, everyone is different. And putting is so unique and so personal, there is not really one pure technique. I putt both right hand low and left hand low. I will switch to left hand low whenever I feel like I'm not as comfortable. For the second half of the season I actually putted left hand low. I've always putted well left hand low. In fact almost consistently. Especially under pressure. But I think I was a bit to vane, my putting stroke looks so beautiful and so pretty when my right hand is low, I was hesitant. And I think again with experience it really doesn't matter what it looks like as long as it goes on.

**TODD BUDNICK:** Let's go through your card, birdies and bogey.

**DANIEL CHOPRA:** My first birdie on the sixth hole, again, that's probably the most difficult fairway on the golf course to hit.

I actually got a pretty good break, I hit it over the corner on the right-hand side and I got a firm bounce and ran into the middle of the fairway and hit a sand wedge into six or seven feet.

7, I had a really nice punchy drawn 9-iron in there to about eight or nine feet.

9, I hit a sand wedge, almost pitched into the hole to maybe three feet.

On 11, I hit a lob wedge to maybe eight feet, made that.

On 14, I hit another lob wedge. This one probably the longest one as well, a 12-footer. It was a tough putt, I was downhill left-to-right and I read it perfectly. The bogey on 18, I actually hit a pretty decent drive, off the left edge of the fairway and it bounced through about a foot right of the bunker. And that was obviously a raised lip, so I could only stand inside the bunker, so I had a huge -- it was almost like a baseball swing, and try to hit a baseball swing with a pitching wedge. There is not much you can do with that. I hit a good shot just left of the flag stick it carried on the green, you couldn't hit it better and it still ran off because of the rough and was coming in so flat. They ran all the way through the back of the green. It was probably the toughest chip shot you will ever have on this golf course, straight downhill out of the rough. I just miscued it a little bit.

TODD BUDNICK: Thank you, Daniel.

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