

# Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

## Don Cheadle

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Don Cheadle, two time Grammy Award winner, two-time Golden Globe winner; nominated for the EGOT, probably one of the most exciting things he could be pumped for is his first time ever playing in the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions.

DON CHEADLE: Yeah, it's more exciting than anything.

**Q. Can you just talk about what you're looking forward to this week? We know you might be a little tired coming straight off a red eye.**

DON CHEADLE: I appreciate that. Hopefully I'm going to be able to turn. I have a little back thing. Hopefully that's not going to stop me.

Yeah, I'm just excited to be here. I'm good friends with Lydia Ko, good friends with Angel Yin. Both going to be here, and some other guys I know, Anthony Anderson, Michael Pena, who I'm in a film with right now Unstoppable on Amazon.

It just looks to be a lot of fun. I am trying to manage my expectations. If I just don't embarrass myself I think that will be a win.

**Q. Is golf something that you kind of look forward to as an outlet when you're away from the studio and away from the set? Is that how you get away to relax?**

DON CHEADLE: Yeah, I live right around the corner from Riv so I get to play there a lot. It's fantastic. It's definitely -- I'm a range rat so I don't mind just going and hitting balls for a while and working on stuff. Can also be frustrating obviously; it's golf.

But like I said, I'm not -- I know I'm not good enough to get upset about it. Now I have a really good mindset and I just like to have fun and enjoy my time. Usually we get to be in really beautiful surroundings.



**Q. You mentioned two of the golfers you're friends with. For the LPGA pros to get into this field they have to win. Have to have won the previous season or the year before. They are literally the best on Tour. What has you most excited about rubbing shoulders, being around some of the best in the world?**

DON CHEADLE: Just when you play with really good people, just to see their swings and the ease with which they approach their discipline. I mean, they make it look easy. Obviously it's thousands and thousands of hours of work and a grind. Just to watch to happen right in front of you and to be inside the rope is just a really special treat.

When I get to be with people that I genuinely like and they're my friends, yeah, that's fun, too.

**Q. The field on the other side has a bunch of celebrities like yourself. Is there anyone on that side of the field that you're looking forward to playing with and/or just catching up with?**

DON CHEADLE: Really all the guys. A lot of the guys were at Tahoe so we got to hang out there in the summer. That was fun. Like I said, Michael Pena. He and I got an airbnb and he has been my boy for a long time. Anthony Anderson as well.

It's going to be fun just to be in this kind of setting and really learn from these LPGA players. They're great and their consistency is something that I always look forward to when I watch them play.

**Q. You mentioned Michael a couple times and the Unstoppables. Can you talk about that movie and the process of filming it and how you're looking forward to see how that turns out?**

DON CHEADLE: Yeah, it's a film about Anthony Robles who was an ASU wrestler, NCAA champion, who was born with one leg. It is just one of those uplifting sports stories about a guy who is, as the title says, unstoppable and undaunted and overcame incredible obstacles and is a motivational speaker today.



Just a really great dude and really good cast. Jennifer Lopez, Jharrel Jerome, Michael Pena as I mentioned, Bobby Cannavale.

It's fun to be a part of a film that people are really responding to at a time like now when we really need to have moments to have a respite from the drama.

**Q. You mentioned people that you know. What have they told you about playing here in this type of tournament?**

DON CHEADLE: Just that it's going to be a lot of fun just to have an opportunity -- and there is a purse for this one, right? Play well you might turn pro this week. (Smiling.)

That's kind of fun, but really just the atmosphere. Again, to be with professional athletes at the top of their game and see really how it's done and how to stay out of their way and let them do their thing.

But at the same time I've never played with the pros and had them not be really encouraging and give you tips and just really buoy you.

So I'm looking forward to these four days.

**Q. Where would you say your golf came is coming into this tournament?**

DON CHEADLE: It's a work in progress as always. I was in LA so the fires were going for long time, so for weeks I haven't played.

Sometimes that's good for the game; sometimes you got to knock the rust off and see what happens. Like I said, I'm managing my expectations. Just out here to have fun and have some camaraderie.

**Q. When you're out there playing golf, do you normally hit the links other celebrities, other actors? Who is in your foursome out there?**

DON CHEADLE: Not really. I'm in a group we call The Thread and it's George Lopez and Anthony Anderson, DL Hughley. Cedric the Entertainer and my friend Chris Spencer.

When we're all able to be together, which is rare because someone is usually doing something and schedules don't allow, but that's probably my favorite group of guys to go golf with.

Other than that I'm showing up and seeing who wants to play.

**Q. Being here in Central Florida have you shot any movies or any projects here previously?**

DON CHEADLE: We shot the film Rosewood right outside of Sanford. That was '97 I think. Many years ago. That's the only project I've done here.

**Q. Do you carry an official handicap?**

DON CHEADLE: I'm a 7 index right now.

**Q. Pretty solid. What would you say is the strengths of your game coming into this week?**

DON CHEADLE: Having a good sense of humor; not taking it too seriously. I used to get pretty upset about it and had really high expectations; low threshold for failure.

That's kind of flipped now and that's actually when I've done my best is when I don't really expect much and can relax and play.

**Q. Kind of a two-part question. You just mentioned Riv. How are you doing especially with how tough it's been over the last month and is everybody okay out there?**

DON CHEADLE: Yeah. I mean, the course has been closed. Had some wind damage. Obviously they punt on the Genesis this year.

But it was necessary and it's more about the community that we're concerned about. A lot of people that are members there lost homes and a lot of people that work there have been affected.

But we're resilient and people I think are going to figure it out. We're just really in the throes of it right now, in the middle of it.

So more than anything, more than the golf course coming back and us having the ability to play again, we're really hopeful people in those communities from the Eaton fire and from the Palisades fire are able to recover. LA is going through this right now.

**Q. Just wanted to see if you're home is okay.**

DON CHEADLE: Yeah, we're lucky. Our home was right on the border. We did have to evacuate. Like I said we been out for several weeks now just bouncing around, but I'm very fortunate that I have the ability to do that. Other people, not so much.

Again, our hearts go out to them. Our kids, my kids have been volunteering and really showing up and I'm very proud of them for that. But, yeah, I think it's going to take some time. We'll figure it out.

**Q. You mentioned your friendship with Lydia Ko. Can you talk about how you met, how that friendship developed, the type of person she is.**

DON CHEADLE: I met her when she was 15 years old. We played in a pro-am together in New Zealand actually. It was a totally my only hole-in-one was in that tournament.

I got to play with her in the round before the official tournament started. We just hit it off. Just have stayed in contact throughout the years. Every time she's about to play we text and every time after a round I text her.

When I see her, saw her in Scottsdale not too long ago. Had dinner with her and her mother. It's been a friendship over the years that's been growing and I'm looking really forward to seeing her. I hope I get to play with her.

**Q. She had a pretty historic season last year as you know. What does that mean to you? How does that inspire you on the golf course?**

DON CHEADLE: Well, it's just great. Couldn't happen to a nicer person. She's really authentically who she appears to be: Big heart, very sweet, very encouraging, very humble.

Just she's as good a role model as she is a player. Better role model as a person. I'm always impressed with her. Like I said, looking forward to seeing her.

**Q. Being a celebrity tournament, if you could put together a foursome of some of the best LPGA players that you know that you would want to go out and play with and maybe a buddy, who would you put in that foursome?**

DON CHEADLE: Well, it would definitely be Lydia Ko would be one. Angel would be in the group. And myself. And President Obama. How about that? That's a good foursome.

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