

**Zurich Classic of New Orleans
TPC Of Louisiana
Avondale, La
April 28, 2005**

First-round leader quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOM PERNICE, JR.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us for a few minutes in the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. A great start to the week. I'm sure it was pretty calm out there early in the day when you first started, and it got a little windy as the day went on. Why don't you talk about what you did well out there, and the golf course a little bit, and we'll go into questions.

TOM PERNICE, JR.: Yes, I played a little bit later in the morning, so I got about five or six holes in pretty good without too much wind, six or seven holes.

I was fortunate enough to get off to a decent start. I was hitting the ball well though and gave myself some chances. My putter was really the key today. I haven't putted well all year.

I spent a lot of time at Scotty Cameron's studio and my stroke looks good on camera, and everything looks good but I just haven't been putting well.

I just toned in a little bit, and got more specific on my putting, and trying to find a better line and be more specific with it, and I made some putts today. Three times I needed to get up and down, I think I got up and down all three times so that was kind of the key.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Tom, the third round at the Shell, it kind of took you out of contention?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: Yes, I was playing well there, and I actually putted well there the first couple of days. And then I made an eight on the 7th hole there, the par-4. I went for the green out of rough, and had a mud ball, and it went into the water, and my wedge hit went into the water, so that kind of took my momentum away, and I proceeded to putt poorly the rest of the week. That one hole kind of cost me.

I had seen some signs last week with the putting coming around and worked on it the last couple of days. It showed signs. I hit a bunch of good putts today. I really didn't hit any putts that were bad and lipped out two or three times. So I felt really good.

I started the ball on line today and hit some good putts so it was nice.

Q. Had you changed putters?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: No, I have been using the Futura Scotty Cameron for a couple of years. I had to prove my boy Vijay wrong. Vijay has been giving me hard time for about three weeks. My putter is no good, needed to change. So I needed to prove him wrong today, he was giving me a hard time last night on the putting green.

Q. How much difference did the wind make?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: Well, today the direction of the wind is blowing kind of out of south. You have a lot of the holes into the wind or downwind. But there is a little bit of a crosswind into that them too. So you don't have many holes that are strictly downwind or into the wind. That makes it extremely difficult. Pete Dye, the way he designs this course, he has a lot of funny angles as it is off the tee and into the green, so it makes it more difficult wind you get some crosswinds out there. You got to pay attention for sure. Do you hear that wind?

Q. Did the course change much throughout the day, were the greens getting baked?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: No, the greens are absolutely perfect. I mean, they're firm whether you play in the morning or in the afternoon. When you are playing downwind you got to pay attention, because they are going to release 10 or 15 yards depending on what club you are going to hit. You just have to be aware of that. It's really difficult because a lot of holes, the angle is a left-to-right shot and the wind is down and right-to-left, so you are really working against the wind a lot, and against the green of how the hole goes. Some holes, it works to your advantage, the angles and the wind. Other holes it makes it quite difficult.

18, for example, it's a much easier hole if it's down and off to the left. But today it's down and off to the right. The pin is on the right front. Your second shot really brings in, if you are going for the green, the water on the right. So everything with the direction of the wind can make it pretty difficult. That's the nature of Pete Dye. He likes very sharp and distinct angles off the tee boxes and into the greens. You don't have a lot of straight away shots. It makes it challenging.

Q. J.J. was talking about how this course is a new course today than it was Tuesday, Wednesday, because of the winds?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: Well, Tuesday it blew probably harder than it did today. So a little bit different direction. It's blowing in a little bit different everyday. So we've gotten to see a variety of what it can do.

You know, it's an interesting course, but all Pete Dye courses are very interesting.

Our agronomy staff, and TOUR staff, was out here getting comments from everybody. My suggestion to them was, I think this would be the golf course on the PGA Tour to not have any rough on the whole course. Because Pete Dye has one large bunker on almost every hole on the left to the right.

On the other side, all you have is the trees for definition. So the definition where the fairways and the rough are, there really isn't, and you can't tell because the grass is the same.

So my feeling was, let's mow everything fairway length. It would be the only course on the TOUR to do it. It would be unique for the people hear at Zurich and New Orleans and Pete Dye likes that kind of stuff where the ball runs away. It's unique.

The definition on the opposite side of where that bunker is usually the only weakness. If they ever had three or four inch rough here it would be hard to tell whether you are in the fairway or the

rough. So my thought is, let's mow everything fairway, and we have the only course on TOUR where that opportunity lends itself to it. With the wind blowing around here it would be fun.

Q. The key to your round was your putter?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: And I drove the ball well. I can't think of a drive that I basically didn't hit pretty much where I was aiming when I had a driver in my hand. I hit a bad 2-iron on No. 8 coming in, but I was trying to be cute, keeping it on the right side of the fairway where the pin was. But with the driver in my hand I pretty much hit it pretty much where I was looking. Some of the times I missed the fairway, but that's the nature of the beast, too. You've got to stay away from some of the bunkers. If it goes into the rough on that side. I didn't hit it in the trees or anything.

So my driver was key and put me in position. I had some iron shots where I had some putt and made them. Obviously, those two clubs were the key.

Q. Tom, you started the season pretty well, you were making some money, then you missed some cuts there?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: I have. It's been mostly my putting. Chipping and putting which usually is my strength and has been over the years. My ball striking statistics have gotten better and better. They are the best they ever had, especially at the beginning of the year. They started getting better last week in Houston and then my putting came around a couple of days and there I was in contention again.

You've got to putt out here. There is no question about it. Tiger Woods is a living example of it. He is not hitting it the straightest anymore, but he is there winning every week. You got to be able to putt and hit some key chips when you need to. It was nice to hole some putts today.

Q. What does this do for your confidence level?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: It just helps. I had something to build on a little after last week. After actually putting better the first two days, I had myself in position and kind of had that train wreck with the eight on that hole. From that it's almost a shocker to where it's hard to turn it around, being in contention of the golf tournament to basically going out.

So I just kind of rely on that, and I just tried to work a little harder on my putting this week and fine tune it. It was solid. I hit the ball right where I aimed it almost every time. I hadn't been doing that.

Q. Anything specific that you worked on? Stance, posture?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: I did nothing more than be more specific in picking out a spot and rolling the ball over a spot. That's all that I did.

Earlier in the year, we tried, to almost free myself up and just kind of feel and aim it. My personality is not quite that -- I'm not a feel player. I'm a mechanics. I'm a very linear player, so I went the other way. I went very specific. I used the line on my ball. I made sure that I lined it exactly up and that's what I focussed on and I started there.

So what's good for some is not always good for the others. But this seemed to work good for me. So it's off to a good start.

Q. Does that take the tension out of your stroke?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: No, I don't think it has nothing to do with tension. My thought today, I'm going to make sure what I start the ball right over the point. I spot putted more precisely than I normally did.

Q. How wide is your spot?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: It varies from a foot to two or three feet. These greens are brand new, there is not many ball marks, and it's tough to find some.

I was very specific where I lined up the line, and very specific on making sure I start the ball on line which I never been that specific in a long time and it paid off because when I looked up, the ball was starting on line and the ball was striking so that's pretty good.

(Scorecard.)

THE MODERATOR: Everybody all set?

TOM PERNICE, JR.: No bogeys today. Wind conditions like this and around here. No complaints.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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