

# Skechers World Champions Cup supporting Shriners Children's

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Clearwater, Florida, USA

Feather Sound Country Club

**Jim Furyk**

**Billy Andrade**

**Steve Flesch**

**Jason Caron**

**Stewart Cink**

**Jerry Kelly**

**Justin Leonard**

**Steve Stricker**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right. Last but certainly not least, we'd like to welcome our defending champions, Team USA to the Media Center here at the Skechers World Champions Cup supporting Shriners Children's.

Joining us on stage are captain Jim Furyk, vice captain Billy Andrade, vice captain Steve Flesch, Jason Caron, Stewart Cink, Jerry Kelly, Justin Leonard, and Steve Stricker.

We'll start by getting an opening comment from each of you and turn it over to questions.

Jim, we'll start with you.

JIM FURYK: Some general comments, I think we're all just excited. Kind of finding out the event was moving here to Clearwater. It was a bummer we were canceled last year. This team had a blast in '23, not only just hanging out together. Kind of the Presidents Cup and the Ryder Cups for me personally are my favorite events. I'm sure the men up here that played in those events would say the same thing.

Now over 50 having that opportunity to come out here and do it again, play against Darren and his team, Mike and his



team, it's a lot of fun. It's an honor to wear the flag. Just excited to be here in Clearwater. It seems like everyone in the area is excited about the event. I think once you kind of form the team, it's just anxious and wanting to get here and get started.

BILLY ANDRADE: Great to be back. So excited. Two years ago it was an amazing tournament. What Peter has done with this event, and to be with these guys and the camaraderie we have and what we had a couple years ago and we're going to continue it this year, it's just a win-win for us.

At the end of the year, we've all had a long season, but this is just the icing on the cake before Christmas. This is a Christmas present for all of us, and we're really looking forward to the competition and looking forward to being out there and seeing what we can do.

I just love the format. I love the fact that every hole is its own hole. There's a match on every single hole. Once the hole's over, then you start again. It's just a unique format, and I think that we'll all thrive in these conditions. Thank you.

STEVE FLESCHE: Honored to be a part of this. I haven't been a part of any of the team competitions in my PGA TOUR, Champions Tour career, so I'm glad to be here. Honored to be a vice captain along with Billy and Captain Furyk.

It's an honor for me to represent the United States in anything. It's not overwhelming, but it's just a really cool thing to say that you've done in your career. I'm honored to be a part of the team. Honored to get to know all these guys who I've played alongside.

We're together a lot this week, get to know each other a little more personally and share the camaraderie of being something together.

I'm looking forward to the week. Glad to be here. Thankful to Peter Jacobsen for coordinating this to show off the Champions Tour a little bit. I feel like we get kind of forgotten about a little bit with what's going on with the PGA TOUR.



Hopefully we'll put a little more spotlight on our product and let everybody know we can still play this game. Glad to be here.

JASON CARON: Super honored to be sitting up here with these guys, that's for sure. It's been a heck of a run for me to play in just a few events last year, to get in, and then to play well this year and have a chance to play in this.

Thanks to Skechers obviously for what they've done for this event.

Sitting up here with these guys, this is amazing for me. It's quite an honor. That pinch me moment has been started a few weeks ago. It will probably continue while I'm here in this event. Really looking forward to it.

STEWART CINK: I think, first of all, I trust all these players up here. I've known them for a long time. The ones who were part of this last time raved about the experience, and they said it was something you just don't want to miss.

That's how largely we decide our schedules, to be honest with you. We just kind of hear the reputations from other players' experience, and this one it was 100 percent home run.

Too bad we missed last year. Circumstances, of course we all know, prevented that. But Skechers is back. The team Jacobsen and Intersport put on a great show here. I think they have a vision for this to be a really longstanding, very important event in golf, and I think we also want that to happen.

We just love representing the United States of America, and I know the other teams love representing their parts of the world too. We have a tie here. We're the home team. Everybody up on the stage here has earned their place right here, and it's going to be so much fun to tee it up in team golf again.

JERRY KELLY: To me, two things. Representing our country, the USA, and being amongst these guys. I think it's an individual sport, and to be able to just celebrate the game of golf with friends and guys that I've admired my entire career, it just means the world to me to be a part of something like this.

I've only been on one team in the past, and this was such a great experience two years ago. Peter and Intersport did a fantastic job of getting this thing together.

If we would have had more media eyes on this thing the last time -- the way it turned out, the point system, crazy, so many points and having it come down to the last hole --

it was fantastic theater. I hope that happens again. I'd love for the same outcome as well.

Just really enjoy being with all these guys, and it means a lot.

JUSTIN LEONARD: I get to go last. Ditto to everything that everybody said. Playing an individual sport, and then when you get to come together as a team like this, there's nothing like it.

To echo Jim's sentiment, the Ryder Cups and the Presidents Cups that I played were some of my favorite weeks that I've ever had in the game of golf.

To be able -- you know, you think the last team I made on the PGA TOUR was 2009 at the Presidents Cup. You think, well, that's probably it. Then all of a sudden this idea comes about, and this event comes about. Two years ago to be able to relive the experience of playing as a team, you get closer with your teammates, it's really special.

For it to come down to, as Jerry said, as many points as there are out there, for it to come down to the last hole in the last match was pretty incredible. There's a lot to figure out logistically. They nailed it two years ago, and it's only going to be better again this year.

To sit up here with these guys who I look up to, who inspire me to work harder each and every day, and to get to play for them as well as myself, then you factor in that we're playing for our country, it just makes for a very special week.

THE MODERATOR: Now actually last, Steve Stricker.

STEVE STRICKER: You forgot about me.

JUSTIN LEONARD: I always forget about you. I haven't seen you in like months. Welcome back. (Laughter).

STEVE STRICKER: I don't know what else to say than to just echo what everybody has said really. Two years ago we all left saying it was the most fun team event we've ever been a part of.

Last night, Billy, it started off like we were right on that same path, wasn't it?

BILLY ANDRADE: Absolutely.

(Laughter).

STEVE STRICKER: Last night, even Audrey, our player liaison got into the mix. It started off with a good week



already.

JUSTIN LEONARD: Need some electrolytes, please.

BILLY ANDRADE: Welcome back, Steve.

STEVE STRICKER: It is a lot of fun to be up here with these guys. To play for your country, it's always a blast. Just to experience this whole week, I'm looking forward to it. Looking forward to being with each one of these guys. The relationships you build along the way is always very special. So we look forward to a great week.

**Q. We can't let you get away without explaining what happened last night.**

STEVE STRICKER: Maybe Billy needs to talk about it.

(Laughter).

It was nothing. It was just us having a good time, having a lot of fun, having too many drinks probably to start the week off. That's the way we ended two years ago, and we had a ball. We played well. We enjoyed each other's company and time with each other.

It was just like starting over again last night, seeing everybody. I haven't seen a lot of these guys most of the year. I didn't play very much. So for me to come in and see everybody was a treat for me. We had a good time, and it was a good start to the week.

With Peter Jacobsen and Intersport doing the heavy lifting and us just coming in to take advantage of it all, can't say enough about those people who make it happen, and Skechers obviously. But, yeah, it got off to a good start last night.

**Q. You kind of answered this, but I think you said this is the most fun team event you've been a part of, which I think people might be surprised to hear given the number of team events you've played in. What -- just in terms of specifics, what about this event really resonates with you?**

STEVE STRICKER: I think it's just the competition is still there, right? That's the part that we all really enjoy, I think. Getting ready for it. Getting ready for it with a partner, with teammates. I think we all enjoy that. The stress level is definitely down compared to a Ryder Cup and a Presidents Cup, so you can go out and have a little bit more fun with it.

You're playing against guys that we play against all year long. There's a lot of friendships there too, and those friendships have built over the years, I think, with the

International and European teams just because we play with them a lot, for one, and everybody's in a better frame of mind. We're all a little bit more casual, except for maybe Jerry.

(Laughter).

Other than that, everybody is willing to have a good time with it, but yet compete, try to compete at the highest level.

JIM FURYK: I think to add to that kind of a small team atmosphere. Only having seven or eight of us, it's a smaller, more intimate group. You can already see it, who would have thought Strick would be the comedian of the group? You can already see how much fun it is.

**Q. Jim, in terms of your captaining duties, how different do those look from other team events you've been a part of?**

JIM FURYK: It's quite a bit different. Again, the team's smaller. Everyone's playing. You're really only in your partnerships, you're putting three sets of two out there. There's not a lot of -- there's a little less strategy because I can't really change partners on, say, Thursday I can't change partners from the six ball to the sixsomes. You're going to stay with your same partner, play against the same team.

So really it just comes down to order and how we pair these guys up. We've got a ton of experience on this team. Strick was a great captain. I partnered with Stewart and Justin. We have so much experience on the team, so for me it's fun for me to hang out and really rely on what these guys are seeing, feeling. We have a pretty good idea how we're going out there and how we're going to pair up, but in the next two days we're going to be fluid with it.

Things could change. We can take a look at the golf course, the conditions, and think maybe there's a little better strategy. A lot of it is more this is kind of a group decision, group ideas, and bounce a lot of ideas off each other. So the next couple nights will be fun and talking about those things and get ready for Thursday.

**Q. For Justin or Jerry, being that you played last time out, in a Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup, it's either one color or the other, 1-up, 2-up, 3-up, whatever. Here you've got to get to 220, give or take, points to win. When you're out there playing, how much are you paying attention to what's on that scoreboard? Do you keep track of the points while you're playing?**

JERRY KELLY: I'm not smart enough to keep track of all those points, let's just start there.



The thing that I love about this is I may bring the last hole with me when I'm playing in a normal event. I really don't feel that way in this format. It's a new match every single hole, and you've got to get yourself up for every single hole. I've got no issues doing that.

But there's nothing bringing you down because, hey, when it's gone, it's gone. I'd like to say I learned from that and took that to the next two -- last two years, but I didn't learn that much. We did all right.

JUSTIN LEONARD: I'm not much of a scoreboard watcher. For me it's like purely situational the last couple holes of an event. Otherwise, I just try and just go play and add them up at the end.

I think that's a fairly wise tactic when it comes to how volatile the points can be. You think the first three days there's three matches going on and on Sunday there's six matches. You can get a lot of variables in that last day.

So, yeah, I think you go out and play your game and do what you can on each hole, as Jerry said, and kind of add them up there at the end.

**Q. For Jim, similar question, does pairing players together differ when you're dealing with points as opposed to a standard match play format?**

JIM FURYK: I don't think so. I think the goal is really you're looking maybe at the sixsomes in some golf balls, you're looking at how the games could kind of match, ham and egg off each other, maybe attack this golf course in different ways in the six balls. And I think a lot of it is personalities as well, guys that maybe will feed off each other and get a lot out of each other.

This group's pretty darn easy as far as all good personalities, all guys that are really easy to pair, all friends. So being that small, intimate group it's not as difficult, but you're still trying to maximize, I think, squeeze out every little advantage you can out of the groups and try to come up with the three best sets for the twos.

**Q. Two questions. First for Jerry, do you remember who the highest point earner was two years ago? Who was it, Jerry? It was you.**

JERRY KELLY: Oh, was it me?

**Q. It was you. I was expecting you to say me. Next question for Jason Caron. Jason, talk about your journey. You had your PGA TOUR card. You became a PGA of America club professional. Now you joined**

**the Champions Tour, no status, and here you are sitting here. That's quite a remarkable story.**

JASON CARON: Yeah, I had my TOUR card in 2000 and 2003, so I got to meet most of these guys back then. My game kind of went a different direction and I went into the club pro side of the world and have a great job at the Mill River Club at Oyster Bay in New York. My wife, Liz, and I both work together.

Just happened to qualify for the Senior PGA last year through the PGA of America; went out and tied for fourth and got into Strick's event; made a few more bucks. Next thing you know it, Mr. Furyk over here gave me an exemption towards the end of the year because I was close to having my chance to keeping my card or getting a card, I should say. Sure enough, I tie for fourth again.

Things just kind of snowballed and got full status and had a great year this year, very solid. All of a sudden, I kind of caught wind of this event, that I might be close to making the team. I really wanted it bad, and I think I might have practiced too much, to be honest. I'm not used to doing that.

So I really kind of dug in deep, and I was fortunate enough to play well enough at the SAS event, which is the last point getter for me, and I happened to make this team.

It was great to get that call from Jim. It was awesome.

**Q. Stewart, congratulations on the Charles Schwab Cup championship. That was pretty cool to see you in contention all year and then talk about what happened in Phoenix at the final event.**

STEWART CINK: Most of the time in golf -- and these guys can all attest -- if you make some goals and state those goals, you just get kicked in the teeth. It doesn't usually work out in your favor in golf. I've had plenty of that happen.

This year, talking to my wife Lisa, she's a big goal setter, and I've never really been because of that kicked in the teeth thing. This year I just decided I was going to try a little differently, and I was going to make it a stated goal. I felt like I had a chance at the beginning of the year to be there at the end. I just chose to talk about it a lot and make it my goal.

I had a lot of fun pursuing that this year. At the end of the year, I knew I was close. The path in front of me was sort of crystallized at the end because Alker just kept playing great and he blew everybody away in Little Rock at the Simmons Bank, and Miguel had four wins earlier in the





year. Those guys don't just stop playing well. So I had to win.

Going into Phoenix, I knew there was some outside chance that, if I didn't win, I had a chance to still win the whole thing, but it was remote. Basically I had to win the whole thing.

To go into a four-round tournament and know that you have to win at the end and play every hole with that in your mind as part of your strategy, as part of your decision, as part of getting yourself in the right position to hit the right shots, I was really proud of that.

It was one of the parts of my career and really put a little star by and say that's one we got our job accomplished.

**Q. I want to welcome all of you guys to the destination. I kind of have a two-part question. This is for Jim or really anyone on the panel that wants to jump in. What makes golfing in the St. Pete/Clearwater area different than other destinations. When you're not on the course, what's your favorite thing to do here in the St. Pete/Clearwater area?**

JIM FURYK: I haven't spent a ton of time in this area although I have been to a number of Tampa Bay games. I was here for the World Series. So that whole area, shutting down the streets, seeing this community kind of rally behind their team. The bar scene down there was amazing. I had a blast while I was here.

It was the one World Series game they won in that series, so maybe I was good luck.

No, I think it's a great city, great town.

As far as from the golf perspective, Innisbrook is not far away. One of my favorite events on Tour. I love the golf course. I think we're all kind of anxious to see how the community supports the event. We're expecting some big crowds. I think from that perspective, we're all excited.

I don't know, does anyone else have a lot of experience in the area?

STEVE STRICKER: Actually owned a house here for a while. We were members or -- were my first year on TOUR, 1994, we lived up at TPC Tampa Bay. We would come down here in the wintertime. Always enjoyed the area. I'm sure the areas have changed. I know Jerry's caddie, Eric, lives here in town.

Yeah, Innisbrook is nearby. It's a nice area. We enjoyed our time here when we were here, I know that.

**Q. Just kind of piggybacking on that, you've got the Valspar at Innisbrook. You've got the women playing The ANNIKA over in Belleair now. You mentioned this being a long-term event. Could this kind of become a staple in this area for the champions players maybe at this time every year where it's a staple on the schedule for the golf schedule down here?**

JIM FURYK: I saw a man that's really instrumental in this event in the back of the room with two thumbs up and a giant smile. So sounds like that would be a nice plan.

**Q. Peter, is there plans on moving this around the world? There is? Nice.**

CHARLIE BESSER: (In summary.) A group from Ireland is coming here this week to bring this tournament to Ireland, potentially by '29. We hope Tampa supports this event for this area to become our tournament's U.S. home base.

**Q. Sort of an open-ended question to anyone who might want to field it. There's obviously been a lot of talk, whispers, whatever, about changes coming to the PGA TOUR, in particular, reducing the schedule. I'm wondering has the Champions Tour membership received any kind of messaging about what the next year or two or three years might look like? Any conversations with Rolapp?**

JIM FURYK: I have not.

**Q. I'm asking if you've heard about any potential change.**

JIM FURYK: Just rumors, I think. Rumors, that's the best I could say. I really haven't had that discussion. I think we're all focused kind of on the Champions Tour. We're focused with -- Miller Brady is in the back of the room, our leader. We love the Tour we play on. You can kind of hear it from the guys talking. We really think we have a great product.

We've got a lot of Hall of Famers. We've got a lot of great golf being played. Our challenge is to figure out where we fit in that puzzle in the world of golf. Again, I think we have a really good product. We're excited about what we do and the opportunity to compete each and every week.

The Tour will look different. It has to, just from what we're hearing, but I personally don't have any knowledge or haven't had any of those discussions.

**Q. The new commissioner addressed the Champions**

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## Tour membership in any kind of formal way?

JIM FURYK: Letters. I mean, a letter to -- am I correct? An e-mail and such, but not a lot of hard knowledge yet.

JUSTIN LEONARD: And nothing specific about our tour. It's normally what he's sending to the entire membership.

STEVE FLESCH: Whatever they do to the PGA TOUR, they send to all the members of the Tour, including us, and I guess Korn Ferry gets it too.

Basically a way to keep the entire membership informed about what's going on at the big show.

STEWART CINK: Big thing to remember is we represent the PGA TOUR even though we're the PGA TOUR Champions. We're here at Clearwater at Feather Sound, World Champions Cup. It's a big event Skechers is putting on here. We're playing professional golf under the banner of the PGA TOUR, and so all the players up here, all the players on the other teams have significant name recognition they've built up over the years playing for the PGA TOUR, and even around the world playing professional golf.

We're all part of the PGA TOUR. It's not just there's some satellite over here and whatever. We're carrying the flag for the PGA TOUR here too. That's the way we feel, and that's the way that the PGA TOUR feels. Until we hear something different about that, which I don't see that changing, we're able to carry that flag and just continue to represent the PGA TOUR and professional golf.

JUSTIN LEONARD: One of the great things about our Tour is most players play almost every event. There's obviously guys taking weeks off here and there, but our best players play a lot, as far as the overall percentage of the event we have. I think that's something the Tour is kind of aiming to do from what I understand by it, but our leadership has a model that really works well for our Tour and having our players -- and every one of them is good, but having all of our players play almost all the events.

So the way the schedule's spread out, both from the calendar and geographically, it works very well.

THE MODERATOR: I would say additionally before we go to the next question, 28 events on the Champions Tour; 22 are in markets where the PGA TOUR doesn't play. So when you go to Seattle, Madison, you got to and Little Rock, this is the PGA TOUR and the representation of the brand.

**Q. This question is for anyone on the panel. Tiger**

**Woods turns 50 later this month. Certainly if he were able to play and make appearances on the Champions Tour it would bring a lot of publicity, a lot of attention to the Tour. Have any of you spoken with him about the prospect of doing that?**

JERRY KELLY: I had breakfast with him the other day and -- no, I didn't. Sorry, I haven't spoken with him. We know as much as you do.

JIM FURYK: I think what we ought to do is potentially challenge him. I don't think he can hang out here at these three-round tournaments. Maybe he'll get mad and play a bunch. I don't think he can handle Stewart Cink, to be honest with you.

STEWART CINK: He's handled me lots of times before. Didn't seem to be a problem.

STEVE FLESCH: Believe me, I know our tournament directors and Miller and everybody would like to get an idea what his plans are, but I mean, with this latest surgery, and everybody up here knows, just Tiger doesn't really share much. Other than maybe a couple guys up here who might be good friends with him or talk to him occasionally, he just doesn't share his plans.

Like when he played the PGA TOUR, he would literally commit -- you have to commit by 5:00 on Friday, I think he would most of the time commit at like 4:58 for the event. Other not that the events you knew he was going to play like Memorial, Torrey Pines, his staples, very seldom would he ever commit too early.

On our Tour, that puts a big challenge on our tournament directors if he does decide to play out here but he waits until the Friday before the event. That's a big scale to change when all of a sudden he might decide to go to Des Moines, Iowa, which I don't know if he would, or Madison for Steve's event.

That's a big buildout difference. A lot of people would show up to see Tiger Woods because he hasn't been in any of these markets. We hope he would play in some of those. Rumor has it he's probably focusing on the majors, but selfishly to help our Tour, we'd love him to go to Madison and Des Moines and some of the smaller markets where it would really make a big impact, where a lot of people who have never seen Tiger Woods play golf would get to see him in person.

Your guess is as good as ours. We won't really know.

**Q. Friday at 5:00?**



STEVE FLESCH: Friday at 5:00. Hualalai is our first event he'll be eligible for next year out in Kona. But his health, his back, we hope he shows up. We'll know, I guess, Friday at 5:00 the week before.

**Q. The common thread here this morning for all three groups, the term 50s golf kept coming up. I'm curious, we have Ryder Cup, Presidents Cup, Hall of Famers, which is a totally unique setup than we've ever had before for any world event. I'm curious, when it's a Ryder Cup year, you hear the buzz, it's a Ryder Cup year. Has the same buzz gone through the Champions Tour after the way 2023 went until now? This is going to become something that's going to happen every year, does that same buzz go through your guys' Tour? I'm anxious to hear what you think.**

JIM FURYK: You heard Strick talk about '23, you heard Jerry, Justin, Billy. The guys who played loved it. Then Jason, how bad he wanted to make the team, coming down the stretch how much pressure he put on himself. Stewart, a little FOMO from not playing in '23, wanted to be here in '25.

Yeah, I think that excitement is there. Again, it's an event we're trying to build, but I think the -- I just think listening to everyone talk about the event puts a big smile on my face, and I feel like we're moving in the right direction.

THE MODERATOR: Team USA, thanks for your time. Best of luck this week.

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