
**Nissan Open
Riviera Country Club
Pacific Palisades, California
February 19, 2004**

First-round leader quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH HANK KUEHNE

THE MODERATOR: Hank Kuehne, with us after a 6-under par 65. The best round of the afternoon. Maybe give us a little idea of what the conditions might have been like this afternoon

HANK KUEHNE: We got out, the wind was blowing. I'm kind of directionally challenged today.

The wind was blowing one direction for about the first five holes and then it really started to pick up and blow into it. I guess, we were walking up, it would have been 15, and the wind really kind of turned around and was in our face, and, you know, it made some of the holes play a little bit easier. But made some of the other holes play quite a bit harder.

The golf course is tough. It's a demanding golf course. The greens are extremely fast and they had some pretty juicy pins out there today, so I'm have pleased.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. (Inaudible)?

HANK KUEHNE: Well, you know, as I say, I hit a perfect drive right down the middle of the fairway, and I think I had 135 to the pin, and with where the -- to turnout a wedge, it actually landed perfect, which is about maybe seven steps back of the pin. It just went right over the top of the pin. I had about seven feet, I guess, from just right of the hole. It was just a little bit uphill from right to left, and I was able to finish off the day with a birdie which is always a good feeling.

Q. Can you talk about your year so far? I would think it would be something of a disappointment, you haven't gotten much on track it seems like?

HANK KUEHNE: Yes, I made a lot of swing changes this off season, and I didn't play much golf. I wasn't really ready to play when I started playing in Phoenix.

I was going to go to The Hope, but then things didn't progress as fast as I would have liked. So I started there in Phoenix. I was really just trying to hopefully -- these four tournaments, I thought I would be ready maybe by last week, but, you know, it was kind of like that. Last week I struggled, just putted poorly, but the first couple of tournaments was really rough, just things, something I have done my whole life, I

changed maybe during the off season, and I got back out on the golf course and it was really kind of hard to get used to. I'm not all that worried about it. I just thought if I can play decent last week and have a decent showing this week and then go home and really practice and get ready for the Florida swing, which is kind of in the backyard. So, you know, I feel like I'm kind of on pace. I would have liked to have been ready earlier in the year, but things happen.

Q. (Inaudible)?

HANK KUEHNE: You know, the main change was, you know, my left arm -- the way my left arm has worked my entire life, it's kind of rotated extremely early and it's gotten a little bit too deep, and then I had a little lift, which beginning at my head, it goes down. So this off season, I hit a lot of my balls working with my teach Kevin Smelts (phn), and really working to get my left arm to track better this way and the club more up. And it sounds pretty simple, but, you know, when you do something your whole life it's not exactly the easiest thing in the world to change.

But basically we were shooting for more consistently. Basically less moving parts. My arm swing would be a little shorter so less room for error.

Q. Hank, you come from a pretty distinguished golf family, I wonder if you can talk about some of their accomplishments and how it may have helped you get started in the game?

HANK KUEHNE: My brother and I kind of started at the same time. But my brother, doing the things that he did, you know, especially finishing -- Tiger beat him there at the Amateur at Sawgrass. That was on the final. That day I would have had him on my bag at Oakhill, you know, that was something that, you know, I couldn't have had anyone better inside the ropes with me. You know, he is my best friend and knows my golf game better than anybody. So that was quite a treat to be able to have him go through a lot of the things before I did, so he was able to kind of help me a long.

And then we were both able to kind of take my little sister under our wings and arguably she has one of the best amateur records of anyone. She won two U.S. Amateurs and a British Amateur and a U.S. Junior.

So it makes it a lot easier. Usually there is one of us playing pretty much every week somewhere, so it's always fun to see how they are doing and call and chat and help each other out and it's nice to be able to spend time with my family and practice and try to continue to get better. We kind of all push each other which is a lot of fun.

Q. Are you giving up any distance?

HANK KUEHNE: I mean, you know, I'd say not really. Maybe a little bit. But I think I got a little bit to spare, too.

Q. (Inaudible)?

HANK KUEHNE: You know certain golf courses, not this one. I mean this golf course -- you know, there is certain golf courses that I feel like I have a huge advantage because I can fly it over a lot of the trouble, and the golf course widens out for me in a lot of ways.

But there is a lot more tournaments that I can't do that at. So it's definitely a blessing. It's something that makes -- when it's going well, and it's going straight, it makes for a lot of birdies and a lot of birdie chances.

But it can also, when it goes sideways, it can go further sideways than anyone else out here.

But, you know, I mean it's just kind of the way I play the game, too. I love it. I don't know how to play it any other way, so I can't tell you what that would be like.

Q. (Inaudible)?

HANK KUEHNE: I don't know who did these pants. I think my wife got these for me. I like them though bringing the bell-bottoms back.

Q. Good style on them. (Inaudible)?

HANK KUEHNE: Right.

Q. Now a year later sitting here in this kind of position, not just specifically this week, but where you are at with your career, what was that like the last year going into last year and how tough was it to kind of get motivated to get back out there?

HANK KUEHNE: Well, you know, I had conditional status on the Nationwide Tour. I think I was -- actually I was one spot ahead of Zack Johnson. It was kind of frustrating because I had a great year on the Canadian Tour. That was a fantastic experience for me. I was able to actually be a member of a tour, be a part of a tour that you're traveling, playing four days. You are walking. You are doing everything. You know, I didn't play well at TOUR School. But getting into the finals, I felt like if I just continued to progress at the same rate regardless of being conditional out there, I would have my card one way or the other at the end of last year. That is kind of what I was trying to do. It just seemed to work out that I didn't play one tournament on the Nationwide Tour. I think I finished third at BellSouth. And I guess the next week was The Masters and the week after that was Hilton Head, and I didn't get in there either. So I was at the Monday qualifier in Louisiana trying to get in on the Nationwide Tour. I missed by a shot, then go to Houston and I ended up finishing second there and, you know, kind of the rest has been history. It's been a lot of fun. I'm getting to do something -- I'm getting to live my dreams. It's something that I dreamed about since I was a child. Life doesn't get much better. It's amazing. It's an amazing organization the PGA Tour. It's an amazing place, and we play the best golf courses in the country. I don't know how it could get much better.

Q. (Inaudible)? All of these guys are trying to get out here, they think they can all do it. Obviously you got out here and got into a few events and "boom" you really made it work?

HANK KUEHNE: Well, I think it just goes to show that there are a lot of really good players on all of the different tours, you know. The hardest thing, the most difficult aspect is actually your game being -- you're playing well at the right time, you know, because that's what TOUR School comes down to. And, you know, there again being able to take advantage of the opportunities.

I think, correct me if I am wrong, I think I was only the eighth person to ever do that, to play the amateur spots on exemptions. Obviously there has been a lot of guys who have gotten sponsor's exemptions. So, you know, I'm just happy. As far as being the poster child, I don't know if I would be the poster child. But at least there are some guys out there, you know, Ricky Barnes who got off to a good start this year. I think he made a pretty good check in Phoenix. He has six more starts. He is trying to play his way on. It's getting tougher and tougher. That 150 number keeps going up and up and up. I think it's a difficult way to -- it's a difficult way to get on to the TOUR. But, you know, I was just thankful that I had the opportunity to do it.

Q. Do you think somehow that made you more mentally tough going through something like that, to have to come out every week and really, like you said, you have few opportunities?

HANK KUEHNE: I think that was kind of a cake walk compared to the rest of my life. (Laughter). I have been through a lot. I was nine years sober February 3rd. I had a few shoulder surgeries, I didn't know if I was going to be able to play golf again. I had an accident. I didn't even know if I was ever going to be able to play golf after that. I'm the luckiest people in the world. I'm lucky to be upright and breathing. I'm blessed in the fact of being out here and playing golf against the best players in the world.

You know, the golf is actually -- I think all of the things I have been through, it made me a lot tougher. So when I get to the situation, I don't take golf for granted. You're one swing, you're one step, you're one bad thing of happening away from not being able to do it again so you might as well enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Hank. I appreciate it.

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