
84 LUMBER CLASSIC
Nemacolin Woodlands Resort
Mystic Rock Golf Course
Farmington, Pa

September 22, 2004
Pre-tournament quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH TODD HAMILTON

The MODERATOR: We welcome Todd Hamilton to the 84 Lumber Classic for the first time.

Todd, your rookie season, having a fantastic one, with 2 wins, the Honda Classic and your first win British Open Championship. Talk a little first, have you had a chance to play this course yet?

TODD HAMILTON: I played nine holes yesterday, actually 10 holes. I played the front nine and went over and played 18.

Q. Your thoughts on the course, first impressions of what you seen?

TODD HAMILTON: I like it. It's in great shape. The greens are a little firmer which is going to make it difficult and the fairways are quite soft.

I understand they had a lot of rain here recently so the course is playing as long as it is listed on the scorecard. You get some rough, even though the fairways are wide, you still need to hit them because if you miss the fairway there is some rough. I think it's a pretty good test. I haven't seen all of the holes on the back 9, but the front nine was enjoyable to play.

Q. Let's talk about your season, you came in here, you were a 38-year-old rookie, after playing most of your career in Japan, you had a great deal of success this year. Let's talk about how that changed you, or changed for you, and things like that.

TODD HAMILTON: My life has gotten quite a bit busier than I expected it to at the start of the year. I'm still feeling out how I won the Honda Classic, let alone The Open Championship. I always felt in my mind that I can do well out here as long as I got out here. And I think once I got my TOUR card, last December, I think that relieved a lot of pressure that I put on myself to do well in professional golf.

Once I did that, it was just a matter of getting in contention. I played in front of crowds before, but nothing like what we see out here on the TOUR. When I played golf in Japan, we were luckily if our tournaments got 30,000 people for the whole week for four days of golf. Over here, you see 50,000 a day. That was a big eye opener for me.

But I know once I could get in contention, and get used to playing in front of the bigger crowds, handling the pressure, I felt that I could do good things.

TODD BUDNICK: We will entertain some questions.

Q. You have had two months to look back at the British Open, what have you come up with? Or have you come up with anything?

TODD HAMILTON: No, not really. I've actually watched the tape a couple of times. I watched it probably a week ago late at night, nothing really good on TV, so I popped the final round tape in. Very exciting. Obviously I knew the outcome, but I was kind of nervous to watch it.

It was fun to see, to see myself excel in a difficult situation. Especially under the pressure of a major championship.

As I said earlier, my life has gotten a lot more busy. Although each day it's getting easier and easier to say no to people, which for me is hard to do because I like to see -- I like to see people get what they want. Whether it be an autograph, interview or whatever. But some time you got to make time for yourself, whether it be practice with your family or whatever.

I receive a lot of requests in the mail for autographs of hats, signed photos. People send me flags from The Open Championship this year asking to get those signed which is kind of neat to do. I wish I could see their faces when they actually receive the flag, or the photo or whatever it is, until they go to sell it.

It's been an unbelievable year and that's quite an understatement for me. I obviously had success playing golf as a professional in Japan. Not on the stage as a PGA TOUR, or even The Open Championship. So to be able to take what I learn playing golf in Japan, apply it to my rookie season here in the states, was a very satisfying.

Q. The idea that your name was in the mix for the Ryder Cup, even though the last two years, you weren't here the one year, that had to be a pretty unique experience for it too?

TODD HAMILTON: Yes, knowing that I only had seven or eight months to acquire points to get on the team and to get close on points and have my name mixed in as maybe a pick was kind of neat.

I don't think I could have made up nine points difference though playing. I watched a little bit of that and I wasn't -- I thought we would win because on paper, everyone says we have a stronger team as far as the world rankings.

I also knew there was a chance we could get beat, a good chance, because the European guys, although they don't play -- most of them don't play a lot of the U.S. TOUR, they are still world class players.

But I didn't think if we lost it, we would lose by nine points. I thought it would be very close. With either side winning one, maybe two points at the most. So I was very shocked with the outcome of it.

Q. Do you think the days of the U.S. automatically going into that event as the favorite are over for a while?

TODD HAMILTON: Oh, I think so, yes. I wouldn't be surprised if, grant it, who knows who is going to on the team, I wouldn't be surprised if we would be considered the underdog next time because we are playing on foreign soil which might be to our favor.

It seemed like to me when I watched it -- I didn't watch will all of the coverage, but what I did see, especially the first day, it seemed like -- and I know there is not supposed to be any betting on golf, but it seemed like our players put up a million dollars apiece, and the European players had one dollar on it, or one Euro whatever. Our players seemed very tight, very tense. And maybe that's part of being the favorite. So maybe next time if we are the underdog, maybe it will work to our advantage.

Q. The field in this week's tournament, how do you stack it up for previous tournaments this year on TOUR?

TODD HAMILTON: To be honest, I don't know who all is in the field. I know Vijay is playing. I know Tiger was supposed to play, I understand he has withdrawn.

Q. We had 20 of the Top-30?

TODD HAMILTON: That's probably a pretty good turnout. I know this facility is kind of out in the country, so to speak, but from what I've seen, it's a first class area. I know the driving range is brand new. It looks like they did a great job on that. The course is enjoyable at least from what I saw yesterday. The course is enjoyable to play.

And I think guys are probably wanting to play more golf. The guys that are maybe outside the Top-30 on the money list are trying to gain more money to get inside that Top-30, so they can attend THE TOUR Championship. So I think you will see a lot of players start playing maybe a little bit more. Especially guys outside the Top-30. They might be playing more at this point in time maybe than the guys that are 10, 15th, 5th place on the money list knowing that they are going to be in THE TOUR Championship for sure. But I think any time you got a good facility like that, and the word gets around, the golf course is good, good shape, the hotels are nice and there are plenty of things to do, I think that attracts a lot of players to the site.

Q. Taking back what you said about the Ryder Cup, where you said it seemed like the U.S. players felt more pressure, these are people who are accustomed for playing for large stakes in front of large audiences?

TODD HAMILTON: It is kind of unusual but usually, basically you are playing for yourself, or your family. But at that particular tournament you are playing for your country. I know golf is not in the Olympics, but that is kind of what it is. You just have the U.S. and the Europeans rather than an Indian team, and a Korean team, or whatever it is.

So knowing that if you don't play well, you let down yourself, you let down 11 other teammates. You let down the captain, one or two assistant captains, and then, you know, 280 million people, or however many follow golf. That's a lot of pressure.

Sometimes all it takes is one bad shot for that to happen.

Q. Can you talk about this golf course and how it suits your game, or how you are playing now? Are there things to your favor? Is it set up a little difficult for you in any way?

TODD HAMILTON: Yes, I've only seen nine holes, really actually 10 playing with 18th hole last night. It seems like the fairways are pretty generous, especially with them being soft, the ball is going to stay pretty much where it is.

I find the greens to be difficult as far as firmness, especially if they put the pin positions in front of the green. It seemed like yesterday when I landed a ball short, trying to bounce it up, it wouldn't bounce up. When I landed the ball on the green, it hit and ran out quite away. I understand they are pretty new greens. So that's probably why it's going to be difficult to hole shots, or get shots close to the hole.

A lot of times the scores depend on the weather. I saw a forecast briefly this morning that looked like it was going to be good weather the whole week.

The wind will affect the scores quite a bit. The rain, I didn't see rain in the forecast. I expect good scores. The putting surfaces look to be very smooth. Probably the biggest challenge this week is going to be getting the ball close to the hole because the greens are so firm.

Q. How did you end up here, Todd, at this tournament?

TODD HAMILTON: I took a plane and I drove over. I haven't really played a whole lot. I played three events in the states since the Open Championship. I went and played in Germany for a week with not much success. Actually, no success. I enjoy playing golf, and I would rather be out playing golf trying to, you know, win a trophy, rather than playing golf at home and having to give five shots a side to my friends and lose 5 or 10 bucks to them.

I heard it was a great facility, and I didn't have a chance to play last year. I heard a lot of guys talk about it. So I figured why not try it out. I'm trying to play -- as a rookie, I'm trying to play as many events as I can to see which ones that I enjoy playing, which golf courses suit my game so I know next year how to better my schedule.

TODD BUDNICK: Everybody set? Thanks, Todd.

TODD HAMILTON: Thank you.