

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Scottie Scheffler

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Scottie Scheffler to the interview room here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Scottie is the defending champion here. This is the second of four opportunities Scottie will have to defend his title in a nine-week stretch. You got the first one done. If we could just get an opening comment on your title defense here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I'm excited for the week. It's a golf course I've had success on in the past. I think I've spoken a little bit about liking the harder golf courses out here and that's definitely what this place is.

First impressions on the course, the fairways are a bit softer than they were last year, which I think is actually going to benefit this place. Because the way a lot of doglegs sit, when the fairways get really firm it's really hard to hold the fairways and you don't always get rewarded for hitting a good tee shot. But the way they're playing right now you're always going to get rewarded for that, which is good. Then, going into the greens, the greens are already firmer than they were last year at this time. So, as the greens continue to get firmer it's going to be harder and harder to get the ball close to the hole and. Going to be a good challenging week, but I think a few more good shots off the tee are going to get rewarded.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take some questions out here.

**Q. The whole tussle for No. 1 between you and Jon and Rory up there. Does it motivate you?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I mean, I don't like losing to people and any time you don't win an event you're always motivated. So pretty much most golfers I think spend their whole careers pretty motivated to be good.

I would say so. I think any time you get some really good competition it's very motivating. It's like, I got the one in Phoenix and then Jon went out the next week and beat me by a bunch of shots. So it's fun to have guys playing at the

top of their games and, yeah.

**Q. As you look at those two individuals and their games, what parts or pieces of those games do you admire?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I think both guys have the ability to hit a lot of shots. You obviously have Rory with his length. They both have the ability to hit the ball extremely high and get to a lot of pins that most players out here can't get to.

Then I think mostly I admire a lot of their competitiveness. I think that's what you see from the guys that are able to make it to the top numerous times. Whether it be No. 1 in the world or win many times out here. I think Jon may have eight wins and Rory -- how many does Jon have? Do you know?

THE MODERATOR: How many PGA TOUR wins? 10.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: 10. So he's double-digit wins. Rory has 20-something. Any time you see a guy with that many wins out here they have got an extremely competitive side to them and that serves them well.

**Q. Rory was just in. We asked him about the new proposed or it's already been approved, the schedule for 2024. Reducing the fields in the elevated events. No cuts. What's your feeling on the feedback from the rank and file of guys on TOUR? Obviously it's going to be more of a closed shop and there's going to be, if you knock out 50 spots out of 10 events, that's 500 fewer playing opportunities. How do you feel about that?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would say it's not necessarily that simple of an equation. Just because you're running the entire business. So, if you imagine you have 120 guys in the fields this year, those 50 additional guys that are not going to be in the fields next year are all playing the events this year and you're seeing a lot of other tournaments on our schedule suffer because of that.

Because, let's say if you're the 100th guy in the world or



over or whatever, you're going to try and play in those 20 million dollars purses and if you're in the event how can you skip it? It's double the money and all that stuff.

But now all of a sudden you have those 50 guys that aren't going to be playing in the next event and that even is going to suffer and there's a chance we'd lose events because of that because guys aren't playing. So the math isn't necessarily that simple.

I think it's exciting because you're going to have the top guys in the world playing against each other more often. You're going to be able to guarantee the sponsors that those guys are going to be there four days. If you're coming out to an event to watch on Saturday and Sunday and, you know, if I'm imagining myself as a kid I would like to get out there early. Let's say I'm having a bad week, some kid can come out and watch me play early in the day and you can guarantee that Rory McIlroy's going to be there on Sunday, Jon Rahm's going to be there on Sunday. I think that's a lot of value added to TV and for sponsors.

Purses aren't going down out here. The guys that may not be able to get into those 70-man fields are going to be playing a lot of other events where the purses aren't going down. So I think it's going to benefit the membership as a whole and I'm excited and hopefully going to finish in the top 50 in the FedExCup because I want to be in those events next year. And if I don't, I'm not getting put in 'em. You got to earn your way still out here on TOUR. There's plenty of avenues for guys to earn their way into those tournaments, whether it's this year or next year, with the eligibility for tournaments being top 10 from current FedExCup and there's other ways to get in the events. We're still going to reward good golf, but, yeah.

**Q. As you approach the title defense of the Masters what do you look for these weeks leading up to it? What particular part of your game is maybe the best indicator in terms of confidence as you head into Augusta?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I would say when I'm preparing for tournaments I'm always preparing and thinking about the situations on Saturdays and Sundays and how you actually feel in the moment. So any time you're able to be in that moment and succeed like I was last year it definitely gives you a bit of confidence moving forward.

As I prepare for those events I know exactly what it feels like when you're standing there on 15 tee on Saturday when you have a lead or close to the lead. I know how I'm feeling on those shots. Having the ability to prepare knowing exactly how you feel is very important.

As I'm doing my practice, Augusta's always kind of in the back of your head as you're at home working on shots and stuff like that. So it's in the back of your head, but at the same time I'm very focused on this week and hoping to play well here.

**Q. Are you at the same stage this year as you were about a year ago?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Same stage?

**Q. As far as parts of your game, what you're really honing in on as you head to Augusta National?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I feel like I'm playing solid golf right now. I had some success in Phoenix and I feel like I've played some really solid golf this year, so I'm definitely excited heading into that week.

**Q. Have you been back to Augusta National since you won?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: No. I've actually never done that. I've never gone to Augusta before the tournament. I always just been there tournament week. This year it's going to be a bit different, but we'll see.

**Q. So maybe you're thinking of going in advance. Would you be able to enjoy the experience of maybe staying on-site and not being in prep mode?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think that's something I'm definitely looking forward to. You know, try and get kind of reliving the memories out of the way before I show up there. Because when you show up for tournament week you don't want to be thinking too much about last year. You want to be getting ready for this year.

Everybody starts at even. If you're the defending champ, you got the target on your back, it's arguably harder to play well.

So, I'll get kind of a little bit of the memories and stuff like that out of the way. That way when I show up on Sunday I'm ready for the week.

**Q. Speaking of having a target on your back. Last year after you won four events was it exhausting every time you went to a new place feeling like people were coming after you, they were gunning for you? By the end of the season were you tired?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: By the end of the season I was definitely tired. I don't think exhausting is the right word. I

would say things were just a bit different for me. I became pretty used to, my first few years on TOUR, being able to spend a ton of time at the golf course Monday through Wednesday. I'd spend a left time practicing after the round.

As I continued on with my career I realized that a lot of the work that's done at tournaments can be somewhat of a waste of time. I say that not as, you know, preparation is no good. But the value of rest I started to learn that a lot more as my career went on. Especially as there's more stuff going on. Whether it be media, fans, volunteers, whatever it is, all good problems to have, I have to do a really good job of conserving my energy to where I'm ready to go and have a lot of energy on Saturdays and Sundays. Whereas, early in my career I don't think I really realized that.

**Q. Do you keep your Arnold sweater and your club coat from Augusta in the same closet?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I do.

**Q. Do they abut?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Do they ever touch?

**Q. Yes.**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Maybe if there's ghosts in there. They're a few inches apart. (Laughing.)

**Q. Along those same lines, for like the ordinary fan, golf -- there's a lot of charming things in golf. Like you get the green coat, the interplay between the caddie and the player, all these different things. But now there's been so much focus on money, money, money. Do you -- I know you're a young guy on TOUR, but do you feel like golf is changing or do you think that the two things can co-exist, if you know what I mean?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think they have co-existed for a number of years out here. I think you -- it just depends on what you're focusing on. I'm very grateful to be playing out here on the PGA TOUR. We get paid a ridiculous amount of money to do what we do out here. But I don't think money is the motivating factor for too many guys. You can't really base life decisions when it comes to money. When you're out here playing golf tournaments you're never thinking about the money, you just want to win the tournament.

So as being kind of a golf purist, that's the motivation. I want to be able to play well, win tournaments and get the most out of my game. Money's definitely not a motivating

factor for guys out here. I believe that they can co-exist.

I know there's a lot of talk with LIV and money and guaranteed money and all this different kinds of stuff. But the guys out here on our TOUR, I'm excited about the direction of where we're going. I mean, we're so blessed to be able to play a sport for a living. So it's definitely not a motivating factor.

**Q. Can you share a little bit more about what you learned regarding Saturday and Sunday play, given how difficult it is to get in position on Sunday to win, given the depth of talent out here.**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Are you talking this week specifically or?

**Q. In general, as you went through the season last year.**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah. It's funny, because I think a lot of people see more of the golf on Saturday and Sunday and those shots you would imagine have more importance, but they really don't. It's a cumulative score over four days.

So something as a player I learned being out here on TOUR was I needed to bring the same intensity to Thursday and Friday as I did to Saturday and Sunday. Because I spent a lot of my early years in my career kind of on the outside looking in on Sundays. I wasn't -- I didn't win -- I think the reason I didn't win is I didn't give myself enough opportunities to have a lead. I didn't have many 54-hole leads, co-leads. The more you put yourself in those positions, the more you learn how to prepare for them.

I think one of the mistakes I made earlier in my career was not bringing the intensity early in the week. I think that's something you see with guys like Tiger. I mean, every shot Tiger hits is the most important shot he's hit in his entire life. Being able to bring as much energy as I can to every shot in the tournament is really valuable.

**Q. What do you think about the mic'ing up of players during Saturday rounds?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It's definitely interesting. It's something I would have to think about. But it's definitely interesting for fans. I've seen a little bit of bits and pieces -- I saw a little bit of Collin being mic'ed up at Riv and I saw some of Max being mic'ed up at Torrey. It's interesting, for sure.

**Q. If someone were to, if a friend or whatever were to**

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**ask you why this is a good decision or a good direction that the TOUR is going, why is there a need for this kind of change, what would you tell 'em?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: A friend or you?

**Q. Can't it be both?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: (Laughing.) I would tell 'em -- I think the PGA TOUR's doing a good job of creating an aspirational set of events. I think it's something that players will really strive for out here on TOUR. So being able to get into that top 50 for next year is going to be huge for guys. They're going to be able to play in those events.

I mean, it's no secret out here that events with less guys are probably a little bit easier on you. Whether it be playing a practice round or getting guys around for four days. It doesn't have the same wear and tear as a 156-man major field does. I think it's going to benefit players all across the board. Purse sizes for the other events are not going down. The field sizes are staying the same for those.

I think it's a better model overall for the TOUR to have a set of events that are aspirational and that give guys access to those events. If you earn your way in to those events, the top 50 in the FedExCup this year gets into all of 'em. Then, let's say you have a poor year this year, you get injured, something happens. Next year if you perform well either in the fall or early in the year and you're top 10 in the FedExCup and then there's other -- or sorry, top 10 current, like not otherwise exempt, I mean, it's a good way for guys to get access to those events. I think it's more of a reward for the guys that are playing the best on the TOUR.

**Q. How do you think, you would have to turn the clock back a little bit, but what do you think your opinion would be on this if you were on the Korn Ferry Tour this year?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would be pretty excited. Because like when I came out here on TOUR I did Q-School in fall of 2018. I played Korn Ferry Tour in 2019. And I remember when I started the year -- after finishing the Korn Ferry Tour, I was Korn Ferry Tour Player of the Year, and I had to see guys that I had competed and played better against arguably that year get the sponsors' invites into those two events in I think it was Korea and Japan.

So I didn't have a chance to get access to those events because the fields were already set based on last year's FedExCup.

But if I show up and I play good at the beginning of year, whether it was the Fortinet Championship or -- I can't remember exactly the schedule cadence.

THE MODERATOR: Sanderson Farms.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, Sanderson Farms. If I showed up and played well I could gain access to those events, whereas before I didn't. So now with the new schedule and the new ways or the new avenues for guys to get into those events I think it rewards more good golf. Which is exciting. Because when I first got out here on TOUR you didn't have the opportunity to go straight to the PGA TOUR. I had to do a year on the Korn Ferry Tour. Then when I got out here I still didn't have access to some of those certain events.

**Q. When you look back at when you did break through and start winning last year, here being one of them, we're only a year removed from that. I'm just kind of curious how you would describe just this run. Obviously, in a very short period of time you won your first event, became a major championship winner and here you are battling for No. 1 in the world. How do you put that into words what this is like and how quickly has it happened, in your mind?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would say it's pretty difficult to kind of put in perspective. Doug was just asking about how I felt on the Korn Ferry Tour and I don't feel that much different of a person as I did back then. I think wherever you are you're trying to get the best out of yourself and do the best you can. That's still what I'm doing out here on TOUR. I still prepare the same way I did back then. Now I'm a little bit more focused as I've learned to be over the course of my career.

But it's kind of hard to describe the run, but it's definitely been a lot of fun and I'm hoping to keep improving and keep playing good golf.

**Q. As we go down this path for the new schedule and maybe we go to the limited fields and everybody else goes to the other events and purses aren't going down. At some point on this path do we create a, in essence, a PGA TOUR Premier League and a PGA TOUR regular league?**

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, gosh, that's a good question. I think what's important about our TOUR is the meritocracy. If you play good golf you're going to get rewarded for it. And I think we're moving more in a direction where that's the case.

We're creating more avenues for guys to get out here with



PGA TOUR University. That's something that wasn't around three, four years ago. That's something for me coming out of college that would have been incredible.

It's difficult because you have a certain number of guys that finish college and they turn pro and then they try and get spots, whether it be sponsors' exemptions. Now there would actually be an avenue where I would have gotten maybe into some Korn Ferry Tour events or some PGA TOUR Canada events.

I remember I couldn't even get in a qualifier for PGA TOUR Canada because of the way the signup worked. There was only certain events that fit in my college schedule and I couldn't get into the right one.

So then I go from maybe having a spot in Memphis, I think I had a spot at Barracuda and then I think I qualified for the U.S. Open. And it was difficult. There wasn't really an avenue. I was playing Korn Ferry Tour Monday qualifiers and playing mini-tour events. Whereas, now maybe I would have been on the PGA TOUR Canada or Korn Ferry Tour or whatever it is.

So I think that's what's real special about our TOUR is giving people avenues to make it out here. Now I think we're creating more avenues where we're going to get the top-tier talent coming out of college and getting out here faster so they can come out here and compete.

I think the question about whether there's going to be a Premier League or not, there's definitely going to be an aspirational set of events with those 70 guys, but there's going to be avenues for guys coming out of college, coming from the lower levels of our TOUR to get into those events and participate.

You look at a guy like Eric Cole last week with his solo second. He probably moved up significantly in the FedExCup. If we're looking a year's, in a year's time, he's going to be a guy that is probably going to be on your radar now that may be on the bubble to getting into some of those tournaments and have the opportunity to participate against the best players in the world.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Scottie, thank you very much for your time. Best of luck this week.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Thank you.

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