

# BMW Championship

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Castle Rock, Colorado, USA

Castle Pines Golf Club

## Billy Horschel

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Billy Horschel into the interview room. He is making his 11th career start at the BMW Championship, and he was our 2014 champion here at Cherry Hills in Denver. Welcome back to Denver. If we can get some thoughts on being here at Castle Pines this week.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: It's nice to be back in Denver. This is a great town. I remember in 2014, I've said this since 2014, that this is a big sports town. They love sports. They love to be outside. They love to be outdoors, being the great weather that they have, especially this time of year.

In 2014 I was amazed that during the pro-am, I swear I think we had 10, 15,000 fans out there doing a pro-am, which I had never seen before anywhere on the PGA TOUR. This city really does support sporting events around here.

I'm excited to be back. Obviously this is not the same golf course. This is a little bit different than Cherry Hills, but this is a beautiful golf course. It's going to be a great test. I think you're going to see some unbelievable golf shots. I think it's set up for some risk-reward and you're going to see some stuff that with altitude and the ball going, you're going to see some shots fly a long ways and you're going to see some shots come up way short.

It's one of those great tests, another added factor into playing here this week, and I think we're all excited to be here at this beautiful course.

**Q. Three straight top 10s, top 20 in the FedExCup. Talk about the state of your game right now as you're trying to win that FedExCup for the second time.**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Game is in a really good spot. We've worked really hard over the last -- I say really hard. We've always worked really hard my entire career. But Todd and I have been doing some good stuff over the back half of 2023 and sort of built some momentum playing on some European Tour events overseas on the DP World Tour.



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Carried some of that momentum at the beginning of this year. Didn't fully come to fruition the way we wanted right out of the gates, but sort of hit the Florida Swing and started playing some good golf, started seeing some good results, and then that carried over to really been playing really solid golf since the Florida Swing. A few missed cuts here, some finishes not where I wanted to be, but the last three events I've played have been really good.

Obviously this time of year it's really crucial like in any Playoffs to have momentum and be playing really well, and I'm happy to be doing that right now.

**Q. Xander and Scottie have had historic years, and I was wondering if you could choose to have one or the other of those seasons, which would you choose and why? Then secondly, how would you characterize the difference between how they approach the game and what they do well and so forth?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Which one would I rather have? I'm going to be that guy and say I'll take both of them because I don't have a major. I don't have a gold medal. I don't have a PLAYERS Championship, so either one of them works for me.

I think you can't -- it's literally comparing apples to apples. Xander has got one more major than Scottie, but I consider THE PLAYERS Championship a major. So Scottie has got two majors, Xander has got two majors, Scottie has got a gold medal. They've had unbelievable years. They're great players.

They go about it I think a little bit differently but very similar. I respect guys out here that work really hard. I respect guys that are always checking all the boxes and trying to continuously just get better. They do that. You've seen what Xander has done over the last couple years. Obviously made a change of coach to Chris Como and made a swing change and what he's done in the gym being able to hit the ball even further now, which we all know in today's game and age is a huge advantage.

Scottie is just an unbelievable iron player. His consistency ball-striking day in and day out is unreal. I've never seen anything like that. Listen, I was around Tiger Woods around that 2010 to 2013, '14, when he was still playing some pretty high golf but I was never around that early



2000s. Obviously watched it on TV. But his ball-striking, we all just marveled at it, consistency day in and day out.

They're just two great individuals that are really good guys that go about the game the right way, that respect the game, that respect the players. They work hard, and listen, what they've achieved recently in the game, they deserve because of what they put into it.

**Q. You've been out here for a long time. You've seen the FedExCup change and evolve. Scottie made some interesting comments last week about feeling like maybe it's not the best indication of the season-long race. What are your thoughts on the role that the FedExCup plays in the game right now?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I disagree with Scottie. Scottie said it's silly. I don't agree with that. I think we have a system now that -- it's never rewarded the best player throughout the regular season. I won the '14 FedExCup. Rory McIlroy was clearly the best player that year. He had won two majors. He came in on a high note. I was 69th in the start of the FedEx. I missed the first cut. I go second, win, win, and I win the FedExCup. It's no different than the New York Giants and beating the New England Patriots and starting the Playoffs 9-7 I think it was and the Patriots being undefeated and then winning the Super Bowl.

I think if you asked two other guys there's two different opinions you're going to get on the FedExCup and what they think is the best way, but I believe that our system and the way we do it -- could we reward the regular season a little bit more? Sure, we can. But this is a Playoffs. Anything can happen.

I think the way we have the TOUR Championship now is better. I love seeing the stats on that. He's a great friend. But I don't think anyone understood anything he was saying when he was doing the board.

Yes, it made sense with all the points, but all those scenarios and how it played out, it was very tough for us as TOUR players and for the fans and the viewers to comprehend everything how it could change with one shot.

So I think the stroke system is better. Do I think the stroke system should be a little bit tighter? Yeah, I mentioned that to the TOUR five, six years ago when they talked about implementing it. But I think this is a pretty good system. Yes, we can make tweaks. Yes, we can do things different. But as players we've got to figure out do we want to reward the player who has the best regular season in the Playoffs, or do we want to reward the guy who played solid throughout the year and then played really good in the Playoffs.

**Q. There's no event in Chicago or New York this year. As the TOUR moves forward and the Strategic Sports Group starts to get their fingerprints on it, do we need to go back to those bigger venues?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I do. Listen, we're in Denver, which is a pretty big city. There's some really great golf courses in Chicago. There's some great golf courses in the northeast, New York, Boston area, the Philadelphia area. It is a little bit disappointing that we're not there, but I think the TOUR -- it's not like the TOUR is not trying to be there. Obviously we go where the sponsors are and the sponsors can dictate a little bit where they want to hold their event.

But I think going forward when we look at a revamped schedule and getting around the country, I do think we need to go back to Chicago and New York because I think those are really great golf towns. They're really great sports towns, and that's what really matters.

I think for us, growing the game -- I don't like using the term "growing the game," but bringing it to the fans and people who aren't necessarily in golf yet, going to towns that are just massive sports fans and fanatics, I think we need to go to those cities because that's how we can get more people involved in the game of golf.

**Q. When you won the FedExCup, I seem to recall you were very generous with your caddie. How else did it change your life? Did your foundation emanate from that, or did it help you get the impetus to start that after winning that kind of bonus? I'm curious how it changed your life in terms of setting things up like that.**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I mean, I was a blue collar kid, truly blue collar. I had a dad who worked construction for 50 years. Neither of my parents had a college degree. There was times that one of my parents were out of a job for months at a time, so I don't come from money. I've never had money in my life. So to win the FedExCup in 2014 was life changing and the fact that it financially set me and my family up for the rest of our lives pretty much, that was a big moment in that aspect, knowing that as long as I continue to play well and I'm smart with my money, I'm pretty much financially secure for the rest of my life.

The foundation side, we just started the foundation side within the last 18 months, our Horschel Family Foundation. But we're working on being involved in charities around the Jacksonville area.

At that time we had decided to start supporting our local food bank, Feeding Northeast Florida. From there we

jumped on board with Feeding Northeast Florida, and then from there we just started -- a few years later we started an AJGA event, we started an APGA event, we support the Canine For Warriors. Our foundation is now based on a lot of that, and then now we've got the mental health and addiction side, which as I think most people are aware of, my wife struggled with alcohol and she's eight years sober.

Yeah, I think as you go further in life and you become more successful, whether it's financially or non-financially, you want to give back, and that's always been something that's been on my wife's and I's heart, and we're trying to do a really good job with that and help people that may not have the resources help themselves.

**Q. How is your game better or different -- obviously you went on that great run, played well, but how is your game different today? I know you had a dip a year or so ago. But is it better now, or do you ever look back to then and say I want to do some of the things I was doing in 2014?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: Yeah, I'm never satisfied with wherever I am in the game of golf. I'm always trying to get better. I sort of live by the motto that if I'm not trying to get better on a daily basis, then I'm already getting worse. I'm already getting passed by people.

Even if that getting better is an inch better today than I was yesterday, then I'm improving as a player and as a person.

But my game is completely different, I would say, to somewhat extent. I'm a lot more of a consistent putter. I've been a top-15, -20 putter on Tour for seven, eight years now. My short game is a hell of a lot better. I'll tell you that. My stats guy when he started working for me in 2014, having a conversation with him at the beginning about coming on board, he looked at my stats and said, he's like, you've got stone hands. Your short game is awful. You'll never be a good short game player. He said, you'll be lucky -- we should just try and get you to be a top 75, top 100 short game player. You should just try and hit the greens when you have a long iron in your hand; don't be aggressive. Obviously I've proved him wrong, and I joke with him today about that.

But I've gotten longer as a player. I've gotten more -- I say intelligent about how to prep and prepare and get ready for tournaments, how to dissect a golf course, how to get around the golf course.

I think emotionally and mentally just the way I handle myself on the golf course is completely different. But that's 10 years ago. I was 27. I'm 37. I hope I've learned something in those 10 years and I've gotten smarter, and I

think I've done that.

Hopefully in 10 years' time from now, I'm a better player and a better person than I was as I sit here.

**Q. You've had time to reflect on the near miss at The Open. I just wonder whether the overwhelming sentiment is one of disappointment at having gotten so close or satisfaction that you played so well that week?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: It's a little bit of both. Yes, disappointing because the ultimate goal is to win the tournament, and to be so close and have the opportunity, you want to get through it and be able to raise that trophy. I haven't had a lot of those opportunities in the 15 years as a pro. That was the first time I've had a chance to win a major probably since 2013 at Merion.

Yeah, I was disappointed that I didn't get the job done, but at the same time I was very proud of myself how I played all week, very proud of myself how I played on Sunday especially. I could hold my head up high and walk away and say I didn't lose this tournament. I played solid, and Xander went out there and played a special round of golf, and you've got to tip your cap to that.

Yeah, I was a little disappointed, but when I looked at the bigger picture of it, I was very pleased with my game and very pleased with how I handled the situation of being there on Sunday. Now the goal is to hopefully get there a little bit more often over the next couple years and hopefully be able to hold one of those trophies one time.

**Q. You're one of those players who year over year were part of the PGA TOUR's churn of the top 50. Curious how you think that system worked in year one or if there's anything you'd like to see tweaked moving forward.**

BILLY HORSCHEL: I think it's worked pretty well. I think my only disagreement with the entire system so far is that I believe the TOUR winners of the current year should probably go ahead of the Aon 10, Aon 5. I believe that's a fairer way to do it. I think it opens up more opportunities for players to get into Aon 10, the Aon 5, open up more access to Signature Events.

But I sit here now and I'm an example that if you play well and you take advantage of the opportunities that you get, whether it's in some Signature Events or you play well in the majors where there are more FedExCup points, you can get inside the top 50. Is it easy? No, it isn't. But it's going to be hard, and it should be a little bit of a challenge. Nothing should be handed to us by any means. I believe

it's been a good system, and the only tweak I would make was I believe the winner should be in their own category above the Aon 10 and Aon 5.

**Q. Assuming you're still working with Mark, what does he give you a hard time about now?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: We give each other a hard time about everything. I don't know, he hasn't given me a hard time about anything the last couple weeks because I've been playing well, so that's the good thing.

Honestly, I don't know. Probably maybe a few decisions here and there that we make on the golf course, but game-wise, nothing too much. Like I said, I've learned a lot from him over 10 years, and I joke with him a little bit that I really just pay him to stay as my friend and that's all. I really don't need his information anymore. But obviously I'm kidding with him because he does add a -- he is a very added asset to my team and there is a comfort level when he's around at a golf course because he knows my game, and if TA isn't there, I can bounce some things off him.

**Q. I get that you'd take either Xander or Scottie's, but you're going to have to pick one for Player of the Year. Is your mind already made up or do these two weeks factor -- will they influence your decision?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: Listen, the next two weeks do matter, but I'll be honest with you; I haven't always voted for Player of the Year sometimes because I just think it's too tough to make a decision. Maybe that's a bad thing and probably shouldn't say that, but there's a couple times I haven't voted for Player of the Year because I couldn't make a decision who I thought had the better season, so I just let it go.

But I do think if I were to sit here right now and make a decision, I'd probably vote for Scottie because I think Scottie has got six or seven wins, he's got a gold medal, he's got a Masters, and THE PLAYERS I believe is a fifth major, so I would say Scottie has had the better year, and Scottie would be my pick for Player of the Year.

**Q. When the PGA TOUR was here earlier, it was a modified Stableford format. Do you have a sense after a couple of days what a good winning score might be here for four days?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: I've only played nine holes, so I don't know. I haven't really played much of the golf course. Just the little bit I've seen, I do believe there is the potential if the wind doesn't blow, I do believe there's the potential for some low scores.

Like I said, the par-5s, most of the par-5s are reachable, all the par-4s I don't think you have more than maybe an 8-iron in, 7- or 8-iron in. So I think there's the potential that you could see some really good scoring conditions.

But I think the challenge is going to be controlling your ball, but then I think on the putting greens, I don't think there's a pull necessarily that you would see sometimes in mountains, but I do think the greens can be a little bit deceptive in reading them in terms of speed and break.

Yeah, but we'll see how it all sets up and how the course -- whether it dries out. I know we have some rainy conditions over the next three days predicted. I think we're going to see a very exciting championship, though, and that's all that matters.

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