

**PODS Championship
Innisbrook Golf Resort
Copperhead Course
Tampa Bay, Fl**

March 8, 2007

First-round leader quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL CHOPRA

JOE CHEMAZYCZ: We welcome Daniel Chopra.

Daniel, 4-under par 67 today, very difficult conditions, difficult golf course, people told us to start the week, maybe just talk about your impressions and your first day and we'll open it up.

DANIEL CHOPRA: Well, the conditions weren't tough. Maybe a little bit -- over the years I've noticed around here the wind is not really necessary just one direction the whole way. It kind of swirls. You really have to pay attention to how the wind changes with every angles of every hole.

But as far as the strength of the wind, it wasn't anywhere any where near as strong as to where we were last week, so it was more manageable.

The golf course regardless is extremely difficult just because of the fact that the rough is high, and there is very intimidating tee shots, tough to get it in the fairway. You kind of need to make sure you know where your bad shots miss. If you can miss a few fairways in the right spots you might still have some shots into the greens. If you miss in the wrong spot, you're dead.

JOE CHEMAZYCZ: 5 of 13 fairways for you today.

DANIEL CHOPRA: Yes, I actually hit it in the first cut a few times. I was probably a little bit better than that. I didn't necessarily drive the ball wonderfully well..

JOE CHEMAZYCZ: Questions?

Q. It's pretty much the same golf course as except for the over seed that you saw in the fall or is it playing a lot differently?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Well, not necessarily a lot differently. I would say you might get a few more bad lies in the rough now than what you did back then. However, when it was Bermuda, you got these huge fliers, I mean the biggest fliers we hit all year was last year here. So you could actually advance the ball and get it to the green for the most part, but then it was coming in at a million miles an hour and getting the ball to stop on the green was nearly impossible. You know, it kind of depends. Now I guess you can get a break and you can get a good lie. Towards the end of the week you'll get better and better lies, it gets more trampled down. I think you will find, depending on whether the

greens are firmer or not, it's difficult to say. I think the definition looks-wise, the golf course looks better over seeded because there is better definition with the fairway and the rough. Where as in the Fall, when it's starting to go dormant, my opinion was, it always looked a little scruffy. You couldn't really quite tell where the edges were, it wasn't that well defined. So it will look better a hell of a lot better on TV, and actually looks better to the eye, as we play it now, we can actually see the fairways a little better, so it may be easier to shape the shots into them.

Q. Do you feel like you are riding in on pretty good vibe off of last week, and where do you think you are with your game?

DANIEL CHOPRA: I'm a little worn out after last week. We are not getting much of a break this week with the golf course. And Bay Hill right after that. So we are going to have three weeks of pretty intense play. I was pretty exhausted after last week. It was really tough. You know, I guess we are going to have to get more and more used to playing tougher and tougher golf courses. This is a beauty here.

Q. How big a roll do you think Jesper has played in Sweden's rise as a golf country?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Quite a bit actually. I think it's like with any sport in any small nation, you have one that does well, and there is a lot of others that think well, if he came from where we came from, we can do it too.

And I think he really did kind of lead the way for the Swedes to travel the world, come over here. He was just about the first at everything, come over here, not the first to win here. But the first to be successful over here. I think now there is even more now, we got Stenson and before that, you know, Gabriel Yestic (phn) came and won over here. So there is a lot of guys that believe they can come over here and play well successfully.

Q. Do countrymen think of him as eccentric and somewhat different than he comes across here?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Probably not as much as what you would see him. I'd say he would be more eccentric to the American people than he would to the Swedes, but yes. Anyone that eats volcanic sand -- it makes total sense when he explains it to you, but surely there is a pill for that.

Q. Henrik Stenson is a good one because he comes here and plays well, and the Americans don't see it because the Americans aren't looking to the European TOUR?

DANIEL CHOPRA: I think it's really come a long way. It's good in a way -- unfortunately they lost a few of their stars, they play more over here. But their base players are really good solid players. There is more of them. That's why I think there is more of them that come over here and surprise the American media and public when they play well, is that it's gotten a lot deeper over the years, the quality of the fields in Europe. I think they are catching up very quickly. Obviously, the Ryder Cup says that the cream of the crop on both tours are pretty equal, but when it comes to the depth I think Europe was just a little bit behind. I will tell you now what, I think it's going to be very, very close.

Q. Jesper talked about how over in Sweden hockey and soccer still rule, that golf is really low on the totem pole. When you look at the leaderboard and you see two Swedes way up there, how special is that?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Well, for us -- I don't know about special. But there is a lot of countries actually if you think about it, there is a lot of small countries that excel in certain sports. If you look at Romania, and what a power house they were in the

Olympics gym gymnastics, and there is only how many people, maybe only four or five million in the whole country, and they were always in the top six or seven in the medals tally in the Olympic games.

So I think it's a little bit to do with the culture. You don't need a million people to play well to get superstars, you just need one or two. And I think it's the belief, and it's just the fact that we can do it. And I think Sweden has a very advanced scientific approach to their sport. They have provided a lot of good access to Junior Golf. I think there is a little bit lacking here in America where country clubs charge you a quarter of a million dollars to be a member, whether you are a 14-year-old prodigy or not. Where as in Sweden, it doesn't matter, the most private and the most luxurious golf club there will allow a Junior member to come in and play if he's good for next to nothing, and they will encourage him.

He can book his tee time in the middle of the summer at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on a Saturday afternoon. He has the same rights, equal rights as a member, and I think they provide that encouragement to the children, to the kids that excel, and allow them access to good practice facilities and give them whatever they want to get better. I think there is not enough of that here in America. I think it's a bit too corporate when it comes to bottom line, and dollars, and they kind of lose sight a little bit of where the future of the game is going as far as talent.

Q. It's early this week, you put yourself in the mix a lot of times the last couple of years. I'm wondering does that kind of give you an calming thing knowing that. You are giving yourself a lot of chances. Is there an anciness?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Oh, no, it's actually the other way around. Yes, it as a calming thing. First when you get yourself in position, and you don't get it done, you feel like, oh my God, when is the next opportunity going to arise.

And then you don't get it done again, but then again the next week you are up there again, and then you are up there again, and you are up there again. So I know I'm good go to get my chances. And so you know eventually you will get more and more comfortable with it. Once I get that first win under, it will be a bit like with David Duval when he won, and he just kept on going.

Once I get that first win under my belt -- and you need luck, everybody will tell you, for your first won, even last week, you hit a bad shot, not even a bad shot, but you hit a so so shot, instead of kind of bouncing on the edge of the bunker and bouncing in the bunker, you bounce away, and you make par or birdie instead of a bogey, you know, and your momentum goes forward, and you just keep it going.

I don't want to say I'm waiting for a lucky break, but I think you need something like that to happen in your first win unless you are winning by six or seven. I'm not inpatient, golf careers are long. It's fun just know putting yourself in position, that's one of the key things, getting yourself there on Sunday, getting in those last few televised groups where people are watching and eventually getting it done.

Q. Was there a significant difference how you look at yourself and your game say from the start of last year before you really started putting yourself in?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Yes, I think I mentioned earlier this year, starting this year was the most comfortable I felt starting a year on the PGA TOUR. I felt very much at ease. I felt like it was a first time when I started the year without one of my major thoughts being, I got to keep my card, make sure I get my card. I thought that will take care of itself. That's nothing I have to worry about anymore. So that was a good feeling. I felt like I already moved onto the next level and to the next step.

Now I want to be one of the guys that's winning golf tournaments. I want to be one of

the top players out here. I jokingly mentioned to the Golf Channel, I said I want to be one of those guys, the notables, I want to be one of them. I just don't want to be one of those guys that they always skip on the leaderboard. They mention him, they mention him, they skip that guy, which they have been doing. So I say, well, it's time I started winning, and then they won't skip my name. I feel like that's where I am right now and that's where I should be. Now I just have to get the job done.

Q. In your mind is the biggest difference between making that next jump a component of your game that you feel is missing? It's a mental thing?

DANIEL CHOPRA: It's all mental. I mean physically I was ready to win when I first came out here from Nationwide Tour. You can't play this game without your brain telling you how to do it. The brain is what keeps you from playing well. Unfortunately it makes you play well, but you get in your own way.

I think the biggest transition for me was playing for those huge purses coming off the Nationwide Tour, and playing in Asia and Europe, I wasn't used to. With these big ties you have out here, you have a pot on Sunday that could be worth 70, \$80,000. I wasn't used to it and it was a bit intimidating for me.

Now I'm starting to get more and more comfortable with those big numbers, and you try not to think of it as much. I think I had a threshold, on the Nationwide Tour \$10,000 was a good check. Everything under that was so so. Between 5 and 10 you were still kind of -- anything under 5 you didn't bother.

Tenfold now, your threshold rises. I used to be nervous over 25,000 when I first came out here. If you are in 40th place, I didn't want to screw up and only make 10.

Now I'm at the point where that threshold has risen. Outside of Top-10 doesn't matter that much. It's jumped quite considerably. You want to get to where when Tiger, all he really cares about is the win. So I'm moving in the right direction, my comfort level seems like it's risen. Unfortunately, it's not rising as quickly as maybe some of the guys out here. But I think part of it has to do with the fact, like I said, I love watching the game, and I listen to the commentators way too much, and they build it up and they make it seem so difficult sometimes.

Q. Too many things going on in your head?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Yes, I guess. But I'm making progress. I feel in my head that I'm going forward and I'm feeling better about who I am.

Q. Daniel, (inaudible) does it feel like it's taking a long time to get here?

DANIEL CHOPRA: I think it took longer than I anticipated. I went through the bleak spell there around late 90's, early 2000, and kind of set me back a bit. A lot of mental scars from that. It was like three years or somewhere I didn't really do very well.

Q. That was on the Asian Tour?

DANIEL CHOPRA: Yes, I went back to Asia, and I started playing better and I won, and I was one of the better players over there, and I came here. And my first year on the Nationwide Tour was a bit of a disaster. I was just overwhelmed with all of the travel, and the big show, and I got comfortable with that.

So I guess I would say I was about four or five years behind schedule. But if I stay fit and strong maybe I can extend my career by four or five years, and I will be all right.

JOE CHEMYCZ: Take us through your birdies and your lone bogey if you don't mind real quick.

DANIEL CHOPRA: Well, the only bogey was just a 3-putt. That putt was a lot

quicker than I thought actually when I hit it. Usually you have a good feel for it and I saw the ball rolling. Halfway there, I was thinking it's going to roll right up next to it and it kept going, and going and going. And I missed the one coming back.

My first birdie was a good about a 35-footer, I actually had a beautiful second shot, it was right at it. But it was a bit cool, it was into the wind, and I guess it came up short. It did come up short. I was surprised to see that but I made that.

I chipped in on 9 which kind of really got me going. It was a beautiful chip, it was moving just a little bit firm, it hit the pin and went in.

On 11, I hit a sand wedge from about 105 yards to three feet.

On 12, I hit an 8-iron from 155 into the wind which I don't know how that missed. It stopped maybe two inches left of the hole. So that was just a little tap-in.

On 14, I had exactly the same yardage 155, I hit the same punch draw, pitched two feet short of the hole, went right up to the edge of the hole, spun left, about two feet left of the hole.

So I nearly holed two 8-irons in a row. The two 8-irons that I hit. Exact same yardage, exact same wind, and I hit the exact same shot both times, and they both nearly went in.

And then 16, 17 and 18 I made good par saves.

JOE CHEMYCZ: Daniel, thank you.

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