

# Betfred British Masters hosted by Sir Nick Faldo

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Sutton, Coldfield, England

The Belfry Hotel & Resort

## Sir Nick Faldo

### Press Conference



TOM CARLISLE: Welcome to the Betfred British Masters hosted by Nick Faldo. Sir Nick, a lot going on behind the scenes in the build up to the tournament. How excited are you and ready to go tomorrow at The Belfry.

SIR NICK FALDO: Yeah, obviously very honored to be in this position. Looking forward to a nice stretch over the next five years or more, and the goal is to have an impact on this event, and do the best I can to help to elevate it in different areas. Excited. It looks good out there. Good atmosphere. Ready to rock and roll.

TOM CARLISLE: Given the venue's history, and your history as well, how proud are you to be associated with this tournament at this golf course.

SIR NICK FALDO: Yeah, it's an instantly recognizable name in the game of golf on both sides of the Atlantic. I have some good and bad memories here.

Yeah, obviously Ryder Cup was very special.

TOM CARLISLE: Do the memories come flooding back as soon as you step on site.

SIR NICK FALDO: Kind of, yeah. Got a few good spots. The whole atmosphere in the team was great. In '85, just started my swing rebuild, so I didn't contribute. But in '89 I played with Woosie at that time after a very successful '87 with Woosie, so that was good fun. Obviously '93, I played with Monty, some good entertainment. Got some good memories.

#### **Q. Had you been asked to host this tournament in previous years, and if so what brought you to be involved?**

SIR NICK FALDO: I was meeting with Keith Pelley and Guy, pre-COVID, four or five years ago, we talked about it, with the Faldo Series, getting the Tour more involved, and that's when it first started, and here we are. Simple as that. I was never asked before. As usual, miscommunication

between past management and that sort of thing,. I said of course I'd do it, they pulled a face, and said really? I said, I'd never been asked, so here we are.

#### **Q. You mentioned five years in your initial remarks. Is that something you signed in your contract?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Yeah, I want a run at it. Which gives you a chance to be more involved and do some things. I want to look at the golf course, you can't waltz in on day one and wave your arms around, you've got to have a game plan on the golf course and how we elevated it for the field. It leads with what I want to do on the Faldo Series, we've had some good discussions. I just want to make things even better.

#### **Q. The field, is that the biggest challenge?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Yeah, obviously as you know, there's 45 events, and guys are going to pick their 22 to 25. So everybody is looking at their schedule, where they are coming from, where they are flying to, where they are playing next. When they look at everything, you want to be on their radar and for them to come and play.

#### **Q. Interested to hear your thoughts on what's happened in the golf world the last three or four weeks.**

SIR NICK FALDO: I've been on Montana, more worried about a muddy river and where I'll be fishing next. I can honestly say we don't know. I've been having some closed-door conversations, so I know a little bit. We don't know, how this impacts golf and how it goes on. I think when the dust settles, however long that takes, whether it takes six months, a year, whatever, my goodness, pro golf is in a financial -- overall better position than we were back in the day. They are playing for more in one week, what the Tour was worth -- can't believe that we still got it. Moving house, I found a little leaflet of how proud the European Tour was to get to ten million, still got that. I should send that to the guys. Some of the guys now, what is ten million? They wouldn't bother with that sort of thing.

The way the professional game is right now, it's pretty amazing, isn't it.



**Q. After what's gone on the last 12 months, how much of a challenge is it going to be to sort things out and change the landscape that everyone's going to be happy?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Well, that's impossible. I think the bodies have all got the best interest in trying to create global golf, and if they are truly on board, with a bottomless pit of money they should be able to make the call. I'd love them to expand in to different areas. South Africa Australia has struggled. Australia has always struggled isn't it. I used to love playing in those places. I was one of the few guys who really did genuinely play a world tour back in the day. Seve played, Pricey, Greg did. We went everywhere, all four corners of the world. Those tours really miss out.

I would love to see that. I would love to see them be keen on golfing global - give everyone a chance to play and to be seen in those countries. There's some great events around the world to play.

**Q. As relates to that, you touched on it, do you think that it's a good thing that Saudi money is now going to be inside the tent, as it were, rather than the outside?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Well, I think, yes, as you know, the litigation problem was huge, massive numbers. So now they are all going join forces, and you've got that issue of, whatever you want to call it, the prop-up, the guarantor, pro golf is in a pretty darned good place. I hope they can all come together, the officials, the official parties. That's their goal to make this a global game, and make it work.

**Q. Talking about LIV, how do you see the future for LIV? Do you think a 54-hole --**

SIR NICK FALDO: If you notice my Tweet, I still will stand by. I wouldn't want to play it. I honestly don't think 54 holes feels like -- you know, look, going to the first tee in a London taxi, you've got somebody on a violin before I tee off, I'm not sure that would have been Faldo back in the day, you know. And the same guys -- to be honest there's only half a dozen who are current. Half the field, you don't really know and half the field, are there because it's very nice last-place money, if you shoot 20-over you still get that rather than going home.

Yeah, nothing feels competitive. I think they all suffer with atmosphere, and they are all big brands, and then you're being told, well, I think 20,000 people saw you, they would rather watch Penn & Teller doing magic tricks.

So it's not really -- that disappeared in a way, which you can do in the game of golf. You stop playing or disappear for six months golf moves on. All the tours move on. So

that's really where I have never felt it was me.

**Q. Do you think it can survive, LIV as a concept can survive?**

SIR NICK FALDO: No, I don't think so. I think it will just -- because nobody is really interested. Sponsorship, they are not going to get the sponsorships they thought. They call it team, and it's not a team, is it, because it's stroke play. You see, your mates on the putting green, you say play well, oh, see you in the scorer's tent, say what did you shoot, that's it.

Out there, the team is out there helping shoulder-to-shoulder, that's a true team. I don't get that part. There's no real goals on a team, you look at The Ryder Cup, the passion, the atmosphere -- they are not playing with the same passion and atmosphere as The Ryder Cup, a team event. I thought it really would just dwindle away because it didn't have the public interest, globally it's very small isn't it.

**Q. Just how does the DP World Tour fit? You're obviously making a commitment to be involved. How do you see it fits in the new system?**

SIR NICK FALDO: To be honest, I'm not a hundred percent sure. As I said, it's true they haven't formulated the whole structure, but the bottom line I hear from Keith is the players are happy with the tour, the DP World Tour and the Tour will adjust. It will adapt. Now it's really a true partnership. They will jiggle dates.

As I said, I think I'd give it a couple years. I think players will play over a 12-month span the schedule they want to play, and I think they will end up playing in different places around the world, which will be great for the game of golf.

**Q. As you said, don't know what it means, the bigger structure, but in terms of the players, one in particular, what do you think it can do for Rory now that he doesn't have to be the spokesperson for the PGA TOUR anymore, and he can just say, right, I don't want to talk about it anymore?**

SIR NICK FALDO: I'm pretty sure Rory suffered from being constantly asked, being the spokesman. You know, and he's young. You want to have a clear head when you play golf, you want to concentrate and do your own practise. Hence, Rory's carried that and that's kind of part of it, and the next round of players should be very grateful that they can go and play a tournament under the radar.

Give you an example, you guys do the math, I'm pretty sure you can go play in an event, finish 12th every week,

so you're not seen on television. You don't have to do any media. All you have to do is roll up, take a bag of balls out, play four rounds of golf nicely, sign a few autographs and leave, and you can make a quarter of a million a week.

Tell us how many other jobs offer that? And you're not really making much contribution to the Tour or anything. You just waltz in, play golf. Scottie Scheffler said it, all we do is hit a golf ball around a field. Some should feel grateful -- yes, it's very competitive, yes, I get all that. But my goodness, you should be very grateful to the top guys who have handled all the media and everything and all of that.

**Q. Rory didn't do an official presser at the U.S. Open.**

SIR NICK FALDO: He's been playing well. I'd rather him playing well. I was talking, I'd rather be playing well and talking why I'm finishing second than finishing 52nd. I know everybody -- write it in one line, if I came in 52nd, I played lousy this week, felt bad, and it's done, isn't it.

But if you finish second, there's a steward's inquiry and suddenly a dissection. But he's there. He's playing that well. He's there every week.

So maybe, you know, maybe -- I wouldn't be surprised if he's seriously inspired at Hoylake. I mean, that's where he won last. I'm sure he's got lots to clear, lots of scar damage, scar tissue from nine years now, nine years.

So a lot goes on. Not too many players come back and win another major nine years later and then gone on. Crenshaw won 12 years apart I think...?

**Q. Hale Irwin.**

SIR NICK FALDO: We'll see what he can do. I'm sure he'd just love to just go and play, practise and play, with minimal off-course work and interference and what have you, and you need that concentration when you're trying to play. You've got to have that all day long.

**Q. How would you handle it? I presume you would speak to us -- when you were popular, you would speak to us almost every day and do pre-tournament press conferences. Just give us as little as possible.**

SIR NICK FALDO: It's was just birdies and bogeys back then. I can handle that. Yeah, it was tough enough when Tiger came on. 'You thinking of getting a dog?' 'No'. 'What do you think Tiger's game's like?'. The second question was always Tiger. Yeah, thanks.

So no, it's -- I've got a feeling, he's playing beautifully. Just

get those wedges a smidge close and that changes everything. That changes the putting under pressure to putting for birdie, is a huge difference. Just do two and three of those better each round. That will be two shots.

**Q. You were in Scotland last week doing loads of stuff. You still enjoy being back up there in?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Absolutely. We came in, wife Lindsay loves golf. She has some very old Scottish blood in her, going back to Caerlaverock Castle. Yeah, we went out for a couple of days. Got this very cool relationship now with Duncan Taylor, the Black Bull Brand, my Scotch, that's a very fun project. Did a bit of filming at St Andrews with Hidden Links who I represent, and here we are. A lovely couple of days

**Q. In terms of your commentary, you said you'd stepped back from full time, and then you did obviously the Masters for SKY?**

SIR NICK FALDO: I'm doing The Open for Sky. Yeah, as you guys know, Flying twice a week, I've done that long enough now -- you want some rest, do some other things, a design business I'm very keen with, third career, going very well in Asia. A lot's happening in Vietnam, Philippines. I want to bring more over to Europe and America. So that's all planned.

So yeah, TV was a great gig but it did lock you for six months, as you know, from January, all the way through to September, and I thought, well, if I carry on doing that, really Montana is special to us. We love the outdoors, the lifestyle, so September, October, two months, you just have to be home. Just cross that in my diary, not moving apart from the Ryder Cup this year. So it's like, I'm not going to rush around and do TV and fit all my jobs in. Feel want to be more resting and fishing and all that. I love my fishing. I have lots of mates who want to take me to their favourite spots. That's really how it came about. I've been on the road since I was 18. You guys, you know. Once you pace the size of your room, you know you're in trouble. I did that. I said to Nantz, it's just not the same. Jim he's been on the road for 40-odd years, and I thought, no, why would I look at four walls? Could be doing something different. Might be time for a breather, something new.

**Q. This course, are you talking major renovations?**

SIR NICK FALDO: I hope so. We are in serious talks. It's 60 years old, I believe. It's time for a refresh. All those saplings we were stuck behind at the Ryder Cup, now they're everywhere. I think it needs a little bit of a clear-out, a little bit of fresh air in there.



Because the game has changed, as well. You know, again as you know, we were hitting a drive 260 and long 4s were long 4s, and now they're all around the corner, and it's completely different. So it will be nice to see -- to do a little work to keep the challenge up for these guys.

**Q. 10th tee is going to be back in the clubhouse somewhere?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Who knows. It might be -- join all the lakes together so there's no fairway. No, I don't agree that length is the answer because again, short 4s and 3s, it's bringing the scare factor. Other pros will pull short irons and you have a creek down the left, they think about it. Making it longer, as you've seen, doesn't affect when they hit it miles.

Completely different ballgame. Back in the day, it was 450, 460, and now, they get on 17 at Riviera, 600 yards uphill with an iron.

**Q. I was looking at the picture on the wall, and wonder what you thought about that.**

SIR NICK FALDO: Yeah, I think I know -- I think that's the 9th fairway at Birkdale. I know that's not -- is that a links or not? Going by the hair and the trousers.

**Q. Yellow-ish scoreboard behind it.**

SIR NICK FALDO: There was that shirt? It's Pringle. Hair, still natural. Thanks, Mum.

Yeah, I think that was '83 Birkdale. And then yeah, then did I change things after that.

**Q. Is that the kind of position you want to get rid of?**

SIR NICK FALDO: I was tempted to swing, good 'ole Jerry Pate, a lot of legs and a lot of lag. Then Ian Connelly said get to the top of the swing and say legs. That era, it was all about your tempo and timing. That's how you collected the golf ball, then legs came along and it was more rotary. Then body was a piston and arms are rotating more. Completely new concept.

At Birkdale, I started 6, 6, Thursday. Double, double and I shot 68 the first day. And with nine holes to play, I'm leading The Open. How about that? And blew up. It was all part of the learning curve.

I won America, Hilton Head, my first win. By the end of '84, I was somewhere, I was reliving that, and honestly, a little voice said, You haven't got it, mate. This isn't good enough. That's when I embarked on the swing change. I

had no idea it was going to be a two-year project. And I had no idea how bad my golf would get.

And amazingly, I don't know how I never lost, what's the right word, determination for it. I just stuck with it. Beating away and you know, I was hitting -- I was doing sessions with David at Greenleaf, and I'd hit five big buckets, the big buckets. I was hitting 1,500 balls until my fingers were not closing around 3.00 and 4.00 in the afternoon. Couldn't even close my hand.

I was crazy to do it. It was ludicrous to do it I would not recommend it now. Now, you disappear to Hawaii with your trainers and psychologist and stay there for three months and come back as a changed golfer, far, far easier.

**Q. You mentioned Ryder Cup. Going into September, which rookies do you see on the team this year?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Hojgaard must be close. Perez? Our backbone is really good right now. My goodness, you go from Rory and Rahm and Viktor, and we have Matt Fitzpatrick, Rosey, Tommy. Who else we got? Tyrrell.

**Q. Shane Lowry.**

SIR NICK FALDO: Shane. We've got our backbone eight. How fantastic is that? Back in the day, eight guys, you're all playing, that's it, you keep playing until you drop. Seriously, that was it, Tony said I'm not replacing you until you fall over. I think we've got a fantastic backbone now. Compared to their eight, it's no difference.

So I'm feeling very -- after the way they trounced us and they win the Presidents Cup, but no, I honestly think that is a heck of a Big 8.

And if you get your rookie that has a sensational, two out of the four, we don't know, maybe just one more of them to have a wonderful week, win three points, bang, I think you've got a heck of a chance now, yeah.

**Q. Couple of questions. You said you were looking for changes, so do you think it's vulnerable this week for low scores? Perhaps from your day to now, it's there for the taking with low scores this week?**

SIR NICK FALDO: A lot depends on the weather, hole locations, all that sort of thing.

Yeah, it's a completely different game from my day. Guys hit literally a hundred yards further than we did. Yeah, I think cutting corners, all sorts of things.

But that doesn't mean it's not going to be a good test.

You're going to find a way to make that happen. If it's going to be low-scoring, you'd better be part of it.

But who knows, if the wind stays up, it's still very exposed out there. It's an awkward test. We'll see.

**Q. Asked this of Justin yesterday, you were the last Englishman to win The Open, which is now 31 years ago, and it will be the 30th open. That's the strongest stretch between English people winning it. Scotsman won the first 29 an Englishman won the 30th. So if an Englishman doesn't win this year, it will be the longest stretch ever between Open victories. What are your thoughts on English players? You mentioned Rory has a chance with his history at Hoylake. Any Englishman can come through?**

SIR NICK FALDO: To be honest, I'm trying to think of a silly answer to the 31 years. Like to keep the Faldo name in there.

We've got some good -- obviously, Fitzpatrick and Tyrrell, probably the top two. Tommy is coming alive, isn't he. Yeah, we do have three genuine guys there who have a shot. Hoylake is a nice golf course for English golfers, isn't it. Probably played it quite a bit over the years.

Yeah, there's a distinct possibility one of those three could do it. It'd be worth a flutter on all of them.

**Q. Three weeks out, would you be start focusing now or look week-to-week? When did you start focusing on The Open? 13 top 10 finishes.**

SIR NICK FALDO: August of the last year. I started planning my next season after the PGA. I was already thinking, yeah, and I would start looking at my game. I did a really good mini-rebuild in end of '91. I had a bad year that year, and I remember I said, let's put three or four -- one of them being bunkers. And I went to Valderrama, and I said, I'm only going to hit bunker shots this week. Just practise bunker shots, and that's basically what I did. But all the extra practise was just bunker shots. I thought, tick the box, so I can at least say I'm a decent bunker player now and then move on to another part of the game.

Yeah, I generally think of that, how I would plan my schedule, and you look ahead, six, nine months ahead. My diary is always six or nine months ahead I know what I'm doing and blocked it and where I'm flying around the world. It's the same in those days. I was already in the mode months before.

**Q. What about peaking at the majors?**

SIR NICK FALDO: Yeah, and then you do a little bit of extra practise when you could so you have a good run. Obviously when we went to St Andrews, we were French Open, and there's a massive putting green there. I said to Fanny, oh, this is perfect, and we were playing at St Andrews afterwards so we practiced 40, 50 and 60 yard putts. I was always thinking ahead, plotting, thinking what I would need.

It was '87 when I played that week, I was hitting the ball better, it was really good. If I thought it was a 6-iron, I grabbed a 5-iron, so I was already getting ready for Muirfield. Pretending I'm Sam Snead, hit it softer. Always planning and plotting.

TOM CARLISLE: Thank you for your time.