

# TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

## Gary Woodland

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We will go ahead and get started. Someone we're all very excited to see here in the Media Center at East Lake is Gary Woodland. Gary, it's been an incredible season for you both on and off the golf course. How fulfilling is it to be here this week at East Lake?

GARY WOODLAND: Yeah, it's been a long time, obviously seven years. It's been an amazing year for me. It's been a long year, but amazing.

Getting back here is -- I mean, it's special. There's no doubt about it. It's something that looked a long ways away to start the year. I'm proud of the way I fought. I'm proud to be here. This is a tribute not only to me, but to my team that have been with me.

I couldn't have done this on my own. I've got a massive team behind me. This is all the hard work and dedication that they've given me and supported me that allowed me to be in this position right now. It's awesome.

#### **Q. You're quite remarkable.**

GARY WOODLAND: Thank you.

#### **Q. You are so resilient. You are so inspiring. How do you do it? How have you got to this point? How have you got through everything you've had to overcome to be here right now where you are today?**

GARY WOODLAND: With the people around me, there's no doubt about it. My wife's my rock. She's the one that reminds me in tough times why I'm here, what I'm fighting for.

This is the only dream I've ever had is to be a professional athlete. I owe it to my childhood self to fight every day. There's a lot of days where I don't want to do it. There's a lot of days I don't want to fight, but my wife reminds me why I am. It's a tribute to my family who sacrificed so much and gave everything for me to go out and live my dreams.

I owe it to everyone else -- I'm not just playing for myself.



Like honestly, I probably was -- before all this started, I thought it was about me. This is way bigger than me now. I owe it to them, and I owe it to everyone else that is struggling.

I had a kid in Memphis who flew over from New Zealand who's 11 years old and has an inoperable brain tumor, and he wanted to meet me. Wednesday through Sunday, he walked every hole with me. I owe it to him. This is a lot bigger than myself now, I realize that. So when I'm struggling, I fight for them.

#### **Q. Two things. Where are you in your journey? When you first sort of had the public revelation in March, where are you now in terms of how you're feeling and how you're coping?**

GARY WOODLAND: It's funny, I have a big team that I work with with doctors and therapists, and I've talked to them. My good days now are 10s. Like when I have a good day, I think I'm more appreciative. I have better perspective. My bad days are still 1s. So I struggle sometimes because it's a massive drop now from 10 to 1, so when I get off, it feels like the end of the world.

Where before my good days were probably 7s, my bad days were 4s, I didn't have a big drop. It was just, oh, it's not great. I still struggle, but I'm learning, I'm understanding where we're able to put protocols in place. TOUR security has been amazing this year. They're a big reason why I'm sitting up here too.

The hardest thing for me I think I've ever had to do was ask for help, and it's amazing when you ask for help how many people actually want to help. I got a little off last Saturday and was fighting with a lot of things going on -- the drones were bothering me, right? I struggle with stuff behind me. They bothered me for 15 holes. When I asked for help, I asked the TOUR security, I asked the rules official, they went away.

I don't have to fight this on my own. I can ask for help, and when you do, people help you. So I'm learning to ask for help to help me get through a lot of things that I'm struggling with still, but I'm a lot better off now than I was six months ago, I know that.

#### **Q. Secondly, completely different, if you look at the**



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**blind resume of a player who had a win, six top 10s, a top 10 in a major, a top 5 in a playoff event, prior Cup experience, would you think that player would be deserving of a captain's pick for the Presidents Cup this year?**

GARY WOODLAND: I'll tell you this -- and Sneds knows this -- there's nothing I want more than to help Team USA. I'll run through a wall, not only for Sneds, but for the team.

Through my struggles, the one thing that's helped -- like the Ryder Cup last year. Being around the team, being around the guys, there's no moment that I felt safer than that. I'll be in Chicago no matter what, and I'll be doing everything I can to help Team USA be the best they can be.

Sneds know it's not about me, it's about me putting the team first, and I definitely will do that. I think this week -- like Sneds has said the whole time, golf is going to be the answer. Golf will explain for itself. There's a lot of guys here this week, there's a lot of guys at home that are all deserving of being the pick.

We'll see what happens at the end of the day on Sunday, but Sneds is going to do what's best for Team USA, and I fully support that.

**Q. Aside from everything you're dealing with, you need your game to be there too to be at this level and get here. What has been good about your golf? How have you managed to keep that at a high level? What are you the most proud of in that aspect?**

GARY WOODLAND: I think from top to bottom my game's better than it's ever been. Statistically it shows that. Randy Smith has been amazing being back in my life and guiding me through all this. I'm as consistent now through driving all the way down through the bag through putting than I've ever been. That's not only exciting for me now, it's exciting for me going forward.

My speed's back. I'm hitting it hard. Statistically I'm putting it as good as I've ever putted it in my career. I have a lot of things to be excited about, but I'm excited about the consistency of my game top to bottom that I'm putting in.

**Q. What's the balance of working on your game and giving yourself a break?**

GARY WOODLAND: It's tough. I'm not there yet. I'm still learning that. That's probably what I fight most with my team about is learning how to take care of myself a little better, learning how to take time off. I don't like to take time off. I like to get better. That's tough.

Looking at the schedule going forward, there's a lot of golf. I've got to find ways to manage that, but a lot of that comes with confidence too. If I have the confidence in myself that I can take a day off and be all right, I think that's common.

**Q. Gary, you mentioned you haven't been here in quite some time. Do you approach this week as a venue you've never been to because it's probably completely different?**

GARY WOODLAND: The golf course is completely different than what I saw seven years ago. It's obviously been completely redone. Yeah, I will. I will attack it that way.

It's nice to see a bunch of people, seeing people in the clubhouse obviously I haven't seen in a long time. There's a lot of good energy here, though, and that's special.

Only 30 players, you can get a little more extra work done on the golf course and the range. I played the front nine yesterday. I'll play the back nine again today with Scottie, and I'll be ready to go tomorrow.

**Q. (No microphone)?**

GARY WOODLAND: I mean, the greens are completely different. Completely different. There's a lot more slope. There's a lot more runoffs, a lot more sections. I think it's a little more strategic than it was before with the way the greens have been redone.

**Q. Two things. One, it just made me wonder, since you were pretty much a regular here a decade ago and not having been here in seven years, did you have to use your GPS to get here?**

GARY WOODLAND: (Laughter). Well, I went the wrong way this morning, so yes. It's been a little different. I'm relying on that GPS a lot more than I used to for sure.

**Q. People talk all the time that their one goal in golf is to get more consistent. How do you do that? My point is everyone's got a lot of skill out here. Everyone wants to do it. What does it take to be Scottie, to be consistent?**

GARY WOODLAND: I think understanding yourself. I think Scottie understands himself better than anybody I've been around. I've spent a lot of time around him the last couple years, played most practice rounds together, and watching him go about his business and understanding what he can and can't do.

He manages -- talk about managing energy. I don't know if anyone manages their energy as well as Scottie does as well. It's impressive to see how he is in control. He relies on Ted. He relies on his team. He's got an amazing team around him as well. Every day he shows up, and he knows what he's doing. He knows what he can and can't do, and he attacks each day with a purpose.

I've learned a lot from him. I've learned more from him than probably anybody out here in a long time. It's impressive to see the way he goes about it. But it's showing up every day with a purpose, showing up every day with a purpose to get better. I think he gets better every day.

He'll get mad at himself. He'll get down and all that, but it's with a purpose. When he leaves each day, he knows he got better. I don't think I attacked it every day with that kind of purpose like he does. That's something I'm working on now and something I believe will help me stay consistent in the future.

**Q. How much grief did you catch for your tee shot on 9 last week? And what's the funniest thing you've heard about it?**

GARY WOODLAND: I've hit some good shots this year, and I haven't got any attention -- or as much attention as that shot has. That one, it caught me off guard too, more than anything. I hadn't really missed a shot for eight holes, and then that came out of nowhere.

Obviously Sneds was throwing me under the bus last night at the Payne Stewart Award. I got a lot of texts. My dad and I will play in the PNC again this year, the father and son, and when I turned my phone on after the round, it wasn't "Congrats" or "Good playing," it was, "Hey, get that shot out of the way. I can't afford to have that in the scramble."

It's been -- I don't think I'll live that one down for a while. I think that one's going to stick around for a while. I'm proud of myself for how I rebounded after that. It shocked me so much. I think I could have let everything get away. I rebounded and hung in there pretty well and let that one shot go. Because at the end of the day, it was just one shot.

**Q. Not to dwell on the fact that you haven't been here for a while, but last time you had to make up strokes, this time you don't. I just kind of wonder what's your mindset going in? Would it be different than previous?**

GARY WOODLAND: Yeah, for sure. You show up now, and everyone has a chance to win. I think that's a big deal.

Scottie Scheffler is the best player in the world. You're spotting -- I don't know, at 18th, I don't know where I would have been, probably 3- or 4-under. You're spotting Scottie six or seven shots. We had a hard enough time not spotting him any shots.

It gives you an attitude -- I'm showing up here to win, there's no doubt about it. I'm not here as a celebratory tour because I'm finishing top 30. I'm here playing with a purpose, and I'm expecting to go out and do that.

It's exciting to be here. Obviously this format will change. Last year, this year, and next year, you show up and everyone has a chance at zero, at even-par. That's exciting from where I'm -- coming in at 18th, that's exciting for that, for me.

**Q. What's the most meaningful thing someone said to you in the last couple years during your -- well, with everything you've been going through?**

GARY WOODLAND: The most meaningful is "Thank you," at the end of the day. I've had a lot of people -- I've said this before. When I came out that I was having brain surgery, I don't know how many texts I got. Let's just say I got a hundred. When I came out that I'm battling PTSD, I got thousands.

People, I don't think, can relate to the brain surgery. People can relate to what I'm battling now. The amount of messages I got of people just saying thank you because they're battling stuff that nobody knows about. If I can come out and ask for help and talk about it, then they've gotten help too.

At the end of the day, I want to make this world a better place. If somebody -- if my story or my journey or me talking about the struggles I face every day, if that helps somebody else, man, that's what it's all about. I don't want to be remembered as being a great golfer; I want to be remembered as a great person. Hopefully my struggles -- my struggles suck. There's no other way to put it. I have a lot of days that suck, but if that helps somebody else, then that's going to help me too.

**Q. There are a lot of people who came back from a lot less that didn't make it here. If you had to condense it down to one reason why you made it and maybe they didn't, what do you think it is?**

GARY WOODLAND: My fight. At the end of the day -- and I've told my wife this -- I'm not going to let this thing beat me. I worked my tail off to get to the PGA TOUR and to be a professional athlete. I'm not going to let that go for something that's out of my hands.



I have the ability to get up and fight every day, and I'm going to do that. I have a lot of fight left in me. I believe I have a big career left ahead of me, and I'm not going to let this thing win. At the end of the day, I truly believe I can beat this thing. It's not easy, but I'll keep fighting every day to do it.

**Q. Did you already tell how Sneds gave you the needle last night?**

GARY WOODLAND: We were at that Payne Stewart Award, and he was talking -- he got asked a question, if I was in contention to be a pick, and he was congratulating me on my win and how I've been playing, and I played great last week minus the shot I hit on the 9th hole on Sunday.

**Q. Gary, a lighter one. Have you ever had to deal with hand, foot, and mouth disease like Scottie?**

GARY WOODLAND: My kids have had it twice, and it is awful. I fortunately have not had it, but my kids have.

**Q. Can you imagine gripping a club with blisters on your hands like he did last week?**

GARY WOODLAND: No, that's the stubbornness that Scottie has to fight through it last week and play. We all knew he was battling it. I don't know if he came out with it until Sunday. We all have the same trainer, and we were trying to avoid the table he was working on. We were working on different tables and avoiding him at all costs.

One of Randy Smith's big deals is making sure our grip is the same every day. One of the things we can control is controlling the club face and doing that and making sure our grip is the same. He's got blisters on his hands and trying to grip the club. That just shows you how dang good he is to show up and finish 12th or however he finished last week. It's impressive.

**Q. You said you played the front nine yesterday. Can you just talk about how difficult that 1st hole is tee to green?**

GARY WOODLAND: Yeah, obviously we're teeing off from a putting green. So they've -- playing off from 500 yards. The green is positioned in places and sections that you've really got to be coming in from the fairway. You could maybe hit it from the bunker, but the rough's really not an option. The middle and then back left of that green slopes away, and you could have 40 yards coming out of the rough even when you hit a pretty good shot in there.

The drive is a massive priority is hitting that golf ball in the fairway. If not, you're laying up short of the green and trying to pitch. It's one of the tougher opening holes I think we've seen for sure.

**Q. Did you go to Dallas and practice with Scottie? I mean, I know you have the same teacher, but were you actually doing this at the same time or working together at all?**

GARY WOODLAND: Yeah, I've done -- I call it training camp. I've gone a couple times where I've spent three or four days. I went for three days before Memphis where Scottie and I practiced all day every day and played every day. I did it last year before Napa as well. I went in for four days that time.

I learn visually too. So it's amazing being with Randy, but it's amazing for me to practice with Scottie as well and watch how he goes about his business and watch what he does. So, yeah, I spend as much time with him as I can for sure.

**Q. Are you actually on the course then competing?**

GARY WOODLAND: Oh, we're gambling every day for sure. Unfortunately, Si Woo's getting a lot of hard grief losing to Scottie. I've never beat Scottie in Dallas. He asked me if I just hand him money every time he sees me. Fortunately, that's been the case.

He's hard to beat there. Right before we went to Memphis, he parred the last -- I was giving him a hard time that he couldn't handle the pressure. He parred the last three holes and shot 60 one day. Si Woo, that didn't work out for Si Woo and I. He's hard to beat out here. He's really hard to beat in Dallas.

**Q. What's the game you play?**

GARY WOODLAND: We play 100 a hole, and Si Woo and I like to press sometimes, but that doesn't work out well either. I've had to go to the ATM a couple times playing him in Dallas. Trust me, I'm surprised he hasn't said it. He likes to remind me of it.

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