

**Nissan Open
Riviera Country Club
Pacific Palisades, CA
February 15, 2006**

Pre-tournament quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOM LEHMAN

DAVE LANCER: We have Tom Lehman with us. I guess we'll just let you open up some general thoughts about the team as it's shaping up this year and open it up for some questions.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I'm not sure what to say. We still have a long way to go and the season just starting with the quadruple points, plus a little extra bonus for winning, it sure has shaken up the list.

I check it out probably four or five times a week just to kind of remind myself what's happening.

There is definitely some names on there that you didn't see a few weeks ago, or for sure a year ago.

So it's kind of an exciting time I think for our team and just kind of seeing how it's all shaping up.

Like I say, it's a long, long way to go.

Q. Players, Tom, have mentioned you've left them some nice letters from time to time in the locker with the new point system, do you just print out 200 letters now and distribute them everywhere?

TOM LEHMAN: My secretary is really busy. My belief is that everybody who has a card, every American player who is out here playing, has a chance to make this team.

At this point everybody is getting -- whatever I send, they're all getting it.

Q. Is that a good thing, Tom?

TOM LEHMAN: It's a great thing. It's a super thing. I've gotten a lot of extremely positive responses from all kinds of different players; from veterans who have been through it all a bunch, and compliments don't come easy from; to the rookies out here that are kind of wide eyed and bushy tailed; to guys that are in their second, third and fourth year, who kind of feel like they discovered their niche, and want to take it up a notch, and they want to make this team.

So I've gotten a lot of many, many, many comments to the effect of how badly they want to be a part of this team.

Q. Anymore or less scrutiny on next week's events from you from a watching perspective? Do you look for certain things or mannerisms or reactions to players as much as you can, Match Play?

TOM LEHMAN: You know, I think the close matches especially may be somewhat telling. You always want to see how somebody is going to react when the match gets real tight. Are they driving it in the

fairway, knocking it on the green, making a few putts? Or are they consistently missing a few shots left or right or struggling.

I think, again, Match Play is -- 18-hole Match Play especially to be really, really fair to everybody is a bit of a crap shoot. Anybody can do anything in 18 holes of golf. So it's not a great judge, I would think.

Q. Tom, after playing Pebble Beach and seeing No. 21 here on this list, if you finish in the Top-10, what do you do?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I've been saying all along we want to field the 12 best players that the U.S. has to offer, whoever they are. And so if I happen to fall within -- for me it would have to be Top-10. I would never pick myself, if I were at all sane. Wouldn't that be fun? I'm going to pick myself and sit out until the singles.

(Laughter).

We want the 12 best guys. So I would have to probably, would have to prove to myself that I'm playing really well. I'd have to prove to the guys on the team that I'm playing well, and I probably would want to get their opinion. I would get them together. I get a bunch of them together and see what do you think. That's so far down the road it's pure conjecture. We simply want the 12 best guys, whoever they are.

Q. A little more conjecture, Tom, if that does happen, if you finish in the Top-10, will you be a playing captain.

Have you thought about if you would recuse yourself from that role.

TOM LEHMAN: Recuse?

Q. Abdicate?

TOM LEHMAN: Abdicate? I'm not even going to begin to think about that at this point. But I have said all along also that there is the idea of leading by example, is something that I always believed in. If I'm still out here playing consistently -- I was a PGA Tour player today until 2 o'clock on the range hitting balls, putting, the Pro-Am, and talking to guys. The 2 o'clock press conference, a different hat goes on.

So I want our players to know how much it means to be a part of that, trying really hard to be on this team myself. There is a bit of setting the bar. I want to be on this team, and we want to go over and win.

Q. Even though it doesn't seem close, I mean your 21st on this list, it doesn't take much to get into the Top-10 right now. If you had a Top-5 this week you probably would be in the Top-10.

My question to you is, do you think you're playing well enough to be in the Top-10 to be picked.

TOM LEHMAN: It depends on which part of my game you're asking me about. No, I know exactly what you're saying.

The big reason why the point system was changed was, in an effort to get the guys who are playing the best in year 2 and who are winning. You can't forget about the winning portion. There is a 75 point bonus on top of the quadruple points for winning.

So we want to have the players who are playing their best and players who are winning tournaments.

So I wouldn't feel good about it quite frankly unless I started winning and that hasn't happened in a while. So let's move on to the next subject other than me.

Q. Two questions, Tom. Is there only one thing that can make this captaincy successful?

TOM LEHMAN: No, absolutely not. There is professional goals and dreams and there is personal goals and dreams. There is things that you want to get out of it that are strictly personal. I'd rather keep them

personal. It can be a very successful two years if everything happens, say for that one professional goal which is to win. So it would be a little bit bittersweet obviously.

But if we went over to Ireland and just played a great match and our guys played phenomenal golf and they were loose and focused and motivated, and they were together and they put on a great show and lost, how can you not feel good about that in some ways?

Q. I'm sure the press would find a way.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, they would, that's fine. I guess. Nobody wants to lose, so you feel disappointed by losing. But if you knew that you gave it your best, that was the best you had to offer, that team just played better. You know, you take your hat off to them and congratulate them and you move on.

Q. Is that hard to measure?

TOM LEHMAN: Everybody knows when you play your best. There has been weeks out here -- that's about as good as I can play, that guy just beat me.

There is other weeks where you say, I left a lot out there. Everyone knows in their heart whether or not they have given it there all, whether they prepared their best, and whether they have been totally committed to every shot.

That's all you can ask for, I think, is for your team to be totally committed for everything that they do for that entire week, and that whole process leading up to it.

Q. Lastly, I will hang up and listen, when is the first time you met Ian Woosnam and what was your impression? In other words, I want a story out of this.

TOM LEHMAN: The first time I met Woosy, you know what, I remember playing in a Shell's match in Barbados. He has a house in Barbados, I actually didn't meet him, I saw his house and he has a keg sitting in the little thing next to the pool, and I figured that's my kind of guy right there. He had a tap. Okay? That's what it was.

Actually meeting him, maybe the Ryder Cup. I don't know him well. It's the kind of thing where we're friendly but I really don't know him very well. Hopefully, get to know him better. I've always heard that he is a superb kind of guy, and a good guy's kind of guy. I look forward to getting to know him better.

Q. Tom, in discussing what you like to see in Ireland, can you tell me out of your experiences in Ryder Cups where you've come closest to that, or where the team has come closest to that?

TOM LEHMAN: Yes, well the team at Brookline definitely had it. Definitely had it. You know, it was a great mix of guys. You go right down the list, Tiger, Davis and David Duval and Payne, Jim Furyk and Hal Sutton. You go right down, Phil Mickelson. You go all the way down the 12 guys, Jeff Maggert. There is a combination of all kinds of different personalities, but there was a real chemistry I thought. Even when we were getting smoked the first couple of days, there was a real belief in ourselves, and in each other that we could still win.

I didn't personally feel that at Valderrama, and I didn't feel that kind of confidence at Oakhill, the three that I played. I definitely felt it there. I don't know exactly why. I know for certain there was a feeling on that Saturday night that we were still going to win that match.

Q. I feel a little odd asking you this question since I was one of those guys who sort of suggesting that the points be tweaked and gerrymandered so that there was more reflexion on the recency, but have they gone too far in that direction where maybe there is maybe a little too much weight on this year versus last year;

would that cause you after the 10 automatics are set up to go with guys who are a little older, veteran Ryder Cup type guys necessarily?

TOM LEHMAN: No, I don't know. I think the idea was to make year two so significant than year one. Because the points had already started before they made the changes. So the only thing they could do is going forward and make a change. The idea is to make year two so significant that year one wouldn't have a whole lot of bearing unless you had an amazing, amazing year. So the points could have been quintupled. It could be a hundred times more than they were last year, because in a sense you are all starting at zero. That's why I think you are seeing these big changes so early because it's kind of like everybody started at zero in a way.

The year is young. I really believe, you know, it's a great system. You look at this team, I think of this team as pretty God darn strong. If you told me to take the Top-12 guys off that list and go to Ireland right now, I would be pretty happy with it. Without saying there is other guys who are not in there that you would be happy with as well. I wouldn't want to overlook them. The point is that the system, I think will work. I think it will provide us a great team.

Q. Tom, you talked about, you know, over at Brookline how there was a sensation in the area, a magic charisma, do you plan in any way to kind of honor Payne Stewart going back to Ireland to wear the knickers and the caps since he was such a really big part of the early Ryder Cups?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, you know, that's a good question because I think there would have been a pretty good chance that he would have been the captain of this team if he was still living. I thought about that. I know that I would like to, without question, make sure that his wife would be aware that I acknowledge him in some way. Everybody on the team would want to do it in their own certain way.

I think there would be a desire, I think, to at least have an acknowledgment that he could have been part of this effort.

Q. Tom, the President's Cup albeit is very young, is known for it's laid back atmosphere, I guess partly explained by so many South Africans, Zimbabweans, Australians are based over here. More and more Europeans, in particularly Brits, are coming over to the PGA Tour, can you see that going in that direction? Is it going in that direction, the laid back friendly side of it?

TOM LEHMAN: The Ryder Cup you're talking about?

Q. Following the President's Cup.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, you know, the Ryder Cup is just a phenomenal competition and probably what makes it so phenomenal is the emotion that it provides, the emotion that it causes people to have. I guess to put it in British terms you wouldn't want to go -- who are the best soccer teams in Britain? Chelsea and Manchester United. You wouldn't want to go watch them and people just kind of sat on their hands and just kind of politely clapped. That would be no fun. It's fun to kind of get into it. The fans show their emotion, the players show the emotion. That's what makes the Ryder Cup, part of it so fantastic.

I think what everybody would like to see, myself included, is a competition that is incredibly gutty, that it's taking no prisoners competition. You are playing to win. But with respect and in the spirit of the game.

I think it means a great deal to compete in the proper way. I think that would be one of our goals this year to compete as fiercely as we can with the right spirit.

Q. But do you ever see the Ryder Cup going the President's Cup way where it's relaxed, but professionally competitive? Or does the tradition of the Ryder Cup, it's so established that that will always be there?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I mean that's hard to say. There is not nearly the media blitz that gets put on the President's Cup as the Ryder Cup gets.

I think a big part of it, the attention paid to the Ryder Cup with the media, like anything really big, it hypes it, overhypes it, mega hypes it, and before you know it, it's bigger than life. It's a totally different animal.

If you're asking me, would I like to see it go that way or not, I love the Ryder Cup the way it is. I think it's great. I think they're both great.

Q. Tom, can you talk about the golf course and maybe what kind of players that might favor The K Club?

TOM LEHMAN: Not Riviera. Any golf course favors great putters, let's start there. Over the history of the event, the guys who are making the putts seems to always win. The team who is putting well, chipping well, has a good chance of doing well.

The K Club is a tough driving course. If it's anything like the European Open last year it will be higher rough, it's very tight, a lot of trees crowding the fairway, water along a lot of the holes, requiring somebody to put the ball in play off the tee and then be able to putt and chip.

If you start staying too much off the tee you got to be pretty lucky, or you are going to pay the penalty.

Q. Tom, some peculiar practice habits the last couple of Cups, The Belfry, I remember Tiger going off around 6:30 or seven, finishing his practice round before the gates were open. Last time, Phil was practicing on a different golf course, and not practicing at all one day.

Are you going to buy into any of that, or do you see a more unified practice session during your captaincy.

TOM LEHMAN: Well, we'll practice as a team without question. And whether it's three foursomes, or one twelvesome, is yet to be seen, but we will be together.

Q. No wiggle room on that one?

TOM LEHMAN: No wiggle room.

Q. That will all be at The K Club?

TOM LEHMAN: As far as I know. You know, the golf fans, you know, who go, I think they deserve to see our guys at their best. They deserve to see them period. So whether we tee off a bit early, or a bit later, we will play it together. But we want to make sure that the folks that are spending all of that money to buy tickets, making an effort to get there, do get to see the team play and practice. But we want to have some fun. I talk about a twelvesome, I'm not kidding about that. We will probably play a twelvesome one day and just have some fun playing alternate shot. Just all tee it up on the first tee together and away we go.

Q. Tom, I want to ask what your schedule is like this year, how has it affected being the captain and also would you make adjustments to your schedule that you have planned out now if you were slowly moving up the list?

TOM LEHMAN: Well, I'm planning on playing a full schedule because I feel like I'm still competitive. I still want to play. But also it provides me the opportunity to interact with all of these guys out here who I want to be able to interact with. If I have something that I want to say, or something that I want to tell a particular guy, or if there is a message that I want to get out to the group, it makes it really easy if I'm out here playing.

So to me playing is the best of both worlds. If I can play well that's even better.

If I'm playing that well, or I've got a chance to make the team, my schedule is pretty much set.

The only change I might make instead of playing the European Open is to stay here and play The Western Open. That's really the only change I can see making.

Q. Equipment now is such that it's very -- everybody is fitted almost to certain balls, certain hats, certain this and that, that it seems like it would make it more difficult to pair players together because of that, is that something that you have to factor in a lot, or it's over 18 holes so you don't worry about it as much?

TOM LEHMAN: I think it's a factor. The two biggest issues in golf for professionals are distance control and trajectory control. You have to be able to trust that your ball is going to go the distance you want it with the flight that you want. So if there is a golf ball that you're possibly going to have to use that you don't trust or have confidence in, that's significant. So there is an element of making sure that each guy is confident with what he's using. Does that answer your question?

Q. Good enough for me.

DAVE LANCER: We good? Tom, thank you very much.

TOM LEHMAN: Thanks a lot.