

**Nissan Open
Riviera Country Club
Pacific Palisades, CA
February 14, 2006**

Pre-tournament quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRIK STENSON

TODD BUDNICK: We welcome Henrik Stenson, a member of the European Tour playing his first event over here on U.S. soil this year.

Henrik, off to a great start on the European Tour, Second in the Order of Merit. You finished second in Abu Dhabi, you won the Qatar Masters, and finished tied for seventh at the Dubai Desert Classic.

Just talk about your great start to the season, over on the European Tour, and then follow into what you are looking for this week at the Nissan Open.

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, it's been probably the best possible start for me this year and when you play the first tournament of the year, you're always wondering how your form is, and if you are going to be able to take on where you left it last year. I guess it worked out pretty well for me. A great start to the year. And I didn't win anything last year, so it was great to get one in this early. So I'm very happy with the start, and it's the first time I'm playing at a regular TOUR event in America. I played three events last year, two of the World Tour events and the US,PGA.

So it's a bit different just playing a normal TOUR event, hopefully I can do some good this week and let it know where it takes us.

Q. Your seventh on the European Tour, you seemed to have progressed each year up the ladder, to the point where you are 17th in the world right now. Are you surprised at 29 that you've made that short of progression, or did you think you would have that kind of game earlier in your career?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, it's kind of hard to know for sure what's going to happen throughout the years. I've just worked hard and it's really paid off the last 12/15 months and got some really good results. I'm happy with the way things are going and looking forward to the rest of the season.

Q. Talk about what in your game has gotten you to this point. As I said you were 176th on the Order of Merit in '02, 68, 32, 82, it's a nice progression, but what is it in your game that has taken you to this point?

HENRIK STENSON: I think I've sharpened up pretty much every department. Mentally I'm better and I work hard with my Coach Peter Cowen and we sorted of raised every department, is a little bit better than it used to be. It's coming along nicely.

TODD BUDNICK: We'll take some questions.

Q. How much has the Ryder Cup been on your mind the last two years? And is that any incentive to your good play also of late?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, I mean starting -- first of all playing on the Ryder Cup, and winning the Ryder Cup has been like a dream since I started to play when I was about 11. So it's always been of great importance to me. And it's been something I've always wanted to play.

So when I started last year, my plan was to try and improve my game throughout the year and be as good as I could be when the points started to count.

And I came out with a second, third and third in pretty much the first three events that I played. So I don't know if you can plan things like that. But that's the way it went.

And then with this great start I've had this year, it's looking like, I'm probably 90 percent sure we're going to be on the team as it stands now. So it's a great thing if I can make it, and obviously try to win it.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your career path, when you turned pro. I'm guessing you probably didn't go to college, which is the way most of the guys over here do, where you played early on and sort of developed to get to where you have been on the European Tour pretty steadily the last three or four years?

HENRIK STENSON: I actually spent quite a bit of time over here in my amateur days because my girlfriend went to the University of South Carolina. So I spent quite a bit of time in Columbia.

Q. I'm sorry to hear that.

HENRIK STENSON: Are you a Clemson fan?

Q. No. No. You know that though.

HENRIK STENSON: So I spent quite a bit of time there. Then I turned pro the end of '98. Played the Eisenhower trophy and turned pro, played '99 a few tournaments on the Challenge Tour and did pretty well, and then that earned me full exemption for the following year and I won the Challenge Tour in 2000. I got on the main Tour in '01 and won the Benson & Hedges, probably my seventh or eighth start on the main Tour that year. So success came pretty early. Then I struggled with my game for quite a long time.

I didn't feel like I could start up '01 as well as I played in 2000, got it together for two weeks and won one of them.

And I played bad for a year and a half, two years and worked with my new coach. And then sort of the end of '03, I had some good tournaments. And then the middle of 2004 I played good since then pretty much.

Q. I have to follow up on the South Carolina. You said you came over while your girlfriend, was she going to the University of South Carolina?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes.

Q. And just sort of hung around for a little while?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, she was over there all the time so that was the only time I could come over and see her basically. I was still amateur and I came over and practiced for like six or seven weeks in the spring. And the same in the fall.

Q. Was she a golfer?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes. Yes she was on the women's golf team.

Q. What was her name?

HENRIK STENSON: Emma Lovegren (phonetic.)

Q. Does she play professional?

HENRIK STENSON: No, she tried it for a little while. I actually caddied for her for at the lady's European TOUR Q-School in 2000. But she had a bad caddy so she didn't make it.

Q. Are you still --

HENRIK STENSON: We are still together.

Q. And you came back and I guess the PGA was the first time you played?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, that's the first time I played professional.

Q. You had a couple of good rounds there, didn't you?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, I finished 45th at the PGA. But I finished 13th at the NEC and then tied for third at the American Express.

Q. Were you surprised at how quickly you had so much success in these really big events?

HENRIK STENSON: I think it's been for me, I always sort of raised my game when I play with good players. So to come over here and play with some of the best players in the world, that really sort of triggers my motivation. I really found it gets the best out of my game. I played really well when I played with Tiger and Mickelson.

Q. What were the things that impressed you the most about those three events, that trip over?

HENRIK STENSON: With the players that I played with?

Q. Anything, off the course, on the course.

HENRIK STENSON: I just thought it was great golf courses. It was really fun to play Firestone and (inaudible). It was great to come over and play those good courses and play with the best players in the world.

Q. What are your thoughts on the course this week?

HENRIK STENSON: The same thing. I mean it's a great track. You got a lot of history and I think it's a demanding golf course. You need both, obviously like every week, if you want to win, you got to play well. But you both need to drive it well and long off the tee and the targets are pretty, pretty small and they really penalize you if you miss it in the wrong places. You got a couple of banks leading away from the greens. You got to play well to do well around here.

Q. Do you find the greens a lot quicker over here than on the European Tour?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, in general, a little bit. PGA and Firestone, they were really fast. It's still early in the week, but I guess they would be quicker and quicker as we go on.

Q. Did you find you have to be more inventive around the greens when you are playing the PGA Tour?

HENRIK STENSON: I think maybe the biggest difference what I found is they tuck away some of the pins a little bit more. Maybe the flags are a little bit easier in Europe on a few of the holes. And the rough maybe, in a general, is a little bit thicker if you miss the fairway. I'm quite used to playing thick rough around the greens. But I think that's the biggest difference.

Q. We had J.B. Holmes in here earlier and he was hitting a 3-iron into the fourth, the par-3, what are you hitting there?

HENRIK STENSON: On the fourth.

Q. 236 yards?

HENRIK STENSON: It was the same 3-iron, yes. I heard that he can give it a rip though.

Q. I'm wondering if you've thought far enough ahead, is the U.S. where you would like to play, do you want to follow Parnevik, (inaudible), all of the other Swedes to Jupiter and keep them all together?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, it's probably a good thing. I'm not sure if you want to have anymore, do you? It might be enough with those guys. I think it's too early. I probably have a better answer to that question later on in the year. I'm probably going to play just under 9 or 10 events this year. So that would give me a better feel if I want to come over and play full time or not. I can't really give you an honest opinion on that yet. So far it's been good.

Q. With that in mind, how many events are you required to play over in Europe?

HENRIK STENSON: How many am I going to play in Europe?

Q. How many are you required to play?

HENRIK STENSON: We are required to play 11.

Q. You have to have 11 for Ryder Cup?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, with the World Tour events and everything it's quite easy. It's only four more. I'm probably going to play about just under 20. 15 or 20.

Q. I was reading in your bio that you live in the UAE, is that correct?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, I got a base in Dubai, yes.

Q. How did you end up there?

HENRIK STENSON: We played the tournament for a long time down there and my Coach got like an academy at the Emirates Golf Club where we played the Desert Classic. So Sweden is not really not an option if you are a golfer and want to have good practice. It's got to be somewhere warm, great facilities and great weather from October through April. Then it gets a little bit too hot in the summer. And it works out fine with the schedule. We play more and more in Asia. So it's less time difference and less flight time down to some of the events in Asia.

Q. Second question is, what's the reception been like, do the guys know you in the locker room? Are they wondering who you are?

HENRIK STENSON: I know a few of them. All of the guys with the European connection. I know all of them and a few of the other ones. But I'm still probably -- they don't recognize me and don't know who I am. It will take a while I guess.

Q. Henrik, living in the UAE, I'm guessing you are friends with Thomas Bjorn?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes.

Q. Can you comment on how things work down there both a couple of weeks ago when the problems with the editorial cartoons began happening?

HENRIK STENSON: Dubai I didn't really see much of it. It was obviously in the papers. I just heard that they were boycotting some of Danish product. But I don't know. It was nothing really.

Q. (Inaudible)?

HENRIK STENSON: No, obviously he didn't think it was a smart move. But it's not really affecting the Golf World that much.

Q. How much would you have to win here to be bigger than Annika back home? Is she that big? You have to believe they are practically going to put her on a dollar Bill?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, yes. I was thinking are we going to have dollar bills now. She is obviously the best woman golfer that ever played. I would need to win a few events to be bigger than her, yes. Unlikely.

TODD BUDNICK: Anything else? Guys.

Q. Can you tell us was that your first win on the European TOUR?

HENRIK STENSON: My third.

Q. You were in the final group with Chris at Abu Dhabi?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes.

Q. A lot of guys, it takes them a little time to recover, can you talk about coming back the next week and winning that tournament?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, I think that just shows that maybe my mental abilities is quite strong and I finished second in Qatar last year and got robbed a little bit of a victory. I had a 2-shot lead going into the last round and Ernie shot a magnificent 65. I came up one short. It was really sort of a bit of a revenge coming back in and getting the title the following year. So I was just very focussed on that. Last year I was in one playoff to Mark Nimsby (phonetic) at the Scandinavian Masters that was one that probably hurt a lot. I had a couple of others. The ones in Qatar, sometimes you feel you are playing well, you do most of the things right, you come up one short or somebody else is playing better. What can you do is just recover and move to the next tournament. I felt a little bit like that in Abu Dhabi. I had a couple of chances but I couldn't really make the putts. Chris was playing solid and he played better than me the in the last days.

Q. (Inaudible)?

HENRIK STENSON: It's always disappointing if you got a one-shot lead going into the last round and you are not winning, you're always going to be disappointed. You can only try your hardest. I think it's easier to move on if you feel like you've done everything that you can to try to win the tournament. If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. You just move on.

TODD BUDNICK: Thank you, Henrik.

- - -

