

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

October 27, 2005

First-round quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOM LEHMAN

TODD BUDNICK: We welcome Tom Lehman after a 4-under 67 in his first here at the Chrysler Championship. Tom your first visit to Tampa, I believe, for a TOUR event. You played a pretty good first round, your thoughts on the course.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I'm pretty impressed with the golf course. I'm sure you hear that. The golf course is an A plus. It's tough. It's fair. It demands great course management. You've got to hit it solid, and you've got to put it in the fairway. That's the biggest thing out here, you put the ball in the fairway, you've got a chance to score. If you put it in the rough, you're going to be struggling.

TODD BUDNICK: Your 44th on the money list coming in, looking for your best TOUR finish since 2001, when you finished 20th, you are all ready in the Masters, what do us use in this tournament to top that or get in THE TOUR Championship?

TOM LEHMAN: Yes, my goal obviously, the reason for playing here is I still have a chance for Top-30. I think I need the Top-3 to do that, but it would be certainly nice to do that. I think I went from about 9 or 10 years in a row in the Top-30 and haven't been in there since about 2001 or 2. So it would be nice to kind of get back in the group.

TODD BUDNICK: Questions?

Q. Do you find that at this stage of your career that there is any lack of motivation, or is it the same as it was for you 10 years ago? Is it hard to keep that going still after having accomplished a great deal?

TOM LEHMAN: No, the motivation is definitely still there. Probably more so now that it has been in a while. It's frustrating to play poorly. So the frustration level gets up there at times. Most of my issues have been physical.

There have been issues with knees and feet and things like that. My golf swing has always been predicated on good strong leg action. When my legs work, I hit it great. When I hit it great, I usually have a good week. When my legs are hurting and my knees are hurting, I have had a couple of surgeries and a bunch of problems. When they hurt, I don't use my legs. It becomes an upper body swing and you play poorly.

So you can look at my performance over the last three or four or five years and you can track it.

It feels good, it feels bad. It feels good, it feels bad.

Q. It's one thing to keep driving the ball in the fairway, but on this course, do you feel it goes beyond just getting it in the fairway as far as creating good birdie opportunities?

TOM LEHMAN: Yes. If you put it in the fairway, it gives you a better chance to put it in the right spot on the green. If you get downhill, down grain putt out here, it's pretty doggone fast. You want to try to keep it below the hole in the right spots in the green. So putting it in the fairway gives you a better chance to do that. No guarantees. You can still hit a bad shot from the fairway. But at least you have a fighting chance. You can make some birdies.

You're not going to drive it in the fairway every hole all week long out here. I hit every fairway today. It's not going to happen again for a long time.

Q. Has it ever happened?

TOM LEHMAN: It's happened a few times, but not very often. Certainly a course like this it's hard to hit all of the fairways. In part, it's picking the proper club off the tees. I hit a fair amount of 3-woods and a couple of one irons and some drivers. I kind of pick out the best spot in the fairway to hit it to, the widest spot, and I hit it there. My iron game is really solid. I marked my ball with a Sharpie, to put a spot in my ball to identify it. There is so many iron shots with a little black dot in the dead center of the club face, it's like, look at that, another solid iron shot, right in the middle of the club face.

So if you are driving it in the fairway, and hitting your irons solid, controlling your distance, you are going to give yourself some birdie chances.

Q. Tom, what kind of schedule do you anticipate playing next year as the Ryder Cup captain, will it be full, and is there any scenario in which you would play on the team? Is that a possibility at all?

TOM LEHMAN: Oh, yes. Answering the last part of the question first, all I want on our team are the 12 best players, no matter who they are, or where they are from. No matter how old they are, or how young they are. I want the 12 best players.

If I'm playing at that level, or I am definitely one of them, the answer would I play, would be an absolutely yes. I'm not there yet. But I'm working on it. But we want the 12 best guys. That's all I would ever say about any of that. Whoever the 12 best players are, that's who I want.

In terms of playing a full schedule, I'll probably get together with Julius Mason at some point in the next month or month and a half and kind of go over in detail what exactly kind of responsibilities I will have next year with media requests, media days or whatever it might be, just so I can have an understanding on how much time is going to be required. How I can budget my time, so that I can play a full schedule. I definitely plan on playing a full schedule.

Q. Has Julius sent you any free stuff yet?

TOM LEHMAN: You know, they invited me to on a free trip to Hawaii.

Q. For the Grand Slam?

TOM LEHMAN: For the Grand Slam, we are trying to make it work. It may not happen unfortunately. It's before Thanksgiving. I've got some commitments already. They are really good about making sure that I'm taken care of.

Q. How well did you know Joe Steranka, what did you think about his promotion?

TOM LEHMAN: He is a super guy. I really like Jim Autry a lot. He's done a great job. He has been a really good friend to my wife and I over a lot of years. So with him stepping down, and Joe stepping in it will be a good transition. Joe is a sharp guy. He knows what's going on, He is funny. He sends me all kinds of clever little comments, via emails. So I enjoy his sense of humor.

Q. Does the idea of making the team as the captain a nice little goal to give yourself, or is it not that way, if it happens it happens?

TOM LEHMAN: No, I definitely believe in setting goals. You wanted to set them high. If I thought it was an unattainable goal I wouldn't even ponder it. But I know there is no doubt in my mind that if I'm healthy and motivated and working hard, and if I can make a few putts I've got as good a chance as anybody. Points are quadrupled next year. I'm kind of looking at January 1 as a green light goes on, everybody takes off running. I hope to be running right there with them. I think for a number of reasons. Personally I would like to make the team. I went to the President's Cup. It was great watching them play, but I wished I was out there playing. I would love to be a part of a team that wins the Ryder Cup. The winning captain would be great. Being a part of the winning team would be super great.

Plus, you know, with that said, I've always believed that there is a big part of leading by example.

I think the players out here understand that I think it's a big deal that I want to make the team. It's worth fighting for. It's a good example to set.

Q. Would you be captain if you made the team, if you felt like you were one of the best 12 Americans?

TOM LEHMAN: Let me rephrase it. I would never pick myself. If I finished 11th I would never pick myself ever.

Q. I thought you said there was a scenario where you could actually finish in the Top-10 but

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TOM LEHMAN: If I was going south. If I started the year phenomenal, and was going south in a hurry, not feeling well, whatever the problem might be, had a really rough last four months leading up to the Ryder Cup, I would definitely have to look at see who is No. 11.

If No. 11 was someone going the other direction, if he was charging and playing great golf, had way more potential to help the team, I would, without question, say I'm going to sit this one out. We'll take No. 11.

Q. What happened on No. 1 today?

TOM LEHMAN: On my tenth hole, I made the turn 2-under, I hit a really good drive; 240 or 245 to the pin whatever. I hit a 3-wood just a little left. It went into that left bunker. I've never played in a tournament. I only played one round here, so I wasn't quite familiar with how dead you were in that left bunker when the pin is in the front left of the green. I was looking at, whoa, it's straight down hill, with the green, there is no way to stop this thing unless I hit the pin. So I aimed at the pin, I hit the pin and it went in.

I went to 4-under, and I just played very well. I made one bogey, a 3-putt on the third hole. Golf is sometimes funny. I hit a really good 1-iron and a really good 4-iron. Had about a 35-footer up over, sliding left, a big sweeping hooking and putt, hit a beautiful putt that burned the top edge of the hole and went four-and-a-half feet passed down green. Hit a beautiful putt coming back and broke across and lipped out on the bottom side. I hit 4 perfect shots and made a 5. That's the way golf is.

Q. Why haven't you played here before?

TOM LEHMAN: I think -- that's a good question. I'm not really sure. I think a lot of it is scheduling. You get into the last tournament of the year, even if a win doesn't get me in the Top-30 or whatever. Part of it is family related. This time of the year I'm missing a lot of baseball games and a lot of hockey games at home. A lot of football games that my daughter is cheering at. It's a good time to be home.

Q. As you know, we're speculating a lot about the new schedule, as it relates to this tournament, there is some talk that if the Player's Championship is moved to May, maybe they could jump to that spot in the spring. I know you got limited experience here, but from what you've seen, would this stand up in the spring, would it be a good place to come after Bay Hill?

TOM LEHMAN: How is the weather in the spring here?

Q. I would say it's maybe a touch better than it is in Jacksonville. We are just a little farther south. There is always that, wind and there can be rain but it's warm.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, you know, I think THE PLAYERS is an A plus exactly where it is at. I don't know how you can possibly make that tournament better than it is right now. Even with a change. I mean I've heard they wanted to play the course on Bermuda grass on the greens as opposed to over seeded greens. There is no way to make the greens better than they are. I don't care when you play. There is no way to make the crowds better. No way to make the tournament better. All they are doing it by moving it to May is mess up the schedule further for that part of the year when you have so many other great events. You have Wachovia, Colonial, Memorial, U.S. Open, Westchester. There is so many great events that time of year. It's adding one more major hiccup into, you know, somebody is going to get burned.

It would be nice to see this tournament move before THE TOUR Championship somewhere. But I'm not really in favor of moving THE PLAYERS Championship.

Q. Any chance your course gets the Match Play?

TOM LEHMAN: Which one is that?

Q. Tucson.

TOM LEHMAN: You know there is 36 there. I heard that they were looking at the course that I wasn't involved with, the Gallery. There is a north course which I helped (design). And there is a south course. Someone told me they were looking at the south course. I don't know if that's true or not. It's a great facility. It would be a great place.

Q. How many golf courses is there on the resort area?

TOM LEHMAN: How many near there?

Q. Yes.

TOM LEHMAN: There is a bunch of courses around there. Dove Mountain, where the Gallery is, there is several, and there is more planned. It's a great spot. I would love to see them play a tournament on one of my courses. That would be fun. Nationwide plays a course that I designed outside of Minneapolis. So it's fun kind of seeing the guys play it and getting their feedback. You learn about what's good and what's bad when it's played in competition and getting the best players to play.

TODD BUDNICK: How about your other birdies, Tom?

TOM LEHMAN: 11 a par-5, just a sand wedge for a third shot to about eight feet, maybe seven feet.

15, par-3, I'm trying to remember what I did there. I can't remember the 15th hole. 4-iron to about 15 feet, really good shot there and made that putt.

The 7th hole a 3-wood, 9-iron to about six feet.

TODD BUDNICK: Good. Thanks, Tom.

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