

The 150th Open

Press Conference

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Scottie Scheffler



STUART MOFFATT: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for your patience. Delighted to be joined by the Masters champion and the world No. 1, Scottie Scheffler. Scottie, welcome to St Andrews. Just wondering what your impressions are of the course.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: First impressions, I didn't know exactly what to expect. I'd heard rumours, but to see it firsthand is definitely a lot different.

I think what surprised me most is all the space off the tee where you're trying to play it into other fairways or just weird stuff like that. I didn't really expect playing into opposite fairways as often as we may be doing. It can get a little dangerous out there at times just with the whole crisscross.

Yeah, it's a really special place. I can kind of see the history and see how golf was designed to be played hundreds of years ago. So it's pretty cool to see firsthand.

STUART MOFFATT: And how have your preparations been going as we get to the eve of the championship?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I've just been trying to get out on the golf course and spend as much time out there as I can, really just trying to get used to the firmness, get used to the bounces, learn as much as I can about the golf course.

I think once you get to a tournament like this, I don't know if you're going to figure anything out on the range, chipping, short game area, whatever it is. I'm going to do most of my figuring it out out there on the course and get used to how it plays, where I can miss, where I can't miss, stuff like that.

Q. You did pretty well in your Open debut last year, first three rounds all in the 60s. This is a different course. You mentioned the history. You mentioned the weird crisscrossing of fairways. Do you still think you can contend this week despite everything being so strange and new?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I don't really see why not. I kind of enjoy this style of golf. It's definitely different than what I'm used to, but with how firm everything is, you have to have such good control of your ball, and I feel like that's a skill of mine is being able to hit all different kinds of shots.

And I really kind of appreciate what you have to do out here. And whether that's running a ball 40 yards up to a green or trying to hit one as high as I've ever hit in my life, just doing all different kinds of stuff I think is more enjoyable for me when I get back to the States.

Sometimes, especially after last year, I kind of missed playing over here. To be back is really fun and special, and I'm looking forward to doing it in competition this week.

Q. You're known for the shot this year at the Masters, which was a punch shot. How far out from the greens are you willing to use that? And also how far out have you tried using putter to approach to a green here?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I've used putter pretty far out. I wouldn't say more than maybe 30 yards. It really depends on kind of what's in front of you. But I've used all the way down to maybe a 6-iron this week for different shots.

That's why I said I've been spending time out on the course because basically I've been going out there and Teddy's been throwing balls around the greens and I'm just hitting all different kinds of shots. He leaves the bag there for me and I play to different pins.

It seems like there's going to be certain spots where a lot of balls are going to go just based on what the wind direction is going to be. I'll use whatever I need to use. Yeah, you might see some weird stuff this week. It's really firm out there.

Q. And what do you think of the Road Hole?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It's pretty funny. You hit over the hotel, and then the green, like it is so small. Then I went down and fooled around in the bunker a bit yesterday. I'm definitely going to do everything in my power to not go in that bunker. It's so bad down there.

But it's really cool. It's such a fun hole to play. I think that's one of the special things about this golf course. It's so simple, but it's really fun to play. No matter the conditions, I'm going to go out there and have a good time just hitting all kinds of weird shots.



Q. Scottie, you're the world No. 1. It doesn't get much better than that. But what would it mean to you to go on and win this very special Open at the home of golf?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It was always a dream of mine just to be able to come here and play this golf course, so to come and play this golf course in an Open Championship is really special, just with the history and all the stuff I've seen at this golf course.

To be able to have a chance to win on Sunday would be really special as well. So I'm going to go out there tomorrow and do my best and put my head down and do what I've done all year and just go out and try to play good golf.

Q. This is a course where depending on the wind it could be the easiest you play or, as Jack says, the toughest into the wind, short par-4s, et cetera. Why do you think this thing has held up so well over the years? It's short by modern standards, frankly.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: But it doesn't always play short. Certain holes, depending on wind, will play really short, and then other holes will play really long.

For instance, I came here Sunday, No. 1, not much wind, I hit 5-iron, lob wedge. Yesterday the forecasted winds were 15 miles an hour, and it was into and off the left. And I barely mis-hit my 3-iron off the tee, and I hit 5-iron into the green. Okay, that's a 15-mile-an-hour wind. With how firm everything is, it just changes stuff so much.

Then when you get a little bit of wind, all bets are off. There's little hollows here, there's little bumps, and the greens are not easy, they're hige. A lot of times where the greens are smaller, you may have bunkers and stuff surrounding them. So let's say I get a flier and I airmail the green, a lot of times it will land in the bunker. Here it's going to land 15 yards over the pin and then bound another 40, 50 yards past the pin. Then all of a sudden I have a 65-yard putt, and it's like what the heck am I going to do now?

So standing the test of time, I think you're going to see this golf course, if you get a little bit of wind, it just changes so severely.

Q. Secondly, what have you done this week that you've never done before in your life? Give me an example. Preferably on the golf course, but if you want to go beyond that, it's up to you.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I'll stick to the golf course for now (laughter).

I'm trying to think. I would say this is really my first experience with an extremely firm links golf course. I think St. George's

last year wasn't as firm as it is now. I think some of the fairways are running faster than some of the greens.

So when we get kind of maybe to 40, 50 yards away from the pin, when I'm using an 8- and 7-iron, I didn't use that last year. Last year it didn't really suit as much as it does now. So depending on what slopes and mounds I want to use, I'm doing various, different things.

Like No. 9, it's so flat and it's so firm, if you're short of the green and the pin's in the back, you have like a 50-yard shot, and I'm using an 8-iron just so I can carry it 10 yards and roll it 40.

Last year I may have been using a 50 just because it was softer. But since it's so firm this year, you've got to get the ball on the ground so it will stop.

In the States, you try to create spin so the ball will stop because the greens are so fast. Here it's the opposite because they're firm and slow.

Q. Your rise to World No. 1 was so fast and you're playing so much that you told us nothing really changed. Now you've been on top for basically the whole summer. How are you adjusting to it, and how is the view from the top?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I guess it's good. I guess I am No. 1 in the rankings. I'm not sure if I'm necessarily perceived that way by you all or whoever it is, but that's not stuff that I really ever think about. For me I'm just trying to go out and play good golf.

It's definitely different. I was talking to my wife at the beginning of this week, it's definitely different when I go out and play practise rounds and there's people around, and I come in here to do this stuff. Six months ago I definitely wasn't asked to come in the press room unless I was winning.

So there's definitely a bit more activity going on at tournaments. That's something I'm learning how to navigate. And I'm kind of learning on the go right now.

When I sit back this off-season, I'll kind of assess how much I play and stuff like that, just because it takes more energy now to show up to an event than it did before. Before, I could come out here and not really have to do anything. I could just show up and play and be done. Now things are a little different.

But it's a fun different. It's fun to be able to come in here. It's fun to interact with fans during my practise rounds when things are a little bit lighter. When you get in the heat of competition, it's a little bit different. But practise rounds, having some people around and getting to have some fun, it's definitely been a good time. But it's something I'll assess at the end of this year.

Q. You mentioned having some crazy long putts out here. Do you have some methodology for that, or is it just sort of see and feel and try?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I think most of it is see, feel, and try and then you kind of get adjusted. Most of that is because of the green speeds. When we see browned-out greens like they are now in the States, they're usually running like a 13 or 14. Here they're a 10.

What I've done most of the time this week is just try to get on the greens and get around them and hit as many different shots as I can because it's so different than what we're used to.

At the beginning of the week, I was kind of still popping the ball in my stroke, like they were smaller. So at home, if I take it back this far to hit a putt, here I would have to take it back this far so my rhythm is still the same. At the beginning of the week, I was still only taking it back that little bit, and I was kind of hitting it instead of rolling it. Basically what I did was just get out there and get adjusted and just kind of get my mind in tune to the slower green speeds.

Q. You are No. 1 in the world. You take hard work and dedication. Could you a little bit explain to us what is the recipe to get there and to stay there?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, the recipe to stay there, I'm trying to figure out. But I guess getting there, yeah, a lot of hard work. Some guys do it different ways. I'm someone that, when I show up to an event, I want to feel like I've done everything I can to prepare for that tournament. So when I tee it up on the first tee, it's like, I'm here, and I've done everything I could, and I'm just going to try to do my best. And the rest really isn't up to me.

Some guys have different approaches, but that's always been my approach. I've always enjoyed practicing. For me, being able to work hard, whether it's in the gym or on the golf course, has always been enjoyable.

One of my favourite things at home is going out to practise when nobody's around. There's a little short-game area at a course I recently joined where not many people go back there, and I can spend four or five hours of the day back there and not see a single person, just go out there and practise.

For me, that's where I get my confidence from. So working hard is something, like I said, when I show up to the tournament, I've done what I could. Just going to try to do my best.

Q. You mentioned potentially going down other fairways to play your approach shots. Can you detail where you're

thinking of doing that and why you think that might be the best strategy for you?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: The first one I'm thinking of is 13. Still haven't figured it out yet, full disclosure (laughter).

A lot of it just depends on wind direction. So for instance, on 13, since it's so firm and if the wind's blowing 20 off the right, a lot of these bunkers are bowls. So when it's blowing that hard, you have to slice it against the wind and hit it low in order for that ball not to curve back to the left when the wind's blowing this way.

So when you're standing there on that tee box, if I can just hit it over those bunkers and take them out of play because the bunkers are -- it's a stroke penalty, pretty much every one. If I can take that out of play and hit it in the rough where it's only maybe a quarter shot or a half shot penalty, that may be the best strategy.

Whether that means hitting it up the left side, which is -- maybe 4 fairway? Or hitting it up the right side, which would be 13 fairway -- or maybe it's 6. I think it's 6, yeah. It's 13, 5 green -- yeah, 6 fairway.

So that's the hole where I'm going to get on the tee box tomorrow, and I'm going to try to figure it out before based on the wind direction. Still, we stood on the fairway for five minutes talking to Teddy, and I was, like, dude, still don't know a good solution. But the one we came up with yesterday is just try to hit it in the rough, I think.

And that's because, with the way the wind is, if you try to take the bunkers out of play, there's not much more you can do other than almost intentionally hit the ball in the rough because the fairways are rolling faster than the greens literally.

Q. I was talking to the caddies this week, and they're a little afraid of how tough it's going to be to call the shots. So what is the dynamic with that? Will you share the blame? Will you blame him?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I mean, I blame him for everything that goes wrong out there (laughter).

No, I mean, the caddie's going to help, but like I said, if I'm one groove off on the shot, it's going to change it by 20 yards. We may have everything correct and then get a little gust of wind, and it's going to change it by 20 yards.

A lot of stuff out here is so hard to predict -- I mean, I would hate to be a caddie this week. It would be so hard. Whatever it is, when the wind gets to blowing like it is now -- and off these fairways, I don't think people realise the ball actually spins a little bit more off this grass than it does in the States.

So when we're hitting into a 15-mile-an-hour wind, it affects the ball more than it does at home, and it's blowing harder. So it's totally different than what we're used to.

So that's why it's up to the player most of the time to hit these weird little shots, whether it's me chipping a 5-iron and trying to land it 140, or hitting an 8-iron and trying to hit 190 and hitting it straight up in the air. A lot of it you can't totally predict, but you just try to use the slopes and contours to your advantage and go from there.

A lot of what Teddy is doing this week is coming up with ideas, like, hey, use this mound. Try and use this, not hey, hit the shot 147 and aim here. You can't really predict stuff like that. So the caddies, it's going to be tough.

Q. Scottie, you were talking a second ago about strategy for the course. What's your favourite challenge to the strategy of St Andrews? Also the sentimental side of it here this week, this place.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think, first and foremost is avoiding the bunkers. The legend of Tiger avoiding all of them for 72 holes, it's pretty cool. I still haven't figured out quite how he did that. That's most of the strategy for me on the golf course is playing angles. When things get really firm. Avoid bunkers and use angles where you can, and whether that means playing down another fairway or hitting it into the rough.

When it gets so firm, you have to have a good angle. A lot of times people talk about that on the coverage or whatever it is about having a good angle, but it truly applies when it's this firm.

Q. I don't know how big you are on watching YouTube videos and things like that, but if you watched a lot of Open golf championship on YouTube videos or on live telecast when you were growing up, which is maybe one moment or one tournament or one shot that really stood out for you that maybe you think, wow, this is really different?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: So going into this week, yeah, I like YouTube. Big YouTube fan. I've watched -- they have like -- I don't know exactly what they're called, but each Open they have an hour long video where they don't show as much golf as I'd like to see, but they show enough.

I watched the coverage of when Zach won in '15 and the wind was a different direction. But I'll sit and watch that stuff because I want to see where guys hit it. You can learn a lot from watching stuff like that.

I did that before the Masters, too. Brookline, there wasn't as much information. And Southern Hills they changed. But I do

learn a lot from stuff like that.

I think what I always go back to is people telling all these legends where it's, like, one day I hit 5-iron, lob wedge into a hole. And the next day I hit driver, 3-wood because the wind was blowing so hard. You don't really believe it. Then you come out for the first time and see it, and you're like, wow, that makes complete sense.

A lot of the shots you see, I always think where Tiger hit that 3-wood and he's aiming at a certain mound and he hits the mound and it kicks it down out there onto the green. And he hit a perfect shot and it was 20 yards away from the pin.

So stuff like that, guys have different strategies for playing links golf and different things work for different people, and I'm still trying to figure mine out. A lot of it is plotting your way around the golf course and trying to avoid the silly errors because you can all of a sudden get in one of these pot bunkers and it will take you three shots to get out. And all of a sudden you've wasted two shots on a single hole. At the end of the week, that's going to make a huge difference.

Q. Will you watch some of the golf before you play?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Uh-huh.

Q. Since you're in full disclosure mode, have you figured out the 12th hole? A short par-4.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Depending on wind direction, yes, I figured out what I want to do. Once again, there's not really a great solution. If there's a great solution, it would be easy for guys to figure out. You kind of just, it's mostly up to what you see off the tee. I've kind of had a good feel for what I'm going to do.

But if it starts blowing straight into the wind, like I may not be able to cover those cross bunkers and the hole's totally going to change.

Once again, that's a hole where I'm going to try to avoid the bunkers. But if it's blowing 20 in our face, those bunkers are going to be really hard to miss. So we'll figure it out.

Q. Scottie, there's so much talk about tradition here, about people who won here, people who have come six times to the Open at St Andrews, et cetera. But you are the world No. 1, four times winner this year. How do you deal with that? Is there more pressure on you? Is there less pressure on you? How do you look at that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I don't feel like there's any more pressure on me. I'm showing up like everybody else trying to come here and play well at a golf tournament. Being the home

of golf and The Open Championship definitely amplifies things a bit, but that's across the board. I don't think it matters if I'm No. 1 in the world or No. 50 in the world, I want to win this tournament as bad or more than anybody out here.

For me, trying to take that pressure off of myself and then just going out and trying to do my best. When I talked a little bit before, it's like I've prepared this week. I've gone out on the golf course. I've hit all the shots. At home I've prepared and practised and done what I can to play well. When I show up on the first tee, I'm going to be comfortable knowing I did everything I could to play well, and I'm going to go out there and just try and do my best.

Q. Scottie, you were saying -- well, you suggested earlier that you're not necessarily perceived as No. 1. Could you expand on what you mean by that.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I don't feel like there's any extra attention on me. I haven't read much, but I would assume not everybody's picking me to win this week, just stuff like that. I don't think I was the favourite maybe going into the Masters. I'm not sure if I've been the favourite maybe going into any tournaments.

That may not be the true perception. That's just mine, but I don't read a ton of stuff. So for me I don't really feel like whatever being No. 1 would be.

Q. Is that something you actually quite enjoy, or did you sort of foster a siege mentality with something like that? Do you use that to your advantage?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It's funny. Sometimes stuff will tick me off. Other times it won't. Stuff like that doesn't really matter to me. I'm extremely competitive just in nature. That's how I am. That's how I've always been. Whether we're playing board games or pickup basketball or table tennis or whatever it is, I'm going full throttle.

Then when the game ends, we're friends. We're friends during the game too, but it's not going to ruin my afternoon if I don't win a pickup basketball game. I've learned that over time. When I was a kid, that may not have been the case.

When I show up to a tournament, I'm as fired up as anybody to go out there and play. I don't think I need any extra motivation or anything like that.

Q. I was wondering whether you were encouraged by the fact that many of the champions here at St Andrews have done quite well at Augusta. You think of Nicklaus, Tiger, Faldo, Zach Johnson was the last winner here.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: That's actually a good point. I didn't

think about that before. Those guys also won a ton of golf tournaments in a lot of places. So I think that's what's cool about some of these golf courses is you see great players win on them.

When you see guys like Nicklaus and Tiger winning at a certain golf course, you know that golf course is going to reward really, really good golf shots, and I think that's something that you see when it gets really firm like this. When you hit a really well struck golf shot and you know where the wind is going to be, you're going to be extremely rewarded for that golf shot.

So for us as players, when you come out here and you know you're going to get rewarded for playing well and punished for playing bad, I think that's what makes a golf course like this so special.

Q. How come you don't read more?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, just because I don't read what you guys write doesn't mean I don't read (laughter).

Q. I know that. College graduate, I know.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: For me, staying off of social media, staying off of what you guys write -- I'm not saying you all write bad stuff about me or whoever it is, but your job is to write storeys and be critical. That's something you have to do. So for me, having any extra noise inside my head, whether it be from people on social media saying, oh, maybe his swing stinks or whatever it is. I don't even know because I don't read it.

For me, there's no point to it because I'm either going to get too high or too low. If I get on social media or if I start reading articles and everybody's like, hey, man, Scottie's the guy to beat this week. He's playing great golf even though I missed the cut last week. No. 1 in the world, yada, yada, yada. I'm going to show up here like, oh, I'm the guy. Nobody's going to beat me this week.

That's not what got me to where I am. What got me to where I am now is hard work and being prepared. For me, just staying away from all that stuff and just showing up and doing my thing is always what's worked best. Keeping the noise out is optimal.

Q. I guess why I ask, has it always been that way for you? Was it like that when you were at Texas? Was it like that when you first got your card? In terms of trying to stay away from others are saying or thinking about you.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think that's something I've learned over time. I think it's more of a curiosity at first. I wonder what people think of me. Then as time goes on, you realise it doesn't really matter as much as you think it does. Perception is what it is.

I've tried to keep my circle small with the people I trust. Those are the opinions I value the most. Even though we're friends, you don't know me as well as my best friends know me. So you guys in the media may have a perception of me, and I'm hoping that it's good. I don't want to be perceived poorly. But at the end of the day if I am and my closest friends and my parents and my wife still love me and care for me and believe that I'm at least a decent guy, then I'm doing things right. Those are the opinions that I value the most.

I've been fortunate to have people in my life that will call me out when I'm not doing the right thing. Mary is definitely one of those people. My parents are those people. My friends are those people. Coach Randy is one of those people. I've been able to lean on those guys for a long time now and trust them. When I'm doing the right thing, they'll let me know, and when I'm doing the wrong thing, they'll let me know. Those are the opinions I value the most.

If people believe I'm a great golfer at the end of my career, yeah, that will be nice. But at the end of the day, that's not what I want to rest my head on.

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