

**Toshiba Classic  
Newport Beach Country Club  
Newport Beach, CA**

**March 9, 2011**

**Pre-round leader quotes:**

**INTERVIEW OF TOM WATSON**

**DAVE SENKO:** Tom, thanks for joining us. You played in one event this year. A year ago you finished with a 62 here, so you left here probably in a good mood, but maybe just talk about where things stand this year. You played Hawaii and coming into this event.

**TOM WATSON:** Well, first of all, I've always enjoyed this golf course. If you want to describe it, it's the classic golf course. It's a course that anybody can go out and play and get around the golf course without losing any golf balls. You play too many courses where you go around and you lose golf balls. We pros don't lose that many golf balls, of course, we get them free. But it's a fun golf course to play. There is a lot of strategy in playing this golf course. You got to lay up off the tee. It's not a long golf course, but you have to lay up enough times where it doesn't play as short as the yardage. It plays a little bit longer. Maybe 150 yards longer than the yardage actually says.

It is a course where a guy like Freddy Couples has a great advantage because he hits the ball so far and high with the driver. He can go into the greens with a lot shorter clubs than most people.

I'm sure Freddy is licking his chops right now playing here. He played well in some of the kid's tournaments. John Cook is playing well and Lehman. We got a lot of guys. Is Lehman playing here by chance?

**DAVE SENKO:** Yes, I think we have everyone in last year's Top-30 except Peter Senior who is playing at the PGA TOUR event this week, Sawgrass.

**TOM WATSON:** It's a course that everybody likes to play. My game, I haven't played a lot. I've been working out quite a bit. I'm in good shape. I changed my putting stroke a little bit. We will see how that works on these greens. I hope I get good feedback. I hope I get lots of good confirmation that I'm doing the right thing. That will be the one thing from this week that I hope that after I come out of this week, I hope that -- I tell myself, I prove to myself that what I changed in my putting stroke is going to work.

That's the thing to work on. I've eye struggled with it. I struggled with the short strokes going inside too much. I think what I'm doing here, I think it's going to help. We'll see. I'm under the gun if it works.

Q. Last year, 62, pros come out here, and they look at this course and they think they can go low 67, 66, usual scores, what did you figure out?

**TOM WATSON:** Well, I got off to a pretty good start. I birdied the first two holes, and I holed a 3 for an eagle and I birdied 4. Well, I'm thinking with all of those par-5s, 15 and 18, a few of the short par-4's, let's see if I can get down there to that range where you are thinking go in the 50's. Of course, shooting my age, that should be the first thing I should be thinking about. 61.

Q. What is it that you've done with your putting that's different exactly?

**TOM WATSON:** I've adjusted my arm position and my setup position. Basically I'm a little bit more behind the ball with my head. I'm not on top of it. I'm behind it. My right shoulder and right arm is closer to my body. I open up my stance to get there. We'll see if it works.

Q. What do you think the reason the Champions Tour players are now playing well on the PGA TOUR, technology kept them more competitive?

**TOM WATSON:** Well, I think it has. It has something to do with it as far as the length of the golf ball goes. We are in good shape. I think more than anything is the conditioning of the players. Players keep themselves in good shape. Before it was, you know -- The TOUR is so much different than before. We thank Sam Snead and Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino for what we have out here. Those three players right there really made the Senior Tour. Was it Fred Corcoran (phn) who started the Senior Tour?

**DAVE SENKO:** Freddie Rafael.

**TOM WATSON:** Fred Rafael. He started it in 1980, The Legends, or '79?

**DAVE SENKO:** '78 they started. Then it become the Senior Tour in 80.

**TOM WATSON:** It kind of started right there. Then Sam Snead said I'll play in the tournament. Sam played every day any ways. It didn't make any difference. He loved to compete and make some money. He can do it.

Then Arnold came along and he gave it a huge boost. Then Lee came along and played in every darn tournament.

And before you knew it, we had 40 tournaments out here. What's the most number?

**DAVE SENKO:** 39 tournaments

**TOM WATSON:** 39 tournaments out here. The sponsors loved to have the names like Arnold and Lee to play their tournaments. We are to 24 now. I think that's manageable number.

The lives of the players have changed in the sense that you are not going to have people playing 39 events, after they've played The TOUR. Maybe a few. I don't think you are going to do that. Where we are right now is a pretty good number.

Q. What's your schedule look like between now and The Masters?

**TOM WATSON:** This is it. I play here and get ready for The Masters. I'm going in a little early and see how the course is playing, pull a Jack Nicklaus.

Q. So you will be there the week before?

**TOM WATSON:** I don't know. I'm thinking about it. A lot of the players do. They get there on Saturday, Sunday.

Q. Was that really the case back in late '70's, 80's?

**TOM WATSON:** No. Jack did it a lot. He would go in there the week before and maybe play on Thursday and Friday. And then come back on Monday. He would start a practice round on Monday, play a late practice round on Tuesday. Maybe nine holes on Wednesday. But Jack was the best at preparing the golf course. Best on our Tour is Bernard Langer. He prepares the best at it of anybody. It has something to do with him probably winning everything.

**DAVE SENKO:** Speaking of Jack, this being the 25th anniversary, what do you remember about that week?

**TOM WATSON:** Well, I was playing right behind him. I was right there. I was both watching and listening. I just did an interview for a special. ESPN 25th special, they had a lot of highlights on Jack. "You were right behind him." You are right, I was right behind him. They showed the shots he played on the last 9.

Jack would surprise me -- it actually wouldn't surprise me because of his personality but he would set a score.

He would say, this is my goal to shoot 32 on the back 9. If I can shoot 32 on the back 9, I could win the tournament. How's it going on the front 9? If I shoots 32, it will put me right there.

I always played it one hole at a time is the way I played it. I never look ahead, and I never looked behind. I looked present tense. Jack, would say this is what I have to do. I did that at Turnberry in 2009. After the second round is over, and with the

conditions -- I knew what the conditions are going to be, I said if I can play, if I can play the last 36 holes with four birdies and six bogeys, I can win this tournament.

Q. I just watched that telecast and there was a great shot of you standing there on 15 with your arms folded after Jack made the eagle. They said something about wondering what you were thinking. Do you remember that moment and that whole seen. Were you worrying about your own game?

**TOM WATSON:** I was worrying about my own shot, yes. I seen that happen enough times with Jack. It didn't surprise me. Obviously I knew how excited everybody was about it. By the electricity, you could feel in the air. The air was tense. It was very tense.

Q. You mentioned 2009 Turnberry, have you ever thought back about that 8-iron on 18? It looked like a good shot in the air?

**TOM WATSON:** I hit a good shot.

Q. One foot too far?

**TOM WATSON:** I hit it too far, I hit it 197 yards. You don't usually hit it that far. I caught a gust of wind somehow. That was confirmed to me by a photographer who was there. Andy North was there at the green. I said, where did that ball land on the green? I said I couldn't see where it land. Too flat, my eyes weren't any good. He said it ended on the front edge of the green it just rolled. And a photographer at the back of the green, he was sitting there with long lens, and he said that ball hit the green and in about 2 seconds, the long lens just got buffeted, like that, (indicating). It was a heavy gust of wind. I don't remember that consciously but maybe subconsciously I remember I hit it. Maybe just a little extra gust to it when I hit it. There was a strong wind to my back.

Q. Do you think that was a perfect shot?

**TOM WATSON:** Yes. I was thinking 9 or 8. It wasn't that 9 was not an option. It was an option. Any golfer, any time you have a shot, almost any time you have a shot, there is an option between 2 clubs. There should be an option between 2 clubs. If you have an option of three or four clubs, you better find another game to play. It should be an option with 2 clubs. I had an option with the eight or nine.

Q. How often would you have done that?

**TOM WATSON:** Again, I have done that. It was one of the most memorable shots that was there. It didn't have anything with me winning a tournament or anything else. It was my release, if you will, my dislike of links golf. I was playing in '79 at Porlu Sinney (phn), I was not playing well, and I was grumpy. It's a links golf. I never liked it. I still

don't like it because the luck of the bounce comes into play and all of that and the 7th hole is a par-5.

The previous day -- this was a Friday when I had this epiphany, if you will, the previous day I played into the wind, I actually hit a good drive there in the fairway. I hit a really good solid 3-wood and hit a 5-iron to the green.

The next day on Friday I had 210 yards from the green, and I asked Al, I said what do you think it is an 8-iron or 9-iron? 210 to the pin or the flag. He said 8-iron. I said, no, it's a 9-iron. I hit a 9-iron ten feet from the hole and that success of figuring it out right there, hitting a good shot and figuring it out, that success kind of brought me to the epiphany, the game, the way it's played over here, is not by the yardage, it's by the feel. You have the feel of the golf course, the feel of the wind. You have to understand that and use those factors, more than your yardage, then you can play the game better. That one moment I hit a 9-iron, 210.

Q. How long did it take to get that ending out of your mind? You we are right there, it would have been the greatest triumph in golf history?

**TOM WATSON:** It took until the next day about noon. I didn't sleep very much that night. The next day I was down in Sunnydale, I was thinking about putting the practice round at old Sunnydale which was the venue from the senior. I was kind of pitty pots, I don't really want to go out and play. But I went out and played, and I played really well. Just like any other tournament in my whole career, you have a disappointment, you go out, make up for it, and try to understand what you did wrong and correct it, and carry on as my caddy Bruce Edwards said. Just carry on. Carry on.

Q. Tom you said Freddy is licking his chops. You shot 62 in the final round last year, what's your thoughts coming into this round?

**TOM WATSON:** It doesn't make any difference last year. It's what happens this year. The key factor to me is how is my iron play. Overall factors are, how is my putting doing? That's the thing that I want to confirm this week is the change that I have done in my putting and my stance and my setup and my putting, is it going to work under the gun?

I want my putting to be good when I go to The Masters or forever more. You are searching for the Holy Grail. Sometimes you get in a bad position.

Normally, you get in a bad position, you practice it enough where it becomes engrained and it feels comfortable to you, if it's not working for you, you got to figure out another position to get into. That's kind of where I am right now. I just want to confirm it. That's what I want this week to confirm that. Everything else will fall, I hope, falls together. My long game, everything else.

Q. Do you ever change the loft on your putter depending on where you are playing?

**TOM WATSON:** I don't. I usually keep it around 4 degrees. People use to play weight of putters, if you get a fast green, get a light putter.

I don't understand why they did that. You dance with the one that brought you. You understand the feel of that putter. How hard to hit that putter. It's not because it's heavy or light. If it's a fast green, you don't swing it as hard.

**DAVE SENKO:** Thank you.

(Columbus question about Jack Nicklaus victory in 1986.)

Q. Was I surprised, but not shocked by Jack's victory?

**TOM WATSON:** Frankly, I wasn't surprised, nor shocked. Anything but shocked. Because Jack, Jack knows the golf course, knew the golf course better than anybody and he still had the ability to play.

He did say one thing, which I thought was very poignant, he said, this is a young man's golf course. Meaning that you had to putt well.

But I think that was maybe just, he was saying that just kind of tongue and cheek because he knew he could still win there.

He knew if everything went right, he could win there.

I think if you asked him, he thought of a score he had to shoot on the back 9, and I think he shot that score and he bettered it by one, and that was typical Jack.

Again, it wasn't a shock to me at all. Surprising, maybe a little bit surprising because he hadn't played very well.

The bottom line is that after winning there five times he knew the golf course probably better than anybody. And he knew how to play it to win. So it didn't make any difference whether he was 46 years old or 66 years old, he still understood how to win there. And he still had the tools to do it.

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