

Charles Schwab Challenge

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Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Colonial CC

Ben Griffin

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the 2025 winner of the Charles Schwab Challenge, Ben Griffin, to the interview room. Ben, you're back to where you secured your second TOUR victory and first individual title. Can you just open with some comments on your favorite memories from your win last year.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, last year was incredible. The last time I was sitting here I think I was a little more emotional than I'll be today. But it was a really special week. Obviously winning the Zurich Classic was huge for my career and getting over the hump, but winning here was just more validation that I can do it individually as well. Competing against a strong field and it was really tough battle down the stretch, it got really very difficult, especially compared to this year after playing the course for the first couple days after some rain has come through, it was a way different golf course than when I was finishing on Sunday last year when it was windy, greens were firm and fast, fairways were running out, the course was playing so much different. But I was really able to grind it out at the end of that round and make a lot of important pars, because par was really good score on Sunday. I was able to hold off Matti Schmid after he chipped in on the last, which made things way more stressful than I wanted, but nonetheless got it done, and here we are, first time defending an individual tournament.

THE MODERATOR: You have three top-25 finishes in your last four starts this season. Talk a little bit about the state of your game heading into this week.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, coming into form. It was definitely a little bit of a slower start to the season, not unlike any of my other seasons I've had on TOUR. I just, for some reason have struggled starting on the West Coast and working to the East Coast. This year it's been more, been different from the previous few seasons, playing in my first Masters, kind of building my schedule a little bit around there. And not being able to play the Cognizant Classic, which is a tournament I loved and finished fourth in it last year. Didn't have the Mexico Open at Vidanta as a part of the spring schedule. So I had a couple of events where I felt like I



had some good experience, loved the course, and wasn't able to play. So I haven't been as high on the FedExCup. I feel like I'm coming into a part of the season where I really like the courses. I feel good about my game. I feel like my game kind of, maybe it needs a couple months after an off-season to get back into form. I don't know what it exactly it is. I'll try to figure it out one of these years. But, yeah, the game as of recent last few weeks has been really good. Played very strong golf at Doral, very difficult test. Quail Hollow wasn't as good, but felt like my game was actually in a good spot, I just didn't see results. Had a good chance to be right there in the mix at the PGA and kind of was -- the scores were so bunched and every shot was so important -- and ended up finishing 14th. So game's in a great spot coming off an off weeks, feeling fresh and ready to go for trying to defend.

THE MODERATOR: Just anyone finished the pro-am, can you share some initial thoughts on Colonial.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, the course is in amazing shape. This is probably the best shape I've actually seen it in the last few years. They have done an incredible job of getting the course ready for this week. Obviously with Mother Nature bringing in some rain it's just a little bit softer, and so it's not, the ball's just not rolling quite as much through the fairways or around the greens, they're stopping way quicker. So I'm sure scoring will be a little bit lower as we start the week, but if it stays dry and the wind picks up, this place can firm up quite a bit. I think this is my fourth time playing the tournament, so definitely have some experience, I'm used to the course kind of changing throughout the week. I think we see it most weeks on the PGA TOUR just how much the course changes from Tuesday to Sunday. It's just the way it goes. The course just gets firmer and faster and they make it more and more challenging. That's why it's called the Charles Schwab Challenge. So just got to keep learning about the course as each day comes, we had some rain last night, so obviously it's going to be soft this morning. But if we have a couple days of sunshine the course will probably play pretty similar tomorrow to today maybe a little bit quicker on the greens and then hopefully by the weekend especially Friday afternoon we'll see it firming up similar to last year.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.



Q. If I would have told you before last year on Sunday that you would play your last 13 holes in 4-over par what would you, would you have given yourself much of a chance, and what did you learn from that?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, it's not very good. Not on the PGA TOUR (laughing). That means I built a big enough lead and got off to a good start on those first few holes to be able to still win. Yeah, I think that kind of goes back to what I was just mentioning about how the course can change really quick and get firm and difficult. That's kind of what was happening on Sunday. I think I remember after the tournament looking at the back nine scores and I think of the guys that were in the top 15 and that leaderboard there might have been one guy shot under par or maybe even had like a birdie on the last few holes. I can't remember exactly what I was looking at. But that shows how difficult it was, how hard it was to get to some of those pin locations. 17 with the back right pin last year. 18, the pin on the left. Just so difficult to get it close to those pins. It's not like you can play true angle golf when the greens get firm and miss it in the rough, because if you're in the rough you can't hold the green. So you got to be on the far ends of some of those fairways down the stretch to have the proper angle to those pins. That's what made it so difficult. But what I learned the most about those last 13 holes were more how I felt, was able to kind of gain more and more experience about my inner feelings when I'm coming down the stretch, what I'm feeling, how comfortable I am. But also I learned that I'm a really good putter and I can trust the putter to kind of get up-and-down a lot of times if I'm out of position. And that's kind of what I did on Sunday, I just kept making those putts inside 10 feet to keep the momentum to stay ahead of Matti and just made enough pars down the stretch to hold him off.

Q. You said you're not nearly as emotional now sitting in that chair than you were last year, but what were your emotions coming on property this week?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, honestly I felt like I did a good job of not thinking about golf really this past off week. Kind of came to this tournament not really thinking a whole lot about it. Then when I got here I was like, Oh, wow, I'm the defending champion. Wow, my picture is everywhere. This is different. I'm walking to work out, I'm looking up at the chimney is which, it's like a target on one -- I think it's a target almost off the tee on 15. I'm like, Oh, I guess I just aim it at myself, you know. It's just those are some of the feelings I had this week. But no, it's been really cool, and a lot of familiar faces, similar volunteers from last year, similar tournament staff and everyone. And they have been so welcoming to me and it's been amazing to have that support, and just be able to bring back some really good memories from last year and just be at a place that

I'm really comfortable with and it's just a blessing to be welcomed as much as I have been.

Q. They showed the video of you standing next to the Defender, how many times have you had a chance to drive it?

BEN GRIFFIN: I think you know the answer to that. Yeah, so it's been an interesting journey with the 1992 Defender that I won. Unfortunately, when it was being transported to drop, to be dropped off in Florida, it got caught in a tractor-trailer fire and basically, it didn't burn down, but it basically turned from Charles Schwab blue to black. So it's been in the works for about seven months of trying to bring it back to life. So I have not really had the chance to enjoy it yet. But we're working on it, the Charles Schwab team, and they're doing a great job of getting that car back into working condition, back to similar to what we saw it looked like on the 10th tee when I won on Sunday and that whole tournament week last year. So I'm really excited. The nice thing is I drive courtesy cars basically for a living, which is also an incredible blessing on the PGA TOUR to have that. But I'm not home very much and so it's not a huge deal for me to win a car and not have access to it right now. Because I'm in the middle of a season and I just, I'm not home a crazy amount to where I would really enjoy it as much as I would want to. So I'm still playing a lot of golf, still enjoying it. It will be really cool to have that car eventually and I know it's going to be perfect when I do because they're working really hard to make it up. But it's out of -- it was out of everyone's control. It was just a crazy event. It's a cool story, I'll probably name the car Ashley and call her Ash, but that's what me and my wife decided. But, no, it's been an interesting ride, pun intended.

Q. Nice to have you back. If you were to look at a continuum on being aggressive and being conservative as you know the golf course now and especially with the weather that we've had, how does that unfold as the week progresses?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, this is one of the best courses on TOUR that rewards being aggressive, in my opinion. That rewards being aggressive and punishes being off and not pulling those shots off. There's a lot of holes here, a lot of doglegs where you can challenge the doglegs and hit driver. Of course, when it's soft you can be a little bit more aggressive and you know you're not going to run out on some of these fairways. But you can attack a lot of these pins. And there are pins that are tucked in corners that, when it's soft, you can be aggressive. But if you don't pull it off you're going to short side yourself and it's going to be a lot more difficult. But yeah, that's the beauty of this golf course, you can lay it back and play it a little bit more conservatively and still have a great chance to win on

Sunday. But you can also be aggressive and try to push yourself away. I like to compare this course to Sedgefield a lot. And if you look at what Cameron Young did last year at the Wyndham Championship, how he built such a remarkable lead going into Sunday and had a nine-shot lead going into the back nine, it's because he was hitting drive and hitting it so well and taking it over corners and was, you know, being rewarded for his aggressive play.

This golf course is very similar to that. The course -- I feel like this tournament though, we have seen a lot of playoffs over the years, so the scores tend to kind of get bunched up a little bit at the top. But that's just because it's it maybe is even a little more difficult than Sedgefield, and it definitely is. There's a lot of demanding tee shots on certain holes on some of the doglegs. You got fairways that slope in certain directions when it gets firm it's really hard to hold them. Similar to Aronimink that we saw two weeks ago. I think it's got a good blend of a lot of different golf courses and challenges a lot of different parts of your game. So it doesn't necessarily favor a bomber. A guy like Lucas Glover probably loves this place. But a guy like Matti Schmid comes to mind, last year, he hits it long and high, he can play just as well -- he can play incredible golf, and Lucas can, and it's going to reward someone that's on their A game. And that's all we can ask for as professional golfers when we tee it up is to try to reward the guy that's playing the best golf that week. And it's not necessarily, it's not a putting contest, it's not an iron contest, it's not a driving contest, it really challenges all three of those together, which is the beauty of this course and really I think a lot of historical golf courses in general. And I'm so glad the PGA TOUR still plays courses like Colonial and Sedgefield and various others, because they're very special places and have a lot of history. But also challenge us very, challenge all parts of our games.

Q. You were talking about your Defender earlier, you also won a plaid jacket. Have you had a chance to wear that since your win?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I wore it last night. Frost Bank, one of the partners of this event, hosts a bunch of clients over at the TX Whiskey distillery, which is at another very famous golf course here that both Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson grew up, or basically played a lot of their golf. So that was cool to be able to wear the jacket and do a Q&A and interact with some of the banking partners and clients that they had. But that was my first time wearing the jacket. And it fit great, felt great. Last time I wore it I think I was actually wearing like this exact same shirt that I'm wearing, but it was a lot sweatier, so it was nice to put a button down underneath it and wear it. And then tonight's the Champion's Dinner, so I'll be able to wear it again, so really cool.

