

# NBC Sports Group Media Conference

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**Rich Lerner**  
**Paul McGinley**  
**Brandel Chamblee**  
Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're going to be joined by our Live From the Masters prime time team Rich Lerner, Brandel Chamblee and Paul McGinley.

RICH LERNER: This is the week we all pick out brand new pairs of socks because it's the only week of the year on live, that we're not hidden behind a desk. We're full body. So I know Brandel and Pauly have some nice-looking socks, I can assure you that.

We look forward to this week probably more than any other. We're not that much different than I think the players. Always said it's more than an tournament, it's an occasion, the Masters. And obviously there's one story right now that's it's about to dominate, and that's Tiger. And always said that there are two three-word phrases to me that define his career -- Tiger wins again and Tiger is back.

We've done this over the last 15 years I don't know how many times now, from the personal issues in 2010 to the back fusion, the various knee injuries, the chip yips.

I think that it's potentially happening on the 25th anniversary of the '97 win is so fascinating because that was as big a moment or as big an achievement as we've ever had in the history of the sport, I think, on a lot of levels.

And yet, so many things that he's done since then have been as big as that, which is hard to fathom. And this could be in that same realm, just as big, potentially as '97 and as '19 and as 2001 when he completed the Tiger Slam. That's sort of the world he lives in.

The other sort of storylines: Scheffler is number one, how does he react; how does Rahm respond to losing, number one; and I think overall the sport could use the Tiger jolt, the juice he brings, because the current superstars have

not won a tournament, Scheffler notwithstanding. He's sort of growing into superstardom. But I'm talking about Rory and Rahm and Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth, those bigger names have not won a tournament in '22. And, though, it's early, the sport needs stars.

Here we are again, and it's going to be Tiger, 25 years later, still bringing that juice that only he can bring. And I think the sport needs it right now.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Looking forward to this week with great anticipation. I think that's the thing about Augusta National more than any other major championship, is that it's such an evocative event. Everything about it is evocative.

We seem to have very vivid memories of not just the players and the shots that they hit, but even the clothes they were wearing when they hit the shots. And then there's the golf course itself. It seems to inspire players to spectacular feats and occasionally ensnare them in moments of folly.

And I think that's why we all sort of lean in when we're watching this golf tournament. That and its aesthetic perfections that are so obvious and unique in the world of sport.

And also because it just delivers year after year such stars. The average world rank, the winner over the last decade has been right at 11. So just a high quality of play, an amazing stage for that play. And it's typical that as you come into these weeks that most of the best players are on a right trajectory.

But to Rich's point, this year it's been a little bit odd. If you look at the top 20 players in the world and you look down and you start writing checks by the favorites and Xs by those -- and question marks, you see far more question marks than exclamation points. There's really only a handful of players that I could point to in the top 20 in the world where I could say come on, what you would call nice form, that check all the boxes of what you need to win around Augusta National. There's a sense that something unpredictable is going to happen here this week.

And of course the dominating story of Tiger Woods. This is, as I said, a bit of a homecoming for the world of golf but



it's a homecoming for Tiger Woods, because the Tiger Woods era, at least in my estimation, really did begin here April 10th, 1997 on the back nine on Thursday. He turned a 40 and shot 30 on the back nine and went on to win by 12. That really is, even though he had won in 1997, excuse me, in 1996 and early in 1997, the Tiger era really did begin right here.

Of course, the comeback that he had in 2019 was the perfect storybook bookend, walking off the green in 1997 to hug his father and walking off the green in 2019 to hug his children. His world and our world had come full circle right there. We watched him grow up and we watched him -- again, to Rich's point -- overcome not just a broken leg and a broken image but a broken short game. Any one of those would be, maybe you could find a precedent in the game of golf for that. But all three of those is utterly incomprehensible.

So always with Tiger there's a sense that you're about to see something that you've never seen before, that you'll be talking about 10, 20, 30, 40, for the rest of your life you'll be talking about it. And you put all those together and not only is there this amazing anticipatory nostalgia that goes with the Masters but there's an epic sense of expectation that pervades this event.

PAUL MCGINLEY: There's not a lot much to say that hasn't been covered by Rich and Brandel. All I can say, speaking here, sitting in my mom and dad's house in Dublin, Ireland and coming out of the depths of winter here like we are over here -- it's still freezing cold, for me the Masters always signifies the start of the golfing season, certainly from an Ireland perspective or anyone in the north and northeast part of America.

It just feels like spring is in the air, anticipation, looking forward to the summer and the golf season, and the world's best players gather in Augusta National and everything that it represents from the beautiful flowers, the azaleas, to the sound of the birds chirping and lovely blue skies and green grass. That for me always gives me a nice feeling inside.

It's a looking forward. It's an anticipation feeling. And looking forward to what the golfing season is going to bring for all of us. But opening up with the Masters, which is obviously -- it's something special in the realms of professional golf, a name synonymous around the world and a tournament synonymous around the world.

There's very few people who have played golf anywhere around the world who don't have the great storylines built around the Masters and some great memories we all have of the great champions winning here throughout the years.

To Rich and Brandel's point again, the storyline for me is the lack of real great form of the superstars of the game, the guys we know who can be superstars over these last number of years. And to see the emergence of guys like Cameron Smith and Scottie Scheffler in particular as well as Burns coming through the last four, five weeks, the form they've shown. And with decent form around Augusta National I think we well could be in for a Master's champion that might be coming from what we regard to have been the (indiscernible) over the last number of years.

And then obviously the Tiger story coming in on the back of it. Six weeks ago he did a really good job, like Tiger is very good of doing, of playing down the expectations of underpromising and maybe overdelivering in terms of his playing schedule. And here we are now pretty much all expected when only a matter of days to go before the Masters starts that Tiger will go ahead and tee it up. So we're all looking forward to that should it happen and everything that he brings to the tournament and the storyline around the start of the Masters will be very much dominated by Tiger should he go on to start this event.

So lots to look forward to and I'll just finish it with that word, "anticipation." Great opening. I know we have a lot of tournaments on the PGA TOUR and European Tour and DP World Tour over the last few months, but for me this is the real opening of the golfing season great anticipation and imagery that Augusta National brings.

**Q. I'm wondering, what is unique from the "Live From" perspective about sort of getting things together at Augusta National where you guys are sort of covering around the event as opposed to NBC actually covering the event? Just what's unique, what are some of the unique challenges covering the Masters as opposed to covering the players championship or the open or another big event in golf?**

RICH LERNER: I don't know that it's appreciably different. I think we all understand what this means to back up Paul's point, what this means to the world, to the golfing public, to fans. This is one where people engage on every device they have from Monday morning until up to midnight on Sunday evening. If you've had a dramatic finish, they'll be with us.

And, again, if you're a golf fan, you love the Open. You love the U.S. You love it all. But I don't think anything touches the Masters for full immersion from start to finish.

And we're immersed in any week because we love the game and that's our job, but I think we have a heightened sense of how different this is for golf lovers and golf fans, people who are watching it, in terms of when we're on the

ground, it's different in that our newsroom, which is typically in a mobile trailer in the greater television compound of TPC Sawgrass, whatever the venue is for the U.S. Open, our compound is at Augusta Country Club, which is about ten minutes away, or if you get stuck in traffic, in my case, however many years ago that was, possibly an hour and a half, you might need a police escort. You might need to hop into the back of a police car in order to be shuttled to the set.

So we're off the premises. And we enjoy Augusta Country Club, that's been a great home for us. And we have this beautiful set sort of on the far end of the range at Augusta National, once we're over there. And other than that, we put our heads down, with eyes open in the same way we would just about any other week. But we feel it I think the same way players do. They said it -- it's an occasion as much as it is a tournament.

You get outfitted for it. And so we feel that sense of, I think Brandel and Paul talked about it, in anticipation and excitement. And nobody arrives at Augusta without a fresh haircut. That I've noticed through the years.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I would just add that we spend a lot of time in the run-up and during, say The Players and even the other major championships, familiarizing our audience with the nuances of the golf courses. There really isn't any need to do that at Augusta National because the audience is almost as familiar with this golf course as they are with their home golf course. We don't need to demonstrate (indiscernible) on the second; from here it rolls here, or the tenth, or the front of the 14th green rolls here or the fifth, they know it. And that is the beautiful thing about this.

In a lot of ways, this tournament is easier to get your arms around from a commentator/broadcaster perspective because our audience knows it as well as we do. So we're almost just sitting in the living room rehashing old family stories. And it's a community in that way.

So I get asked often, I'm sure Paul and Rich get the same question, what is your favorite tournament to cover. And I'm always torn between The Open and the Masters, but generally speaking it's the Masters because we come back here every year. Not only is our audience familiar with the course and its history, we too are. So we can all just relax and settle in, and there's a comfort to that. It really is like coming home.

**Q. Brandel and Paul, there's been a lot of talk about if Tiger's going to play next week, he's only going to play if he thinks he can win. What do you guys make of that?**

PAUL MCGINLEY: Look, I think what we've learned over the years you can never discount great champions, guys who have it in their gut and know how to win. And certainly there's nobody better in this game at the moment and has been certainly since Jack who is better at knowing where the finishing line is and knowing what the number will be and getting themselves to there.

I think that was illustrated very much in 2000 -- what was it -- I forgot the year, apologies; the year has rolled into one, COVID has made a mess of all the years. But he knew where the finishing line was there on the back nine even though it was a congested leaderboard, there was a poise about how he went about playing that back nine. And even how he played the last hole with a 5 to get over the line. He knew where the finishing line was. You can never dismiss great champions.

I remember having a debate with Ivan Lendl, a great friend of mine, going into that Masters. I was somewhat dismissive of Tiger chances going into that Masters. And he made a great point. He said great, great champions never forget where the finishing line is or how to get there. I think Tiger proved that. He proved a lot of people wrong. You can never discount him.

Having said that, it's going to be a huge ask. He's not starting from the same position as he did when he won a few years ago. He doesn't have miles on the clock the way he did a few years ago. He doesn't have a win in the back pocket like he did in the FedExCup, a matter of five months before winning. He doesn't have some tournaments on the clock.

So it's well over a year since he's competed at this level. I think it's a massive ask to go even at Augusta National and even for Tiger Woods to go in and have a realistic chance of winning. Can he get a top 10? Yeah, you never will dismiss Tiger. Could he win again? I'd never say never but it's a huge, huge ask because he's coming from a long way further back, as I say, than a few years ago where he had miles on the clock and some good performances under his belt before he went on to win at Augusta National.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I would just add to that, you're right, Paul, the greats don't forget how to win, but inevitably at some point their body no longer is capable of doing the things that they need to do that their mind gives them clarity to do. I said in 2019 and the run-up to Tiger competing in the Masters that I would be looking for just a couple of different things to think he would have a chance to win. It was the drives at 1 and 2 because you need to hit sort of a fade off of 1 and you need to hit a swinging

draw at 2. And early in 2019 Tiger, he could certainly comfortably hit the fade but I'm not sure about the swinging draw.

He got up, if you remember, you can go back and find this, how he starts Thursday, hit a beautiful cut off of 1 and a swinging draw off of 2. So check, check. And need to see him hit some decent lags and make some 4- and 5-footers, which he did because he hadn't been putting particularly well.

If he does indeed come back here, the same things hold. I'd need to see a couple of decent drives off of 1 and 2 because those very first two drives you pretty much have encompassed everything you need off the tee here. I need to see where his touch is.

But then I also need to see how he's ambling up the 18th hole, how his back's holding up, because if you remember back at the Father-Son he was also talking about how his doctors were as worried about how his back was going to handle the accident as how he was going to recover from the broken bones in his leg.

So all of that together, we're three years down the road from when he won here at 43. So he is at that age when time starts kicking you in the teeth.

I know he's superhuman, but at some point you've got to think time is going to say enough. I hope he's able to still compete at a very high level going forward. But, look, if he's here and he has any semblance of game, he manages to contend, compete, finish in the top 10, it will all be -- because every time he played now, I'm well aware that this is, we all are -- this is the sunset of his career. But I'd argue that we've all been privileged to watch, not just the best golf, but the most exciting golf that's ever been played with -- okay, maybe a couple other exceptions -- but you have to go eons back, young Tom Millers or Bobby Jones. Young Tom retired at 24 and Bobby 28. And Tiger just kept reinventing himself.

Fifty years from now if any of us are still alive, we'll still be sitting around talking about how we got to cover the man who had the greatest capacity for miracles that ever played this game.

RICH LERNER: If I could jump in real quick, I think one of the principle reasons Tiger's considering playing here is he wants to, but I think he believes this is likely his best chance to win another major, to pass Sam Snead. To inch closer -- I don't think it will happen -- but an inch closer to Jack Nicklaus. He rolls out of bed, and the question obviously is can he walk? We know he can hit shots. We saw that at the Father-Son. He can hit shots. Can he walk

72 holes?

But I think he believes this is his best chance to win a major. It's a short field. You take out all the past, the older past champions, the amateurs, the first-timers because only -- first-timers typically don't win, save for Fuzzy Zoeller a long time ago. And then what's left from there you cut that in half. Guys just can't handle the heat.

He understands this golf course probably better than anyone. It suits his game. He's a great iron player. He's a phenomenal putter and short game. So if there's a way, we know there's the will.

You can just imagine Tiger, I thought about this. He almost needs to be nothing to be everything. Like he needs this challenge of putting all the pieces back together. And in this most recent case, the pieces of his body back together that sort of Navy Seal fascination that he's always had, needing the extreme challenge. That sort of fires and motivates him. And you could imagine him in the last two months in his backyard in South Florida, just hitting 5-yard cuts and 5-yard draws, and chipping matches with Charlie and Tiger's into Charlie for \$7. And watching Duke against Arkansas with the treadmill on six and a half on an incline pouring sweat, like he's playing in the game itself.

I mean, that's what gets him going is this climb up Kilimanjaro. And this is it for him. I think he views this from those two sort of perspectives, the great challenge and yet another comeback. And it's like "Godfather" -- it's "Godfather" with four sequels as good as one and two for Tiger. I know he views this as a great chance for him to win. If he's going to play, I have no doubt -- I don't disagree with Paul that it is a big ask, but I think Tiger is not teeing it up unless he thinks he can do it and win.

**Q. Paul, you spent so much time with Rory over his career. Have you seen anything to encourage you that this could be the year? And could you share maybe some insight into the frustration that he's probably experienced over this major drought that he's in the midst of?**

PAUL MCGINLEY: I think there's two things that really make me boiled about Rory McIlroy at this point in time. One is the improvement in his putting that we've seen since he started working with Brad Faxon. I believe he's a better putter. He's putting more instinctively. He's holing more putts. And he looks more comfortable. I like what he's doing with that. I felt he became a bit too structured and a bit too mechanical in his approach before that, and that was holding him back. And Rory as we all know instinctive player certainly from tee to green.



That's make me boiled that he's matching his putting to the personality the style of player he is. That's good.

I think the second thing is the fact that he's got Bob Rotella in his corner. I think he's a great addition to his team. I'm a huge fan of Bob Rotella, and with the challenges that Rory has, particularly in trying to become only the sixth player in the history of the game to get over the line and win all four major championships, you can't do it on your own. You need some help. Some guidance. And I think Rotella is a great addition to that team.

So I think he's in a good place. The biggest challenge for him going forward is always the burden, expectation -- internal expectation, particularly -- of trying to do something as we say that only five players in the history of the game have won. And trying to do it at Augusta National when there's so much media attention coming your way one way or the other anyway.

So that's obviously a big challenge. Also the fact that I don't think he's playing particularly well. I've seen him play better than he has been playing this year. He's been playing okay, nothing great.

But we all know that Rory is an inspirational player and it can kick into gear very quickly. His iron play in particular has nothing terrific. That category has not been great statistically. And Rory is -- we all know the importance of that category, winning around here at Augusta National. Three of the last seven players who have won the Masters have led that category of strokes gained, approach. And five of the last seven have been in the top 5 of strokes gained, approach.

It brings me back to 10 years ago, before they did statistics at Augusta National, and I'm having dinner with Bernhard Langer once on the European Tour, and we were talking about the Masters. And Langer made the point that everybody thinks winning the Masters is about putting, and all you hear is about putting. He said it's not. The most important part of your game to win at Augusta National is iron play because if you hit it below the hole and in the right quarters of the green and the great sections of the green and particularly below the hole, then you can be aggressive with putts. If you're constantly putting on the back foot and constantly afraid of the one back, you're not going to win at Augusta National.

Now, since we have had statistics now come, since 2015, I believe, is when they started officially doing these really minutized statistics, we've seen a clear correlation, like I say, five of the last seven have been top five in strokes gained, approach, which absolutely plays to the point that Bernard Langer instinctively new, what 10, 15 years ago,

when we had a chat.

So that would worry me a little bit, in terms of his iron play, his distance control with iron play in particular. With the style of play that he has, he comes very much from the inside, which is great in terms of flash speed at the bottom and getting massive distance off the tee. But we all know one of the great strengths of Tiger's game is the quietness through the ball that he's able to give and how he's able to play three-quarter shots and how he's able to control distance.

And that is a part of the game that I still feel that Rory hasn't mastered. So that's going to be the big critical key for me. Can his iron play improve a bit? Secondly, where is he going to be mentally with this huge feat that he's on the verge of doing?

**Q. Rich, we'll have to keep the "how you ended up in some police escort to make the show" for another time. But there is one aspect of what you said that I did find interesting, which is you think this is Tiger's best chance and not the Open at St. Andrews, which a lot of people have pegged -- most people have pegged because of how flat it is. Is that still your belief that even though that is flat, just the sheer number of players in that field make it not the best choice for him?**

RICH LERNER: Look, I know Tiger has won at the Old Course twice. It's flat. It would presumably be an easier walk. I think just because this is a shorter field and because -- this is on a relative scale -- the pressure, I think that other players feel in the moment. We saw it in 2019 at the 12th hole. I think that pressure is different at Augusta, at the Masters, than it is anywhere else. And that includes what would be a special Open, the 150th at the Old Course.

And to back up Paul's point -- and I'll cede the floor here to Brandel and Paul because they're the golf experts, but Tiger is a pretty good iron player, last I checked.

So, again, it comes down to if he can walk. And I don't think he'll do this if he determines that he can't comfortably make 72 holes. So if he does enter, then I'm assuming his leg's good to go. Might feel some pain, discomfort, but I'll assume he's good to go. If that's the case, I'll stand by what I said that I do believe this is his best chance to win a major. And I'd be really curious to see what Brandel and Paul have to say on that.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I'm inclined to agree with you, Rich. And there are a lot of things about Augusta National that I, over the years, said the golf course has been kind to

the elderly. There are more repeat winners at Augusta National, the easiest tournament to predict who is going to win, really, in the world of golf for obvious and not-so-obvious reasons. The obvious ones you've stated, which are it's short field. And once the golf course has sort of weeded out the players who have the necessary skills to compete around there, it just keeps on rewarding. And in Tiger's case, yes, it's his great iron play but it's even more than that.

You've got to be able to hit it high cuts off of lies. You've got to be able to swing with the slopes and not into the slopes. Once you've been able to do that, once you can do that, you keep getting rewarded. And you get rewarded with, again, to Paul's point, better-looking putts.

But there's more than that. As you age -- and your visual acuity begins to decay at about the age of 29. So suffice to say, by your late 30s and your 40s, your eyesight is nowhere where it used to be.

In particular, your contrast sensitivity declines. And that's the ability to differentiate between fine gradations of light and dark. I don't think it's a stretch to say that affects your ability to read putts. But I also don't think it's a stretch to say that familiarity with the greens at Augusta National will mitigate that difference.

So that is, yet again, another reason why, as you age, whatever physical decay there is, the normal physical decay that certainly comes to bear at major championships, it's mitigated at Augusta National.

I can remember Jack Nicklaus talking about the putt he had at 17 in 1986 when his son read it one way, I believe, and he was unsure how it was going to break. No, no, Ray's Creek is over there; it's going to have this left little tick right in the middle of this putt, it's going to move left. That kind of familiarity, does Jack win the Masters in 1986 if he didn't know that? I don't know. Maybe not. Maybe he doesn't make that putt. And maybe Greg Norman doesn't feel all that pressure and miss it out to the right. You never know.

So there are all kinds of reasons why what Rich said I agree with. This is his best shot, if he can handle the walk. And only Tiger knows that. And I guess we'll know better as next week progresses if Tiger shows up. But that's a big if.

While his golf looked sharp at the Father-Son, in particular the shots we saw him hit into the third hole, the par-5, those were long irons, and they were stellar. They were all over the flag at Father-Son on that par-5. They were 3- or 4-irons that landed right by the hole and stopped 5 or 10

feet away. That's the Tiger we know. But he looked hobbled there.

We're four months down the road here. What sort of improvement has he made? I guess we'll begin to find out and it will be coming into clearer focus next week. But if he can walk around -- his club head speed or ball speed was right around 174, 175 at the Father-Son. That's a tick about tour average.

Presumably he'd have a little bit more ball speed than then, you'd like to think. But that's plenty fast enough.

His iron play, his knowledge and the fact that there are just so few people that you have to beat at Augusta National makes this, at least in my view, the most obvious choice of his best chance to win a major.

**Q. Paul, I'd like to ask about Shane Lowry. Is there anything you've noticed in Shane the last year, year or two that he could possibly be a factor this year? I think he's 14th for strokes gained, approach, which you mentioned in relation to Rory. He's played well in the last two Masters, two top-25s, putting a few decent rounds together. He's played well in recent majors, too, obviously winning the Open. Do you see anything in Shane that would suggest that he might have a chance? Or what do you think are the biggest challenges for him?**

PAUL MCGINLEY: Shane certainly improved a lot in terms of his statistics, underlying statistics. I think he's pretty established now in America. It took him a while to really get his footing there. I feel that he's done that now. He was very close to winning the Honda, only, what, three, four weeks ago, where he did nothing wrong down the stretch but didn't happen to be his week to win. He's really close to winning again.

He's playing as well as he has done throughout any stage of his career. Going on to win the Masters, can he do it? Of course he can. Absolutely. He's proved he's a guy for a big occasion. He can handle that kind of pressure. The main thing is getting in contention. If there's a weakness in Shane's game it's his putting. But like I said, if you can distance control it around there and give yourself good looks at these putts, and when you're putting from the right side of the hole, you can get at this golf course.

So will I dismiss him? Absolutely not. Could I see him winning? Of course I could. But there's so many yin and yang that I can give. I can name 15 players here. I've just done Rory. I can give the you the yin and yang. Every player has upsides and every player has question marks around them. And it's very hard to get a really clear view at

this stage in the process as to what way it's going to go.

I think we have a much better reading, I do after two rounds, when you can watch the body language. You can watch the play, you can look at the underlying statistics. You can see the weather. You can see how the players are going about it. And you can get a much better reading after two rounds. Who were the guys who were focused for the week? Who are the guys tuned in. Whose body language looks different, looks like they mean business and are up for the fight?

It's so hard to make a pretty definitive call this far away from the week and certainly with so many players not showing exemplary form, certainly of the big names. It's hard to get a real good reading. But I would certainly absolutely think that Shane Lowry is going to win again very soon.

Would it be beyond a reasonable possibility to win this week? No. He's done it before. He's come out for a big occasion. He could certainly do it.

RICH LERNER: If I could jump in. I had Shane at the Match Play last week, was on the call there. And his sportsmanship really stood out in a couple of matches.

And to me, Shane embodies the joy and spirit of the game as palpably as any pro. I think all those sort of, the things that you hear, associated with Shane, you just sort of throw them out, are true, that you'd love to have a pint with Shane Lowry. You'd love to play Portrush in a cold, 30-mile-an-hour wind with Shane Lowry and you'd have the time of your life.

He has that -- I don't know if you're familiar with the old entertainer Jackie Gleason -- but Shane has the Jackie Gleason big man rhythm. That's a compliment. He's light on his feet.

What he did in winning The Open in '19 -- you would know this better -- but I've unquestionably cemented him as an Irish golfing legend, with O'Connor and Bradshaw and Harrington and McGinley, and I'm sure the list goes a little bit deeper than that.

And we all remember here in America because we played it on the Golf Channel when he took the jug into the local pub and sang deep into the night.

Imagine if he showed up back in Ireland in green in that jacket, what that would be like. So we all love Shane over here. We really like covering him and watching him. He just has a really big spirit and a golf swing.

I know, Brandel, that we love. It's that Longshoreman's frame, and it's very elegant and rhythmic. Love Shane.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I was going to say the only thing I'd add to that, when I'm doing prep for major championships, I'll do the top 50 players in the world in great detail. And then I go through and I write an X or a question mark or a check by their name, depending upon a million different things that I've looked at.

And all I can tell you is I had a check by Shane Lowry's name. Absolutely think he can win this week. He's amongst -- in the top 50 players in the world. Putting him amongst the top 10 favorites going into this week.

**Q. Apart from the top 10 or so, and the usual superstars who are perhaps a little off form right now, who are some of the players that you have your eyes on?**

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Outside of the top 20 -- look, in the top 20, it's not a lot. It's Scheffler, Morikawa, Smith, Thomas, Matsuyama, where I don't have any question marks. But outside of that, I'd say Daniel Berger, Matthew Fitzpatrick, Will Zalatoris, Shane Lowry. There's just not that many where you don't have some question marks.

To Paul's point earlier, there's advantages and disadvantages to pretty much every player or obvious assets and question marks to every player, but there's a few -- there's a handful, maybe more than a handful, about 50 at least -- where I don't have any question marks.

I look at pretty much every facet of their game, and their form is right where it needs to be.

PAUL MCGINLEY: I would just come in on the back end of that, too. If I'm going outside of the obvious guys, whether they be well-established names or whether they be guys particularly in form this year, like the Scheffler, Burns and Smith that I mentioned earlier, I'm looking at a guy who played really well that Brandel just mentioned there, Zalatoris, really highly rated last year statistically, not just in strokes gained approach which is, as I say, a strong indicating category, but also in putting last year. I know he fell away a little bit on the Sunday, but certainly over the first three days, his putting was fantastic. And even going back to last week, in Texas, in the Match Play, his putting was fantastic.

I know there's a lot of question marks around it. But he's able to get these periods and these runs of two or three rounds where he gets really hot with the putter.

Now, whether he can do it under pressure obviously on

particularly a Masters Sunday is another question. But certainly he'll be a guy I wouldn't dismiss.

I think he's destined for much, much bigger things in the game than what we've really seen from him. And then the other guy, again, who I just love his golf swing, Brandel being more of a connoisseur on the golf swing than me, but the elegance in how he plays and a guy who has been really strong in terms of his form all year long in terms of consistency, is another guy, Max Homa.

We've seen the Danny Willetts and those kind of players coming through to win in the Masters. So you've got to look at guys outside of the real mob of the top guys when you're looking at this Masters, particularly with so many of the real well-established names, not really showing the kind of form we expected early season. And we could be in for somewhat of a surprise winner.

That's why I've spent a little bit of time looking outside the top 20 and who could be the Danny Willett, who is the guy that could -- time has run like a racehorse in the last furlong and come running through the field to win. And those two names stand out for me.

**Q. It's only the third month of the year -- well, I guess technically tomorrow starts the fourth month of the year. Tiger has dominated the conversation for a good majority of it. He's dominated the conversation pretty much all of today, too. If he tees off on Thursday in Augusta, is there any way that he does not win the Player Impact again?**

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: They should give him the Player Impact in perpetuity.

PAUL MCGINLEY: Tiger, listen, he's the biggest name. He moves the needle. We all know that. We've seen all the clichés about what he does, and it's obviously quite clearly true, if he does decide to play this year, which I really hope he does.

And then of course, he's going to dominate the first two or three days and the build-up to it. That's where all the attention is going to go.

You know what, that could work in favor of the other players. Certainly in terms, we mentioned Rory earlier, if Rory is -- if Tiger is going to play, I kind of like that, where it positions Rory nice and quietly underneath the radar. Not a lot of people will be putting him on the pedestal that he normally is coming into this.

And if you heard my point that we made at the TPC, I love the competitiveness of golf. I love the clashes. I love the

mental clashes. And why I'm really wanting and hoping that Tiger is going to play is that, what's very clear over Tiger's career, certainly in the last 10 or 15 years, and even when he won the Masters a few years ago, his ability to influence the play of people around him is quite clear.

And I would love nothing than to see Tiger, A, playing, B, getting into contention, and seeing how the players around him react to Tiger being in contention again at the Masters. I mean, that will be a terrific narrative for me.

That doesn't mean that Tiger has to win that time. I just want to see the reaction of the other players with a Tiger Woods in contention again, particularly around Augusta National.

And if we had him anywhere near the lead, within two or three of the lead with nine holes to go, that would be just a fantastic scenario to observe and watch. So that's what my wish is for this Masters.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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