

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

**October 25, 2006**

**Pre-round tournament quotes**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH ERNIE ELS**

**TODD BUDNICK:** We welcome Ernie Els to the 2006 Chrysler Championship. Ernie, coming in number 30 on the Money List. You need to hopefully make a few dollars this week to get you into next week's TOUR Championship.

Just talk a little about being here this week.

**ERNIE ELS:** It's good to be here, obviously. It's good to be here. I haven't been over here since the PGA or the World Series. I kind of had a pretty quiet schedule, quiet season so to speak of.

I'm looking forward to obviously a good week here. It's a really good golf course. They got it in good shape. I've played it a couple of times. You know they can have any kind of a big event here. It's that good.

At least you're not going to have a 24-under par winning score here this week. The guy that does will win by 12 or 13 if you do. But it makes me a bit more comfortable.

I like tougher golf courses. The last two weeks I've been working really hard on my game. I'm looking forward to the week here.

I came here a little early because the weather has been getting a little bit crappy in England, so I came over on Sunday, landed and went next door to the Bucs' game. That was pretty cool.

So at least we've had better weather over here, and I am looking forward to a good week.

**TODD BUDNICK:** We'll take some questions.

Q. Did you see the quarterback throw up?

**ERNIE ELS:** I missed that. I got to see the replay on television in the box. I missed that. But it must have been so warm. It must have been over 100 degrees or something. Where we were sitting it was about 90. Thank God I'm not football player.

Q. You picked a good one to go to, didn't you?

**ERNIE ELS:** I've never seen players like those. I saw a 30 yard penalty, a guy kicking the umpire's yellow flag a couple of times. The team got penalized 30 yards. I've never seen that. And obviously, the field goal for 61 or 62 yards.

And the guy that we went with, his wife was gracious enough to host us, Ronde Barber. I

mean he had a game of his year probably. It was all a good Sunday if you are a Buccaneers fan.

Q. I promise we will get to golf in a second. I'm curious, was that your first NFL game?

**ERNIE ELS:** No, I've been to quite a few.

Q. On what occasion?

**ERNIE ELS:** I've been around for a long time. I was quite a Cowboys fan when I lived in Dallas.

Q. You say Ronde invited you?

**ERNIE ELS:** I wanted to come early so we were looking around to get some tickets. I didn't expect to sit in a box. So he was gracious enough to give myself and my friends, you know, a couple of tickets.

Q. He is a huge golf fan?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I he met him afterwards after the game, yes. He has been to England, so I said, you know, I would like to return the favor to him. My favorite team is Manchester United. So I will take him up there.

Q. You won't take him to the Ashes?

**ERNIE ELS:** No, that's not my team. Neither of those teams are.

Q. When Todd said 30th on the Money List it's a little surprising to us, I guess that that's where you would be. How about yourself, it's been a bit of a different year for you?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, it has been. I think the other time I missed it was in '98. I finished outside of the Top-30 playing a full schedule. I'm playing a full schedule this year, and I'm 30th. So I really don't want to miss it. Finishing Top-30 would give you something. I haven't had too much to grab onto this year. I've had some good finishes outside of the U.S., quite a few, Top-5's and so forth, and a couple of playoffs that I lost. In the U.S. itself I haven't really been up to my best. So finishing Top-30 will give you something, you know, on this side of the Atlantic. At least, I did something decent. And I think if you ask the players, at the end of the year, if you are in the final field of the year, you feel good about yourself and most of the players will feel that they've had a pretty successful year.

Q. I guess you just said it, there is an urgency then this week? Is it going to be a blow to your pride if you don't make it?

**ERNIE ELS:** You know what; I've had many blows the last couple of years. It wouldn't be that big a deal. But, you know, I'm looking forward to a really good week. But my actual goal is to get into the Mercedes Championship, that's the urgency I want. I want to start the year in Hawaii. All of the years I've started in Hawaii I have had good years. I would love to get this. The only way I can get this is to win this week or next week. That's what I want to kind of focus on.

Q. What are you waiting to see in your game, what's going to be the thing that pushes you forward, that little bit?

**ERNIE ELS:** You know I think I'm really focused a lot better. Ever since after the World Series I've really tried to refocus myself, give myself a goal that I want to work at. I've given myself a realistic goal for the next three years and that means that I have to dedicate myself physically and mentally, obviously, and be very dedicated to the goal.

So far, it's been a short time since then. It's good to have a clear goal that I want to try to achieve in a couple of year's time, and not really giving yourself a six-month goal or two-month goal because I feel no longer or nothing, that's when I'm going to be my best. So I think I am definitely refocused and dedicated.

Q. Is there any significance attached to the three years instead of five, instead of two?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes. If you look at where the No. 1 player is right now, you are not going to get near him in one year or two years. So I got to give myself three-year stretch to try to approach him.

Q. You want to get back to No. 1?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes.

Q. Has the difficulty you've gone through, does that still date back to the injury, or is that long since gone?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I think this year I would say a good six months of the year I was still getting over the injury in the head, getting your brain to forget about what was going on, and that's been very difficult. It's been a tough year.

But I think, all in all, it hasn't been the year that I've had in past years, or my performance hasn't been that good and consistent as previous years. But, you know, in what's happened the last year and a half, you know, I think I'm not doing too badly yet.

It's not like I've fallen off the map completely. I haven't been consistent, I know that. But I don't want to read too much into it. I want to get back and forget about the past and look forward and start moving forward toward my goal.

Q. You were one, I think the last time was '97 or '98, would it be more meaningful getting there now than it was the first time around when you first got there?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, it seems like the game has totally changed since the '90's. I think '97, you're right; I was No. 1 for a week. '98 I was No. 1 for a couple of weeks.

I mean, from then to where we are now, equipment changes, the guys just looking fitter and stronger. Guys, more guys playing at a higher level. The TOUR just basically a lot stronger than it was in '98. Yes, it's a different game.

But I feel like I've adapted well. I think physically I'm in much better shape than I was in my late 20's. And I feel my swing has come a long way also since that time. I think I've had a couple of blows, body blows, losing tournaments, close tournaments. I think that's par for the course.

For a good 4, 5, 6 years here, I played at a very high level. When you get in contention, you are going to lose quite a bit, especially playing against Tiger.

So that's in the past, as I've said, I feel good about my game. I feel good about my equipment, physically myself. There are a lot of good things to look forward to, I guess.

Q. You mentioned the past a couple of times here, did you get caught up in the past the last 18 months, too much looking back instead of looking forward?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I think so. You know, you give it your best, and you think you've done the best you can and things don't quite fall into place. So you look back and you try to figure out a way in what you've done wrong. Yes, maybe I've fallen into that trap a little bit.

But as I say, it's been a good, long 18 months and I'm ready to change things around a little bit. It will take a while but that's my goal.

Q. How will next year's new schedule impact you? It is it going to make it difficult

playing here and Europe? Or do you have to do more juggling than normal?

**ERNIE ELS:** It works great for me. I love the changes that they've made. I love TPC they changed to May. For the European guys, when we play on mainland Great Britain there is some big events that's going to unfortunately going to conflict with tournaments over here. So it's going to have a bit of an impact on some of the events here and over there.

I'm just thinking about The International -- you might as well get a new name for it basically because you are not going to get too many international players. The next week is Loch Lomond. I might play The International, but some of guys won't do that. It's too far to fly. You will have a couple of problems over here and over there. But I like it. I'm going to play Wachovia Championship. I'm going to play some big events. I'm not going to play Byron Nelson unfortunately. But my schedule won't change too much. It will be the same amount of events that I've played the last 10, 12 years. It will just be at little bit different times.

Q. Anywhere you might get to for the first time?

**ERNIE ELS:** What's that?

Q. If you look at the schedule, and the points and all of that, anywhere you might get to where you haven't been before?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I will go to Las Vegas. I haven't been to Las Vegas since '91. I'm sure it's changed a little bit.

Q. You go to Vegas?

**ERNIE ELS:** I will go to Vegas. I played Wachovia this year, I will play it again.

Q. Boston?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I will go to Boston.

Q. Chicago?

**ERNIE ELS:** Chicago I'm going there the end of the year stretch, so I will go to a couple of new places.

Q. What will take you to Vegas since it's after the thing?

**ERNIE ELS:** Well, you know, it's that time. I think I got it in a schedule. I think I'm playing (inaudible). It's either one or the other one. I think there is two there next year.

Q. You are someone that is going to play round no matter what's at stake, not to keep beating yourself, but just to keep playing tournament golf?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I've got some good events. I signed up a good deal with Barclays in Singapore so I will go there for the next three of four years. I will play the Johnnie Walker next year in Phuket. And then we've done a deal with BMW to play the Wentworth event -- no, excuse me, the Munich event and the Shanghai event.

Q. They are going to have the Shanghai event?

**ERNIE ELS:** There is a BMW there as well on the European Tour. And then obviously in the Middle East I will go to Qatar and Dubai.

Q. They didn't move that to the fall?

**ERNIE ELS:** Maybe they will do it one day.

Q. They just don't listen to you?

**ERNIE ELS:** Maybe it will be good.

Q. If you talk about the competition today and where it's going to be coming from, if you look at Adam or Trevor, Luke Donald, Paul Casey, there is a long list of good young players; not many of them Americans, any idea why that is? Really all of these guys are playing on the PGA TOUR, is it the upbringing?

**ERNIE ELS:** That's a good question.

Q. I don't mean their manners?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I know what you're saying. Where we come from to play on this TOUR, obviously you have to travel, and you go about things a little bit differently. In the U.S., they go to school, school to college, and go into the U.S. TOUR, or Nationwide Tour, so you don't really need to leave the U.S., which would be a great thing, I will tell you one thing. I would have had a -- I have had a great life but it would have been a lot more comfortable to me coming out of South Africa, or Australia. I don't want to bring up the Internationals are more hungry because I don't think that's quite a case. I think everybody that wants to be a professional golfer, you have your certain goals and you work towards it.

I just think that our games are more adaptable, international players. Aussie's play on hard, fast surfaces with a lot of wind.

Q. And desert?

**ERNIE ELS:** South Africa, very similar but different conditions, different golf courses. We have links courses down there. We have inland, park land courses. Trevor comes from Capetown. I come from Johannesburg. It looks like we are going the same route. Retief comes from up where I am. We've had to travel early on. We played Europe as amateurs. We played Europe as professionals. I think we played on very different surfaces a lot of the times, instead of having a one dimensional game; we've got more shots earlier on in our career. We don't have to learn so many new things when we turn pro. College golf is one dimensional in so many ways. You got a coach telling you when to lay up and when to go for it. So you're not really that individualistic as it should be. You are not doing your own thing. You are listening to other people. That could have an effect.

But conditions over here are what you dream of, to grow up. You've got everything possible that's here for you. Great teachers, great ranges, great golf courses. You can look at it both ways.

Q. You said this time and in the past how much you've enjoyed this golf course, you are coming into a week where you admit you need to get something done. Is it comforting to be on a golf course that you do like? Is it easier to come in and feel like I can put pressure on myself this week?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes. I would say -- I would say 80 percent of the golf course I really like. I like the way the holes are shaped, the way they bend. I like the greens. The greens are going to be quick and quite firm, so you got to keep the ball in play. There are a couple of holes I don't like. Like the sixth hole, it's a dogleg to the right, going against a slope, it's tough to hit that fairway.

But most of the course, I really like the golf course. It's got some undulation unlike other Florida golf courses that we play. The bunkering is different than other courses we play. And as you said, we are playing a difficult course and it's comforting to know that a low score is not going to win here.

So I've got some breathing room, so to speak. I like playing courses like this. You got to be right on from the first tee shot. You got to be concentrating from the first go. I just feel more comfortable that way.

So there is more pressure on me, I got to try to win, Top-30 and all of that stuff. I feel a bit more comfortable on a course like this than say Disney.

Q. Ernie, as you look back at just this year, what part of your game has let you down? What part of your game do you think has improved?

**ERNIE ELS:** I think what's let me down is my putting and my driving. Both have improved, especially when I played in Europe the past couple of weeks. I drove the ball much better at The Grove. And I hit a lot of greens. My putting wasn't that great. I feel like my stroke is good.

At St. Andrews, it might not have looked like it, but I hit a lot better putts and made some good putts especially from inside ten feet where I missed a lot from.

And I have been working on my swing the last two weeks also.

Q. Who are you working with?

**ERNIE ELS:** I'm still with Led. We have a couple of new moves, hopefully it comes off.

Q. What do you do to get the putting on track when you go through a stretch where it's not great?

**ERNIE ELS:** Well, first of all, because I haven't driven the ball that well, you know, I think I've put a lot of pressure on my putting, so I missed greens, and then you got it from inside ten feet a lot of times for pars. A lot of times at crucial points in the round where I felt like if I made this putt, you can go on to having a free round, and then a lot of times I missed those putts at crucial points.

You know, I think my driving is a little better so it gives me more chances to hit the greens and it takes the pressure off the putting a little bit more.

You don't have all of that pressure on every putt that you hit on a golf course. It makes it a little bit easier to play.

I think it's a whole snowball effect from the driving.

Q. There was a girl from South Africa who played a key roll in the world amateur team victory which is from your foundation, which must make you feel pretty proud?

**ERNIE ELS:** Yes, I know they're doing well. I was down there after the British Open. I spent some time with them down there. I was very proud of the victory in the Chicago. They made a little home video. I was so happy and proud. They met Tiger. It's a great bunch of kids and I'm really happy to be involved with them. They've got some talent. We try and take kind of people that can't play the game really, coming from limited resources and work with them and they really come through well. School work can be a little bit better. I think they have too much time to play golf but we are working on that.

Q. If everyone thinks or believes that The International team is good, if not stronger than Europe, why does Europe kick the U.S., what are your thoughts on that?

**ERNIE ELS:** That's the million dollar question. We probably got the best team on paper except for Tiger. But where our guys are in the world rankings, where Europe is in the world rankings, and where the U.S. are, we got a strong argument that we are the strongest team. We get beat almost every time.

And the U.S. has got no chance against the Europeans at the moment. It's hard to figure

out. It's team stuff. It's team sport. Team commitment. Team energy. Europeans just have the mojo at the moment so to speak. We are looking for it.

TODD BUDNICK: Thank you, Ernie. Good luck this week.

**ERNIE ELS:** Thanks, guys.

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