

CHRYSLER CHAMPIONSHIP
The Westin Innisbrook Golf Resort
Copperhead Course
Tampa Bay, Fla

October 27, 2005

First-round quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES HOWELL III

TODD BUDNICK: All right, we welcome Charles Howell after a 4-under 67 today. Charles, entered the tournament No. 30 on the money list. You finished 33rd last year, just missed it.

Two years prior to that, you were the runner-up in the TOUR Championship.

Just talk a little bit about sitting 30th on the money list and coming into this week.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Well, I think last year I came into this event 33rd, and I know that 30 is a whole lot better place to be than 33rd. It's always amazed me how much of a money gap there is between those spots. It's a lot more than just say three places or two places or whatever.

A great example of that is last week I finished 15th and I kept my spot. You know, a golf course like Disney, a tournament like that, I shot 17-under to do that.

In the last two weeks I have been 35-under and have moved up five spots on the money list.

So grant it, those are two golf courses that do yield and give up a lot of birdies, but at the same time, me being 30th on the money list, it's just as well as being 27 or 35, you have to play good. There is no doubt about it.

I've been around enough or been in this position enough to know that it jumped so quick that you still have to play good. And I can't go in there and start thinking about forward, or getting into Eastlake, or anything like that because it's more than just to make a cut, or just do to this. It still has to be a good tournament.

TODD BUDNICK: Speaking of playing well here, you've opened well here the last three years now with rounds in the 60's. But the last two years haven't been able to follow that up. It's a difficult course out there, talk about the troubles that you have had with the course.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Thanks for reminding me. We'll talk about that later. This golf course is hard. I think it's made a little bit harder because we come from two tournaments where you can make a whole bunch of birdies. We came from Las Vegas and Disney where 17-under finishes 15th, to a golf course here where you've got to drive it in the fairway. You got to hit the greens. The greens are fast. They are Bermuda, but they sure don't roll like it. They roll a lot more like bent. It's a tough golf course, but it's made tougher than recent tournaments that we've played. The rough is extremely high. I think this is the highest rough that we've seen since the PGA at Baltusrol. The golf course is not easy at all. You get a day like today where it's a little cooler, but a little windier in the afternoon, by the end of the week double digit under par will look really good.

Q. I wonder if you can talk about how you are feeling this week, irrespective of being 30 or 33 but with the idea that you seem to be playing a heck of a lot better right now than you might have been a year ago?

CHARLES HOWELL III: That's a good word.

Q. I say it all the time.

CHARLES HOWELL III: You know, my game does feel a lot better than it was this time last year. You know last year like you said, I was 33rd going in here and knew I would need a really good week to get in the Top-30. I was just playing average.

Here, the last few weeks, my game started to turn around a bit. You know, fundamentally enough, I have to give a lot of credit to changing equipment. I went to the Callaway test center the Monday of Las Vegas which is something I never do, never go to the test center the week of a tournament. And I actually changed a few clubs in my bag. I put a new 3 and 5-wood into my bag. I put two new wedges in my bag. And I put a new putter in my bag. The Odyssey Tri ball.

Q. It's bigger than you are.

CHARLES HOWELL III: It's a little bigger than I am. It is bigger than I am. And it's more stable than I am as well. But I have to give the putter credit. I've been putting pretty good this year. But this putter, I put it in the bag and it seems to be working a little bit better especially on the short putts 10 feet and in.

We all know how important those putts are. I changed five clubs in my bag. Haven't never hit them before. I put them in the tournament and that's unusual. I've got to say the putter has definitely paid off.

Q. Did you use the two hole before that?

CHARLES HOWELL III: I messed back and forth with it. I wasn't using it before I put it in play, no.

Q. Talking about coming from Vegas and Disney where it's a birdie fest, do you come here with a targeted score then to start out, or do you have to see how it goes?

CHARLES HOWELL III: You know, it's funny I was talking to Tiger about this on Tuesday of Disney, and I think it's harder playing golf tournaments like that than playing golf tournaments like this in that you know every day that you tee up in Las Vegas or Disney you've got to shoot 5-under-par. I think at Disney one of the top rounds I shot is 4-under and I lost some spots. They are hard events to play. You can't have a so-so average day and grind it out around par and still keep a position.

You know here, at this golf course, obviously is a whole lot tougher but it still gives you the chance to grind it out, and try to get something around par, and you still have a chance with it.

Any round at Vegas or Disney around par and you are really putting yourself behind the 8-ball.

Q. I wonder if you can talk about what Ryan Moore did having tried that yourself, you came pretty close, didn't you? Real close about 3?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yes, I did it in 2000 I ended up 144 on the money list in 13 events. And I missed at TOUR school. And then in 2001 I did it in seven events and continued to play. And that's the toughest thing he's had to do so far. There is no question about it. I know he has won a lot of tournaments. But I still think he would tell you that's the best thing he's done.

Q. Without his A game you said?

CHARLES HOWELL III: It is the toughest thing he's had to do. It's tough because you know you have a limited number of events and you know exactly the amount of money you have to make. There is no ball park figure, there is no guess. There is no going out there and do the best you can do. You know exactly what you have to do in a limited number of time. And with the way that the purses are these days, you have to have a high finish to do that. I know he finished high up in Canada. I think it's a phenomenal accomplishment and that TOUR school is definitely not a fun place to be.

But I think then the accomplishment is even better than that, and playing your round tours like what Verplank and Mickelson did, winning a pro tournament while you're in college, that's awesome. That's as good as it gets there.

TODD BUDNICK: Any other questions before we go through the card.

CHARLES HOWELL III: I birdied the third hole, I hit 6-iron to 15 feet, holed that one for birdie.

Fifth hole, par 5, laid up, L-wedge to ten feet. Made that for birdie.

11th hole, par-5, driver and 5-wood, pin-high left in two. Got up and down. Birdie putt was six feet.

And the 14th hole another par-5, driver and a 3-wood on the front edge and 2-putted there for birdie. No bogeys.

Q. What did you do on one?

CHARLES HOWELL III: One, I drove it just in the right rough, laid up, hit a wedge to 15 feet and missed it. ShotLink can confirm or --

Q. We are working on ShotLink right now. We are not confirming anything. What's the best hole on this golf course? As a golf hole?

CHARLES HOWELL III: I think the best hole on this golf course is 18. It's right in front of you. The trees shape it on both sides. But once you do hit the fairway, if you to manage to hit the fairway, the green is brutally tough. The green is borderline. It's borderline as far as fair and unfair goes. I know the guys must have a really hard time finding four pins on that green. There is so much slope in it. The green is running there with the slope.

I think the 18th hole is. As far as the overall, the looks of the hole, the toughness and everything, I think 18. There is no pushovers out here. That's the thing about this golf course. There is quite a few holes where you don't hit driver off the tee, but you are having to lay back to where you are still hitting a six, 7-iron into the green. There is no holes out here where you can blast one up there and hit a wedge on the green. I can't think of one.

You take a hole like the third hole, it forces you to lay back short of the water and it still leaves you 200 yards to the green.

If you don't hit the fairway, the water forces you to lay up to the left. Although they do take a driver out of your hand, you are not hitting wedge to the greens.

Q. How would it compare, the golf course, quality-wise, tournament-wise with the Florida swing events?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Well --

Q. Or any golf course that you guys play in Florida?

CHARLES HOWELL III: As far as with the Florida swing events, I think the difficult is right up there with and maybe just guys may argue just behind THE PLAYERS Championship. I think it's harder than Doral. I think it's harder than Bay Hill. I think it's a little harder than Disney. Honda, I think it's tougher than that one. I think it's right up there with the TPC course, maybe just a shade behind it. That might have something to do with THE PLAYERS Championship and what not.

I mean as far as toughness of the golf course, it's right there. You can look at what's made the cut at this tournament, and what will make the cut this year, and you can see that. You can see that right away, how difficult the golf course is. The winning score isn't always indicative of that. You can always look at the cut and find that out.

Q. According to the media guide, in this tournament, No. 5 has never been hit in two shots. I'm sure it could be done. What would it take for somebody to do that and is it worth the risk?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Well, it is possible. I played with Jason Gore today, and he hit it in the green-side bunker. I think the hardest thing is, if you catch it downwind, it's easy to get the distance in two. It's hard to get it on the green and hold it on the green. That green is tough to hit some days with a wedge, being that the green and the slope runs away from you front to back. I think some guys have been able to do it length-wise. As far as keeping it on the green in two, that's going to be really hard to do. Jason got it pin-high right in two in the bunker. So guys can reach it, but it's a matter of getting it on the green and keeping it on it.

Q. You are not on Pac, are you?

CHARLES HOWELL III: No, no.

Q. Did you get any reports back from that meeting?

CHARLES HOWELL III: No, not one. Did you read Shawn Murphy's email? Did you see the article in the Wall Street Journal?

Q. Yes. Any thoughts on that?

CHARLES HOWELL III: No way. Not a lick.

Q. I was just curious if there is a lot of talk about what the schedule is going to look like in 7 and 10, and you have a Pac meeting, and most of the comments is about slow play, what does that tell you?

CHARLES HOWELL III: You know, pace of play it is what it is. Guys right here, they are trying to chase dreams and winning tournaments. They are trying to make a living. They are doing the best they can on every shot. It takes a long time to play these golf courses. These are not easy golf courses. No, we're not playing your municipal or your country club golf course with no rough, slow greens with pins in the middle. Yes, you can play around those. We're not doing it. That's just how long it takes to play golf. It just seems to me when you speed up a group you invariably run into another group, so then you slow back down. And then you have the players that are very fast players, and I will use Chris Riley for example, or John Huston, I played with John Huston and John Daly at Greensboro, the first the rounds, and we waited every shot. So those guys aren't encouraged to play fast because they are waiting on every shot unless you want to wait on every shot. It is what it is. I don't complain about it. I've got enough other stuff to worry about. To fix pace of play, if I'm a rules official, I'm going to have a hard time giving a guy a 2-shot penalty knowing what's at stake with a 2-shot penalty. Knowing that it could cost him a cut, a tournament, a win, a second, whatever. You know, whatever it may cost at the end of the year to keep a card or go to a certain spot. I'm going to have a hard time looking that guy in the face and saying you know what I'm going to single you out amongst everyone else and give you a 2-shot penalty. It's not just that. Your group may fall behind because you made a couple of bogeys. The group in front of you may be making a bunch of birdies. Officials come around, guys always speed up. Officials leave, guys slow down. It is what it is. Now it takes five hours, five hours and 10 minutes to play golf.

Q. Tournament golf?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yes, tournament golf. But the tees, the golf courses are not easy.

Q. Could things be improved if everybody on TOUR was ready to hit and ready to putt when it's their turn instead of after the guy in front of them plays, you see some guys now they are lining up to putt for the shot?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Sure. It's a mix of everything. You could say, you could argue a bunch of things for that. You know a lot of times, especially around the greens, guys are watching other players putt. They are watching their ball roll up there. They may see something that changes their mind, want to take a second look at it. It all gets back to what's at stake. It all gets back to how hard everybody is trying. Everybody is trying to do the best they can do. I think if you see guys out there that don't want to be there, or they think they are going miss a cut, sure they speed up, they are not looking at things as hard or looking at things as much. In terms of what's at stake, I just don't find pace of play being that big of an issue.

TODD BUDNICK: Thank you, Charles.

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