

TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Scottie Scheffler

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Scottie Scheffler to the media center here at the 2025 TOUR Championship. Scottie, we got some rain yesterday afternoon, but what are your first impressions of the golf course in year two of the restoration here at East Lake Golf Club.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Shoot, we got a lot of rain yesterday. I wasn't on the course yesterday when it happened, but I was still on property and it was coming down pretty good.

Golf course is in good shape. Rough is healthy. Greens are really nice again. Zoysia fairways as well. I think it's in great shape overall and should provide a pretty good test this week.

Q. Scottie, I know there's a bit of a push to make this championship a really difficult test. Do you have a sense if that's going to be the case based on course setup so far?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think we need to shy away a little bit from the focus on difficulty. I think as players, we always look for a good test. So when you look at a really good test, you want to see good shots rewarded in some way. On certain holes that's a par. On certain holes that's a birdie. It never should be a bogey, I don't think. I think when you're hitting good shots, you should be able to make par or better.

I think some of the best tests we see are typically ones where the score to par is a bit lower, and when you look at a week like this -- I played the front nine yesterday, and when you're in the fairway and you hit a good tee shot, if you're able to hit your driver in the fairway on this golf course, there's typically opportunities for you to make birdie.

And when you're not in the fairway -- you look at a golf course like Memphis, I think was a good example this year. Every fairway I hit out there, you're like, okay, I can make a birdie on this hole, I can wedge it close, I can hit an iron



in there near this pin, and every time you missed a fairway, you're like, oh, my goodness, how am I going to make par?

I think sometimes what can frustrate us about setups is when you have guys hitting it all over the map and they don't really get punished for it. You want shots -- the further offline they go, you want them to get punished according to how poor the shot was, and it's a really challenging thing with randomness in the game of golf.

Overall this week, the rough is extremely healthy. I dropped some balls in the rough on 1 yesterday, and I'm hitting it like 100 yards out of the rough. Depending on the lie, Bermuda can be a bit more patchy than other types of grass, but overall I think it's going to be a really good test this week.

Q. No. 18, at least from a bad golfer's perspective, the fairway looks really hard to hit. The approach shot looks awkward. I'm curious if you could walk through that hole, those first and second shots.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I'm going to try and be nice to the hole. I don't totally agree with the changes there. I think when you have a par-5 like that, it's a 3-wood or driver off the tee, but what they did is they mounded the fairway so now the fairway repels balls.

Before, the hole was a great par-5 because you could hit a drive down there and if you hit the fairway, you could get at the green in two and hit it close to some of the pins and maybe make an eagle. It could be a swing hole in terms of two good shots, you could make a 3, and if you hit two or three bad shots, you're going to make a 5 or a 6.

Now with the way the hole is, some good tee shots aren't rewarded, and if you miss the fairway, there's essentially nowhere to lay up, especially with the way the rough is now. It's kind of an awkward angle, and they had to make internal out of bounds on the hole because guys were looking at playing it a different direction. I think when you look at a good golf hole, that's never really the case when guys are looking to play down other holes.

Now you're also hitting the second shot from a downslope to a green that's protected with bunkers in front of it, and it's not a contest of accuracy, it's just a contest of who can hit the ball maybe the highest. I'm not even sure if Rory



could hold that green, especially last year.

I think a little bit of the reward has been taken away on a hole like that. I don't know where you go from there, but I was more of a fan of the old 18th than I am the new one.

When you change a golf course that most people like, you're going to have opinions -- guys are going to like certain things, and guys are not going to like certain things. That's just the nature of redoing a golf course that was so great.

Q. You're not already leading the tournament like you have been last year. Regardless of how it affects you, how do you like the format this year? Is this the best way to finish it, everybody starts even? What are your thoughts on that setup?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I guess no more sandbagging for me at the end of the year. (Laughter).

I was not a huge fan of the starting strokes format. I was a fan of the points format, but I understand why people wanted to move away from that with FedEx being a huge sponsor and having to give out two trophies at the end of the week and explaining the season long race. This to me is a much simpler format to end the year.

In order to qualify for this championship, you have to have a great year. To be one of the 30 best players on our TOUR and make it to this tournament is an extreme accomplishment, and one of the things people may pick apart is, well, some guys can win the season long race without winning a tournament until the TOUR Championship.

I would argue making the TOUR Championship without winning a tournament is a pretty cool accomplishment, not in the sense of not winning, but you have to put together a really consistent, great season in order to qualify for the TOUR Championship, especially without winning.

When it comes to this week, we all start even par, and it's time to go chase what you want. In order to win tournaments, you have to play good golf at the right time, and if you want to win our season long race, you have to play really good golf at the end of the season. Going into this week, we all start even par, and if you want to win the FedExCup, you've got to go win this week.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I was not a fan of it. I didn't think it was a good way to end the year, for a variety of reasons. I'm much more happy with this format. I think

having a real -- a good golf tournament on a really good golf course to finish off our season is extremely important, and I think when you look at it this week, we're going to have a difficult test, a good test to golf to finish off the year the right way.

It's exciting for us as players. It's exciting to be able to qualify for this tournament, and it's exciting to have an opportunity to win this tournament and the FedExCup.

Q. There was a lot of indications that this was obviously made mid-season. Are there more things that you think could go forward maybe next year in the future to make an even better TOUR Championship?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think as we continue to evolve with this golf course and I think as we continue to improve the test and also improving the points system for the playoffs, I think the way it is right now, it maybe overvalues play at the end of the year in terms of qualifying for this tournament, and it may -- I don't know if cheapen is the right word, but I think having such a drastic difference in the points in the last two weeks, I think creates some inconsistencies in terms of rewarding the great seasons we have in order to qualify for the tournament.

When I imagine the TOUR Championship, I imagine it being the most difficult tournament to qualify for in golf. I think in order to make it here, you have to have a really great season, and then the reward for making it here is having a chance to win the FedExCup, and I think it's a great reward at the end of the season. I think having a really good golf tournament as our last event is extremely important to us.

People have tossed around a lot of different formats for this tournament, and I think a lot of talk -- there's a lot of talk about match play and stuff like that. The reality is we've had a match play tournament for a number of years. We had a match play tournament for four or five years in one of the biggest growing markets in the country, and that tournament still didn't succeed. I don't think match play is the best way to crown a season-long champion, and I think changing the format for your last tournament is kind of quite silly.

People love the comparisons to other sports, but golf is simply not like other sports. I'm just going to leave it at that.

Q. You obviously played with Russell Henley in Montreal. What has it been like to watch him take another leap this year as well?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, Russell is a tremendously

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

hard worker. When I'm in the gym, I see him in the gym. When I'm out practicing, I see him out practicing. Russell is a guy I look up to for a variety of reasons. He's a great person; he's a great golfer as well. Anytime you see a guy who puts in the amount of effort that Russell puts into becoming a good golfer and seeing him have success, it really is special to see.

Q. Scottie, obviously you're on this really nice run of not just wins, but high finishes every week. Human nature being what it is, sometimes it's just -- how do you keep going? How do you keep pushing? Last week might have been an example of that. You had the points thing sewed up. It wasn't going to help you here. Obviously you want to win, but do you ever have to fight that, and was there ever a point in your career where there was an example where you felt like you didn't give it your all and it was a lesson?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think over the course of my career, there's definitely been tournaments and shots that I would like to have back in terms of -- that was the one thing -- my biggest takeaway from playing with Tiger was the amount of intensity that he took to every shot, and that's something I've talked to a lot of guys about.

Tiger was just different in the sense of the way he approached each shot, it was like the last shot he was ever going to hit. I've only played with Tiger once in a tournament. I played with him in the 2020 COVID Masters, and I think he made a 10 on the 12th hole, and he birdied, I think, five of the last six, and it was like, what's this guy still playing for? He's won the Masters four or five times. Best finish he's going to have is like 20th place at this point.

I just admired the intensity that he brought to each round, and that's something that I try to emulate. If I'm going to take time to come out here each week -- like it's not an easy thing to play a golf tournament. If I'm going to take a week off, I might as well just stay home. I'm not going to come out here to take a week off. If I'm playing in a tournament, I'm going to give it my all. That's really all it boils down to.

Q. As you keep getting better and better, you're now becoming more of a personality away from the golf course. You're the guy that everybody wants to hear from. You're playing starring roles in movies. How have you grown into that role, and do you feel more comfortable with being in the position you're now in away from the course?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I mean, for me, nothing really has changed. If you guys want to ask me questions, I'm more than willing to answer them.

To be honest with you, I don't really have much to say. My life hasn't changed. Essentially sometimes it feels like a double life. I come out here and I play tournaments and have a lot of fun doing it and it's an amazing experience, and then when I go home, I have the same friends, I practice at the same golf course. My home life hasn't changed a bit since I've had some success out here.

My life on TOUR has changed a good amount. It's a lot different for me to show up to a golf tournament. That's why I talk about if I show up to a golf tournament, I'm here for a purpose, and that's to compete as hard as I can. If I want a vacation, I'm going to go on vacation. I'm not going to show up to a golf tournament to have a week off. If I want a week off, I'm getting out of here. I'm getting out of the public eye, I'm going home. I'm going to retreat a little bit and get rest so I can come back out here and compete.

I guess nothing really has changed for me very much. I don't really know how to elaborate on it other than that.

Q. Was there ever a time over your career, over a 72-hole tournament that you weren't into it as much as you should have been on a first nine Thursday or something like that? You kind of eased your way in and a kind of reminder that you need to be ready to go from the get go? Was that ever an issue?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, that's something I feel like I've talked about a decent amount. The biggest change I felt like I made my first couple years on TOUR to 2022 was the question always was, hey, how come you haven't won? The reason I felt like I hadn't won yet is I hadn't put myself in position enough times. I'd only played in a couple final groups. I always found myself just a little bit on the outside looking in, and that's one of the things I learned from playing with Tiger.

It was like, we're in 20th place or whatever going into Sunday at the Masters, Tiger has won five Masters, he's got no chance of winning the tournament. Then we showed up on the 1st hole and I was watching him read his putt, and I was like, oh, my gosh, this guy is in it right now.

That was something that I just thought about for a long time. I felt like a change I needed to make was bringing that same intensity to each round and each shot. And I feel like the reason I've had success in these tournaments is -- I don't hit the ball the furthest. The things that I do on the golf course, other people can do. I think it's just the amount of consistency and the intensity that I bring to each round of golf is not taking shots off, not taking rounds off, not taking tournaments off.

When I show up at a tournament, I'm here for a purpose and that's to compete hard, and you compete hard on every shot. I think it's a lot easier said than done, and I think I've been in a good head space the last couple years where I've been able to stand up over a ball and focus on what I'm doing and just try and pull it off.

Q. Was there anything to the psychology or the weirdness of starting a tournament with a two-shot lead before you've hit a shot of getting into it? I'm sure you were, but was there anything that made that weird?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, it's very weird. When you talk about expectations and stuff like that, the TOUR Championship for me was a tournament that I hadn't won before, I had a pretty tough loss to Rory here in 2022. For me, last year this was one of the hardest tournaments for me to play just because you show up and it was like -- in 2022, I remember finishing the season, going home, everyone is like, hey, man, great year, but I'm sorry about East Lake. I'm like, I'm mad I lost, too, but at the end of the day I had a pretty cool year. I played some great golf.

It just frustrated me. It's like, I think it was Phil Jackson said, you're only a success at the time you're performing a successful act, and it just irked me so bad finishing off the year where guys were like, hey, great playing, I'm sorry about how it ended. It's like, you know what, man, I won the Masters this year, won a few other tournaments, it was a pretty good year.

So going into 2024, coming into East Lake, Teddy brought up a good point. He's like, hey, man, it's tough enough sleeping on a lead. He's like, you've been sleeping on the lead for this golf tournament since February. I was leading the entire year in the FedExCup, and it all comes down to a four-day tournament on a golf course that I hadn't really played great on.

It was a challenging week. It was stressful. But we do what we always do and just tried to focus on the execution and then ended up winning this tournament. But it was one of the hardest tournaments I had to play just because I had been sleeping on the lead for six or seven months. It's a weird feeling.

So that's why I prefer this format. I think it's great to have just a really great golf tournament to finish off the year. It's a golf tournament that's hard to qualify for, and it's a great reward for guys that have had tremendous seasons on TOUR, and now we all have an opportunity to go win the FedExCup.

Starting strokes I don't think was the best way to crown the

season-long race. I think we're in a much better place now.

Q. What does it mean to have Ted Scott back on the bag this week, and how did he help you win it last year?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, yeah, it's extremely important to have Ted back on the bag. I don't think it's any secret that my career trajectory changed quite a bit when he came on the bag. I went from a guy that hadn't won on TOUR to a guy that started winning at a pretty good pace immediately upon him entering the picture.

I think what Ted has meant to me on the golf course, I think the results really do speak for themselves. He's a great asset for me on the golf course. He's a great friend, and I feel like we're a really good team. He works super hard. He has a relentless work ethic as well.

There's a lot more to a great caddie than just giving me really good numbers all the time. Teddy has a lot of different roles on the course, and it's great to have him back this week. Obviously he's got some personal stuff still going on that I'm not going to elaborate on, but it's really great to have him back on the bag this week.

Q. When you hear that you're the last guy since Tiger to win back-to-back years five tournaments, stuff like that, inevitable comparisons to Tiger, what do you make of that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I mean, I think it's a greater discussion. I think in the simplest form, I think it's very silly to be compared to Tiger Woods. I think Tiger is a guy that stands alone in the game of golf, and I think he always will. Tiger inspired a whole generation of golfers. You've grown up watching that guy do what he did week in, week out, it was pretty amazing to see.

I talk about a mental change I made because I played one round of golf with him in a tournament. I've only played one round of tournament golf with Tiger Woods, and it completely changed the way I look at how I play tournaments.

I can't tell you the look on his face when we got to the 1st green, and I look over, and we're in 20th place, kind of playing, yada, yada, yada, and I look over and this guy is just locked in, and I was taken aback. I was like, holy smokes. Then we got to the 2nd hole, and he had this chip shot and he looked at it like it was an up-and-down to win the tournament. I'm like, this is incredible. I've never seen anything like this before in my life.



I think he completely transcended the game of golf, and I think when it comes to me, I don't even like comparisons to other players because I think when we come out here, I'm doing the best I can to be the best version of myself. I don't think about legacy, I don't think about the past. I try to get the most out of myself each week.

I just don't really love the comparisons at all.

Q. I was wondering if you have any tips for our high school golf team as we head into this year competing for a state championship.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would say when I step up on the first tee, the thing I focus on most is my preparation. When it comes to tournament golf, you always want to win tournaments, but what it comes down to is trying to execute each shot.

When I get on the first tee, I want to be able to tell myself that I did everything I could in order to play well that week. I've done the practice, I've gotten used to the course. I've spent the time in the gym. I've got my mind right. I've checked all the little boxes that I need to in order to play well. So when it comes time to hit that first tee shot, I can swing freely and know it's time to compete. I'm not worried about the other stuff. I'm not worried about anything outside of trying to compete in that golf tournament.

The thing I always fall back on is the work that I've put in to get to that point, so I would encourage you guys to continue to work hard and have fun while you're doing it. Playing high school golf is such a great joy. Playing with my teammates growing up, I have so many great memories of my buddies growing up playing golf. Enjoy it, enjoy the practices, and yeah, just have fun with it.

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