

The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 16 July 2024

Scottie Scheffler



STUART MOFFATT: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this afternoon's press conference with the two-time Masters champion and current world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler.

Scottie, it's obviously been a fantastic season for you so far. You've won several times on Tour and obviously winning the Masters. How much are you looking forward to the challenge this week and putting yourself in contention again?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I'm excited. Excited to be back over here this year. Excited for the week. I think the golf course is great. Should get some good wind this week. Looks like it should be pretty consistent, some good breeze, which is -- I think increases the challenge of this golf course. It should be a fun week.

Q. Rory was in here talking about how important he felt it was to play the Scottish Open to get used to the conditions and the greens. You obviously didn't play. What went into that decision?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I've done it the last couple years, and I felt like it was more important for me to get over here to this golf course and prepare, getting used to the conditions of the grass, the bunkers over here.

Q. What do you feel like the process for learning links golf has been like for you? It's different for every player. I'm curious, you've played in four or five now of these. What do you think it's been like?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: This is my fourth. As far as the learning curve goes, I just feel like you have to be more creative here. I love that part of it. I feel like, when I do come over here, this is really how golf was intended to be played.

I feel like there's a lot more opportunity for shot making and being creative around the greens. I can just see how somebody who is either a bit older or maybe not as talented as some of us out here, like you take a 10 handicap that only carries it 200 yards, they can run it up and have fun and not lose many balls.

But a golf course out here is still going to challenge players like myself. So it really is fun to come over here and play, I feel like, just getting more creative.

I think the biggest adjustment is how much the ball spins off the turf here. It spins a bit more than it does at home. When you're playing shots into the wind, it will typically have much more of an effect on what the golf ball does than what we're used to. Getting used to the heavier air and the spinnier turf.

Q. Scottie, obviously you've had huge success back home. Do you come here with different plans based on what you have learned from the two or three times you've been here for The Open? Do you come here with different tactics of how you're going to try and break down the course and attack it compared to when you're back home with more American style conditions?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, it will definitely be different tactics out here. Like you said, that's why my preparation was a little bit different this year, focusing more on this golf course than last week, getting over here and feeling a bit more rested.

As far as getting used to this place, the links golf is obviously different than what we play at home, so getting used to the firmness of the fairways, getting used to the bunkering and the speed of the greens is obviously different as well.

Q. How big of a factor do you think driving will be this week? You won't take as many drivers off the tee; will there be 2-irons and stuff instead?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It all depends on the wind. Today we got downwind on a lot of holes on the front nine. You could hit drivers if you wanted to and could hit irons if you wanted to as well. A lot of it is game-time decision based on the wind, but most of the back nine I'm going to be hitting driver because the holes are significantly longer and are supposed to be playing like slightly into the wind.

So being able to hit driver into the fairway, I think, will be a big advantage this week if you're getting the ball in play and driving it well. It's been a wet year so far this year, so the rough is thicker than it has been in years past, so it's a bit more of a penalty.

Q. The consensus is that the front nine is the easier nine, but obviously you've got this Postage Stamp hole which I think you're familiar with that, like 120 yards, and you've got this



longest hole. You've got the shortest and longest holes in The Open. Could you talk us through those holes. I know you haven't played it in competition, but how do you see them?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: You've got No. 6, the long par-5. I think it's a really good hole, especially when you get it slightly downwind. You can get to the green in two still just with how firm the grass is. If you carried the ball let's say 300 yards in the air and it's a little bit downwind, it's going to roll out on this turf at least 30 yards, unless it lands into an upslope. So you'll be able to get there in two. I like that it has opportunity on that hole.

I think No. 8 is great. The Postage Stamp -- I get frustrated sometimes when the solution to distance is just making holes further and further, and then it only just encourages guys to try to hit the ball further and further and not worry as much about controlling your ball. No. 8 is a good little way to almost step back in time and control your ball a bit more. You don't have to make a par-3 230 yards to make it a great hole. It can be 120 yards. I think holes like 12 at Augusta and 17 at Sawgrass, the best par-3s in the world are short par-3s. They're not overly long par-3s.

It leaves a lot of opportunity for you to hit a shot. If I don't hit the green on No. 8, it's mostly likely going to be a bogey unless you're in the front of the green. If you miss it in the right bunker or the left bunker -- if you hit it in the left bunker, you're going to be glad to be making a bogey because it's probably going to plug, and you'll be hitting up-and-down for your bogey.

I think great little short holes like that are fun. I think it's an underrated skill for guys nowadays to be able to control your ball, and I think it's something we need to encourage in our game, not just building golf courses longer and longer. You can make a short hole with a small green, and it's pretty dang tough.

Q. What's the most difficult conditions you've ever experienced on a links course, and how did you cope?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Most difficult? I can't remember if it was two years ago or last year at the Scottish at Renaissance Club. I mean, the winds were blowing sustained like 30 miles an hour and gusts were blowing over 40, and it was cold. So those were the toughest conditions that I can remember.

Most of it was just, like I said earlier, how the ball spins a touch more off this turf. It was getting used to how much the ball will actually fly into the wind because when it blows that hard at home, let's say typically when it does it's a bit warmer. Springtime we always get high winds in Texas, and you can pinch it and hit it through the wind.

But with the ball being spinnier off the turf, if I tried to hit the shot that I did at home, it would almost spin even more off the turf and then go even shorter. So I had to learn to adjust and shallow out a little bit and hit it low without as much spin.

Q. When you're out there and it's blowing and it's rainy, is there a psychological game that you have to play with yourself to convince yourself that you're actually enjoying it?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I think, if you're playing well, it can be pretty enjoyable. I think, when things start to go south, you've really got to stick with it and just continue to grind.

I was always a guy at home growing up that I would play in whatever condition it was. So I try to embrace that when I get out here in challenging conditions.

Q. Scottie, what was your first ever experience with links golf?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: When I came over here and played the Scottish in -- I think it was in '21. Played the Scottish and played The Open Championship.

Q. You never played in a Ryder Cup or Walker Cup or anything like that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: No, our Walker Cup was in the States. I never made the Palmer Cup to come over here and play. Didn't play any junior tournaments or anything like that over here.

Q. Second, the bunkers here, how much do you spend in them?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I'm spending a good amount. One of the things I liked that the R&A changed this year from last year was the bunkering. Last year I thought it was a bit silly how they flattened out each bunker. The bunkers are still a penalty enough when the ball isn't up against the lip. It was a bit of luck whether or not your ball would bury into the face because you have a flat bunker and a wall that's going to go right into it.

As long as you build a little bit of slope into it, you can allow guys the opportunity to get out of the bunker. If you're on the greens, it allows for opportunity for guys to either take on the lip or play smart and play sideways. It leaves more opportunity for great shots and risk and reward around the greens and the fairways because you have an opportunity to hit a great shot or just play it safe and go out sideways.

I love how they changed how they rake the bunkers this year with the more traditional sloping coming off the walls.

Q. You said earlier on you love being creative here. Do you play one of your creative shots from the 8th, or where are you producing one of these --

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, it depends on wind direction. That's one of the things. If No. 8 is playing into the wind, yeah, I'm going to have to get pretty creative with what I'm doing, especially since it's an elevated shot. It's a shot that you have to try to hit without a lot of spin. So that would definitely be -- like, for instance, today I think it was like 113 adjusted to the pin, and my pitching wedge at home usually goes about 140 yards. I hit a shot that was a high 20s pitching wedge with no spin -- or with less spin. I call it no spin. It's my no-spinning shot.

So that's just kind of one of the little creative things that you've got to try to do, which is a shot I typically don't hit a ton at home.

Q. You were talking about the creativity of the shot --

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, so if I'm going to take 15 yards off of a club and not try to spin it, that's a lot different than hitting a stock shot.

Q. As you know, the last person to win six in a year at this stage was Arnold Palmer, 1962. His seventh that year was The Open at Troon. It would be nice if history repeated itself with yourself?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, that would be great.

Q. Were you aware of the fact that his seventh was this?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: No. I really do mean that I try to stay off the internet as much as possible. I like to -- when I'm at home, I like to try to be at home and be present.

I love the history of the game, and there's certain things that I know and certain things that I don't. That was something that for some reason I just never stumbled across. So I had no idea that that was a thing.

Q. At its most basic level, your foot action, is that the result of you creating a lot of club head speed, or does that help you create a lot of club head speed, especially on a driver, the long shots?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I don't really know exactly what it does for my club head speed. I've tried to hit a few shots with my irons with what you would like call traditional footwork, and I just felt kind of locked in, felt a little bit too robotic.

I've always been a guy that loved hitting a lot of different shots -- changing the height, changing the curve. That's how I play

most of the time.

In terms of my footwork, I just felt too kind of locked in and unnatural if I don't do what my feet normally do. It may look funny to you all, but it feels totally normal to me. I never thought twice about it.

I didn't really think much about it until I got out on Tour, and it really became something that I got asked about. That was kind of my calling card when I was out on Tour was my footwork, and it's something I never really thought about because it's just always what I did.

Q. In the end, the idea is to get the club square, right? Obviously this helps you do that? Like if you were to try to not do that, did you notice that you weren't as consistent?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I did it maybe a couple times in a row, and I just didn't really like it. So it never really got any further from there.

The last time I can remember trying to hit a shot with normal, traditional footwork was Faldo came up to me on the range a couple years ago at the Masters, and he was one of the guys that was, I think, pretty critical of it at the time. So when he came up, he was like, just -- he asked me why, and I was like, I don't really know. Let me hit one normal and see how it goes.

So I hit one with traditional footwork, and I turned around, and I was like, it just feels like I'm locked into the ground. I don't really feel like I can hit my shots. Then I just kept moving my feet like I normally do.

Q. Is that sort of a good mark of your coach who didn't try to change you?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah. I mean, Randy, he's taught me since I was 7. We have definitely made changes to my swing, but that was something that he never changed. I think the words he would use is that was kind of just the DNA of my swing, and he doesn't want to change what I did to try to work the ball.

I think that was one of the things he liked about me when I was a kid was there was always a pole out on the driving range, and I would try to hit it with a straight shot and I'd try to hit it with a draw. I loved being able to try to curve the ball.

Part of it is when I was a kid, I used to play in the house with a ping-pong ball. A ping-pong ball is super spinny. I would learn to curve it from room to room and spin it a lot. That was what was fun for me about the game.

As time went on, I didn't want to turn into a robot. I wanted to do what I thought was fun, and that was seeing and creating

and trying to hit shots. I get bored sitting on the driving range trying to hit every shot straight. Sitting there learning how to curve it, learning how to hit shots, that's more fun for me than it is just sitting there and working on club position.

Q. Like you said, you have always taken pride in keeping golf and life relatively separate. This year, though, you have people practically tracking the birth of your child. You had the Louisville incident. There's more focus on you. How much trickier has that gotten to keep?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It's definitely been a bit trickier. I think continuing to play better this year definitely -- especially at tournaments, I think there's just a lot more going on day to day. I think I've had to almost lean into that more, just continuing to improve my rest so that it's actually restful.

I think that's something that my wife and I are always working on. When we're at home getting rest, what does it actually look like to be restful? That's not necessarily sitting there and watching TV. There's a lot of different things we do to get good quality rest so that, when we come back out on the road and play and do things, I have the energy to compete. I have the energy to -- really the social energy to come out and interact with the fans and do this kind of stuff, sit in the media center.

Believe it or not, this isn't my favorite thing in the world to do. But it's part of the job, and it's something that I enjoy -- I enjoy doing it. I like being able to come in here and sit and talk to you guys and do all the stuff that comes with playing great golf.

It's a pretty cool feeling to be able to make someone's day by signing an autograph or taking a picture. It's a pretty fun feeling. I'm trying to embrace more of that side of it than not being able to sign everyone's autograph. People are upset because you can't get to them throughout the day. That's not a fun feeling. I'm trying to lean into more of making somebody's day by signing something or taking a picture.

Q. Wondering if you've seen the house that's in the middle of the course. How unusual is that? Have you ever seen something like that in other places?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I have seen the house. I think it would be more unusual if there wasn't all the stuff built around. It kind of blends in.

I think, if I came here six months from now when all the tents and all the build-out is gone, I think it would be a lot more unusual. I've only seen the place with massive grandstands and stuff. So it's hard to really tell how much it stands out out there.

Q. I know you guys are all trying to beat each other, but

when somebody suffers a tough loss, the walls tend to come down sometimes and people reach out. I was wondering if you'd reached out at all to Rory after Pinehurst. And then what your toughest loss was and if there was anybody who reached out to you that you kind of always remembered.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: As far as reaching out to Rory, I didn't. Sometimes guys -- he took the next week off at the Travelers, and it seemed to me like he wanted his space. I just felt like giving him his space was the best thing to do.

As far as my toughest losses have been, well, it was a great one for Rory. East Lake a few years ago I would say was probably one of my toughest losses.

I remember immediately after, I think Justin was standing there and gave me a hug. He didn't really have a ton to say, but he gave me a hug just because we're good buddies. There's certain guys that I'm very close to out here on Tour, and Justin is definitely one of those guys. It was nice to just get a hug.

I think that's what's cool competing out here is you make great friends for life, especially being on team events with guys and stuff like that. Really have great friends for a long time. We love competing with each other and sharing in successes and beating up on each other a little bit as well.

Q. You and Sam popped out at Turnberry the other day. A couple years ago you made a couple stops in Ireland. Just wondering what inspires you guys to stop at these top courses more over here than you maybe would at home in the States?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, really more of what happened this year was, since I didn't play the Scottish Open in terms of like the travel and the jet lag and everything, you need to get here a bit earlier in order to be ready to compete.

I didn't want to come here and play Troon that many times in a row before the tournament. That would be outside of my routine and definitely outside of Sam's as well. So when we came over here this time, we're like, let's go find somewhere else to play on Saturday. We were fortunate to go out there and play. We had a great time, great golf course. Had a ton of fun.

Played with our caddies, had some good matches. As far as Ireland, when we did that, it was for the McManus Pro-Am. I obviously wasn't going to play a practice round for a Pro-Am, so they gave us an opportunity to play other golf courses and see some of the links courses there in Ireland. It was a tremendous amount of fun.

We played -- I think we played Lahinch with Jordan and Sam, and then I think Sammy and Teddy went over and played

Q. Following from an earlier question, if you go back from Korn Ferry to your first win at Phoenix, Masters, and then everything you've done this year, have you noticed, mostly on the road, being recognized more? Have you had any weird moments come up?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I've definitely had some weird moments come up. It will be hard for me to remember them off the top of my head, but there's always some funny ones because I think like sometimes people don't know exactly what to say, and they can be a bit weird at times.

In terms of -- like one of the things that's been really great about this year is the fan support I've gotten. I really feel like the crowds this year have treated me wonderfully. They've been behind me, and I always dreamed of playing -- growing up playing on the PGA TOUR. Being out here playing in front of great crowds and having them scream your name and holler when you make putts and be truly rooting for you is a great feeling.

It's something I'll always cherish from my time out here. It's one of the very special perks we have out here playing on Tour is playing in front of great crowds and being able to feel their support.

Q. Why do you think they like you?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I couldn't tell you. I guess you'd have to ask them. I feel like I've always been a guy that just let my golf clubs do all the talking for me. I guess that's kind of the cliché. I never really thought of myself as anything but a golfer. I was never trying to be famous. I didn't want to be a celebrity or whatever. I just wanted to become a good golfer and get the most out of myself.

It's brought me this far, so I continue to just try to keep my head down and put in the work that got me here and just continue to practice and hopefully continue to get better.

As far as the crowd support, it's great. Some of the things I talk about like being able to take a photo with somebody or sign an autograph and have a good impact on their day is a really special feeling. I try to embrace that side a lot more now because, when I first came out, I would feel bad that -- I guess I should say, when I first was having some success, I would feel bad that I couldn't sign everybody's flag.

Then you spend a decent amount of the day telling people no, and that's not a great feeling. I'm trying to lean into more of being able to sign the autographs and hopefully getting a good reaction instead of a bad one.