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

First-round leader quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHAUN MICHEEL

DAVE LANCER: Shaun Micheel with us, 7-under par 64. Just your general thoughts on how you played today with the weather?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Yes, they were, you know. I played all day yesterday in the Pro-Am. It was raining. You could see the golf course was starting to change just a little bit.

I think most of us like to come to the golf course when it's playing pretty firm because it's typically a fairly long golf course, with what they've done adding some new tees and so forth.

I left late last night about 6 or 6:15. It was pitch dark just working on a couple of things in my game and my putting in particular. So I was a little anxious, maybe nervous, maybe about how that was going to work.

It's kind of hard to tee up in a round with such a quality field, and working on something.

But I kind of realize in order to get better at this game, sometimes you got to take some chances. I did that today. I had a nice start. I feel like I played this golf course enough to maybe have a little bit more experience on some of the places that you can miss your shots, where you can play from, where you can get up and down from, where you can putt from, and I think that helped me today because I haven't been striking the ball maybe as well as I would have like. But when I looked back on it, that may have helped me to know that I can just kind of aim for the middle of the greens, and that is kind of what I was doing.

And if any of you followed me out, you probably saw that I made some pretty long putts which is a nice change for me.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SHAUN MICHEEL: The answer is D. All of the above there. I was just really struggling with just making putts, and I worked on Tuesday with Stan Utley (phn), who helped a lot of players.

He told me a couple of thing, one particular was in my grip, a certain part of my grip, and I wasn't able to really get that into play yet. But I did move the ball back on my stance, that is the one thing that I did do because I have a tendency to have the ball creep

too far forward which causes all sorts of things. You know, you feel like maybe you are going to pull the ball left of the hole, and you try to hold the putter off and you hit it off to the right. So I moved the ball back in my stance.

And actually what I'm thinking about is, I'm thinking about Tom Watson, if you can believe it, he plays the ball middle to forward and has a nice firm stroke, and I felt like that's what I did. I think when you get the ball forward in your stance it has a tendency to come back a little bit farther, and a little bit more to the inside causing a lot of miss hits, a lot of poor speeds, a lot of putts that just have poor speeds, and I did miss a couple of four or five footers. But, you know, I felt really, really comfortable today and it was nice to see some finally go in.

Q. Shaun, after August and what happened there, are you now a little more comfortable in this situation being out in front?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, I think any time you have Tiger Woods and I Vijay Singh, and guys like that in the field, I feel kind of under the limelight I think. It is nice to be able to go out in a practice round of a Pro-Am and have people pull for you. Even last week playing with Tiger the first few rounds I was supported very well, and it is a nice feeling. I feel like I have come of age so to speak. You work hard out here to, you know, try to win tournaments and earn respect of your peers and you then you get out here and you realize you don't have to earn the respect of the players, but the fans and the media, and that's very difficult, and I think that maybe I'm starting to get a handle on that.

You know, I enjoyed my last four months. I felt like I got a little bit better handling what pressure like I felt like there was. A lot of players have really helped me to try to get me to realize, you know, there really is no more pressure on you now than there was -- the hardest win is to get your first win and it's to relax and go out. Guys like Jeff Sluman, Nick Price, Bob Tway have been good friends of mine and have really helped me out tremendously with that.

Q. Your agent said you actually staked it in there on two or three other ones where you had like 4-foot birdie putts when you could have been in the neighborhood of 60 or so?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Yes, I played well. Of course, around this golf course the par-5s really aren't reachable. In order to shoot a round like I did, you are making a lot of 20 and 25 footers. I missed one -- par 3, I think it was 13, I missed one. Or 14, I guess, from about four-and-a-half feet, and I kind of was a little dejected because I made two nice putts in a row. So I made some putts out there that I probably shouldn't have. Some maybe you are just trying to get close, and that just happens.

I'm very happy with the way things went today, outside of missing a couple of short ones. Hey, you can't make them all. Of course, I wasn't thinking that after I missed the first one. (Laughter).

But when I go back and look at my round I just felt like I played a nice smart round of golf, and I left myself in a lot of good positions on the green, so I'm very happy with the way I managed myself out there.

Q. Shaun, how much, or when people talk to you, do they discuss that final great shot, at the PGA, and do you think about it much?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Well, people come up to me all the time and they mention that shot. I think that is one shot that probably sticks out in everyone's mind. One it was kind of a defining moment. And the other it was basically the last shot of the tournament that everybody remembers. It was, for me -- I don't really think about it that much anymore. I'm still out there trying to hit quality shots each and every time I go out there. But it is nice to be remembered for something. I mean I watched the video every now and then. I haven't seen it for a month or so. I'm still amazed that it didn't go in. Yes, you know, I think you guys, you guys write history, make history, and the players just play the game. And whatever you write about us, as long as we don't say something stupid, we are usually okay with it. But I think that's probably something that is going to stay with me a long time. It was a nice feeling to know that I can close a tournament.

Q. Shaun, you mentioned kind of flying under the radar, are you more comfortable flying under the radar, would you prefer that, or do you like being out in front and being recognized?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I don't seem to have any problem with it. Three or four weeks ago I was in Thailand playing, Ben Curtis and I were invited over there to play and I felt I was there because of what I had done at the PGA. So I felt like there was maybe a little pressure there, going out with Colin Montgomery and Thomas Bjorn, two great European players, I felt like I was there and I was under the microscope, so to speak.

Over here, I would like to have that problem a little bit more. As I said earlier, when you have Tiger and Vijay, guys that are battling out one and two in the world, people have a tendency to gravitate toward those two players and understandably so. Maybe one day, I will get to that level, that's certainly a goal of mine, but I don't have a problem either way.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I do, absolutely. I said that after I took my father to Scotland to play in the Dunhill Links championship. This is no knock on the fans here. I'm not talking about this city. I think people over here are a little bit more star struck than they are -- when I was in Scotland playing, I noticed there was one particular time that I was in the middle of the fairway, and I hit a shot to about 15 feet, which I thought was a great shot, and I got a few claps.

And then someone else was in a greenside bunker in the same group, and hit it about two feet, and it was a really incredible shot, and he got a roar.

I just think that the people over here, it's changed, and I think it's great for the game. But the fans in Scotland, where the game started, are so much more familiar, and so much more respectful I think of what you are trying to do out there. There are times that we get out there, and we are all trying our best to get out there to do well, and you get snickers and jeers from the crowd. You get people making comments, and everybody wants to be a comedienne, and I guess they need to move to L.A. This is where the movies are made. It's frustrating. They just don't realize that we are trying our hardest out there. So people around the world, they are just great golf fans.

So, yes, I think it's different overseas. I think people don't have the opportunity like we have in the states. We are playing 40-some weeks a year. Every week there is a golf tournament on T.V. When there is not playing of a tournament, you got the Skills

Challenge. Look at Mark McGwire, he is ready to join the tour. So they just are hungry for golf, I think, in other parts of the world, and if I can be a part of that, all the better.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I do think that has a lot to do with it. You know, but I want to play in the United States, that is obviously where I want to play. It's great fun. There is so much more to do than just play golf. You sit there and you watch somebody hit a white ball into a hole. It's not for everyone.

Q. What does it take for you to be a star?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I don't know, maybe another PGA Championship. I don't know. I'm trying to get there. I don't need that really. I think I'm pretty grounded. I don't need five airplanes. I don't need 6 yachts. I don't know need any of that. I have my wife and my new son now, and so, of course, I need to make a living. That's what I'm doing. I got to be able to pay for my trip to L.A. and pay for my hotel down there in Santa Monica. So there are things. You got to make money. And I think I did that for a while. I think every Sunday, or every Monday I looked in the paper, and I thought how much money did that putt cost me, or how much could I have made if I did that. Now I don't do it, you just drive yourself nuts. I think I'm learning.

I don't know what it takes to be a star. I don't know if I have that quality.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SHAUN MICHEEL: Right, right. I would like to improve my game. I would like to become Top-10 in the world, I think, at some point, be a lot more consistent of a player. It's fun coming in here, I enjoy it. And I would like to be a constant fixture in this chair. This is nice. (Laughter.)

Q. Shaun, when you won the PGA and you are standing there on the green, and you are thinking about maybe what all of this means, or how long it took you to get here and all of this, in the following months, was it what you expected it to be being a Major champion?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I don't know. I was hit with a lot, a lot of commitment, and it was interesting when I turned my phone on when Stephanie and I finally got back to the hotel at 12 or 12:30 that night, and I had 80-some missed calls, and I thought well, maybe this is a little bit more than I expected. But it was -- I felt like at the end, going on to the next week at Firestone, when I got there that afternoon and didn't get a tee off on my practice round until about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and I had gotten there about eight. I knew something was a little bit different. I was unique. I was a story that week. It felt really nice. I was certainly happy to do it. I still try to make as much time for everyone as I can.

Stephanie, or my manager will tell you I'm kind of a yes guy. I have a difficult time saying no, and I don't say no very often. I don't know how guys like Tiger -- how Tiger handles it all. He has a great support group as I do, but to be wanted by everyone, every single day of the year, that's got to be very difficult, and I admire what he does.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I didn't know I had 87 friends. I don't really.

Q. From a golf standpoint, you talk to Major champions to once they win maybe their first, they immediately try harder to get better because they think now I'm a Major champion, I should play like one, I'm going to get better at this or that; have you gone through that, have you fallen into that?

SHAUN MICHEEL: A little bit. I don't know how Ben Curtis feels, but I know that you look at Mike and you look at Jim, and they have had victories outside of their Major championship last year. I don't know if I'm going to try any harder or not. I feel there is one thing I need to do I need to maintain a certain level of attitude, politeness. So I feel like I'm that way any way, but I feel like, you know, I have to -- it's not that I get angry on the golf course, but I feel like I have to present myself in a little different light on the golf course now. I never be one -- I never really throw clubs. I'll get aggravated out there, I might toss one at the bag or something. But that's probably the biggest thing I need to do. Aside from the fact that I want to contend a little bit more. I can only do so much to control that. I can hit balls and practice and all of that. But when you get to the tournament -- the four Majors are so different, and the golf courses are so difficult than the regular events. I think that's why you don't see one guy winning all of the Majors, aside from Tiger who seems to have that game.

Q. Playing with Shigeki, how is his English for just general on course chitchat because we kind of get a kick out of him?

SHAUN MICHEEL: I'm amazed, he's smiling. He makes a bogey, and he is still smiling. I enjoyed it. That's the first time I played with him. I know how good of a player he is. And if you might remember about two or three years ago he shot 59 or 58 in a qualifier for the U.S. Open at a golf course. And in order to do that you got to be able to putt very well, and he got off to kind of a slower start, and he just picked it right up.

I think a lot of the players speak a lot more English than I think they let on. I think knowing their culture playing in Japan, unless they know perfect English, maybe they are a little hesitant to speak. But we had a nice time out there. He knows more English than I know Japanese. So we are in my country now, if I go to Japan I'm going to have to learn a little bit.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Shaun. I appreciate it.

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