

The Sentry

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii, USA

Plantation Course at Kapalua

Scottie Scheffler

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Scottie Scheffler into the interview room here, our recently announced PGA TOUR Player of the Year for the second straight season. Scottie becomes the sixth player to win the award multiple times and he's the fourth to do it in back-to-back years first since Tiger Woods in 2007.

Scottie, congratulations once again. If we can get some thoughts.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, it's good. Obviously an honor to receive the award. Anything that you receive voted on by your peers is very special to me and being able to go home with this trophy two years in a row now is very special. I think the body of work I put in last year with the consistency and finishing top most of the weeks that I played I was very proud of that consistency, and so yeah, I'm very appreciative of the award.

THE MODERATOR: Yeah, 13 top-5 and 17 top-10 finishes in 22 starts, including two wins, so the consistency you mentioned. Now, how are you going to build on that heading into the new season?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Just keep trying to stay as consistent as that. That was obviously very good last year. Hoping to improve on a few things with my putting so that I can finish off a few more tournaments. That's pretty much it.

THE MODERATOR: Scottie also wins the Byron Nelson Award for the low scoring average of the year and he is making his third start at this tournament. Talk a little bit about the state of your game coming into the week.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, it was good. I took a nice break after the Ryder Cup, and then I had a good start at the Hero. Went home, kept the prep work going, sharpened things up, and show up this week feeling refreshed, excited for the season to start. It's always great to be here in Hawaii and, yeah, excited for the year to start.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. As you look back on 2023, how did you define success? Obviously you were extremely consistent, but now in this back-to-back years, do you kind of look at the things I did well, the spots you might have needed improvement? Just what goes through your process of evaluating the year you had?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: At the end of each season I kind of sit back and look at things that I want to improve on. Last year my ball striking was obviously very good and my putting wasn't as good as I think it needed to be. So when I look back at the season, that was one of the things that I kind of tried to focus on in the off-season. I usually have one aspect that I try to put a little bit of extra emphasis on, if that makes sense, to where I'm still always working on all as specs of my game, but throughout the off-season I have a little bit more time on my hands to focus on different things.

Some years it's my diet, some years it's been the time I want to put in the gym, one year it was creating different shots, and then this year kind of the emphasis was placed on putting. I put in a lot of work with Phil over the off-season and I'm excited. I saw a little bit of the fruits of that at the Hero. I had a nice putting week and I feel like the ball's coming off my blade really nice right now and I'm looking forward to coming out this week and seeing where I'm at.

Q. Do you give yourself a chance to celebrate or appreciate what happened or are you someone that keeps your head down and is looking forward to what's ahead?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I've always been one to kind of keep my head down. I'm not very good at celebrating, I don't think. My wife is very good at that and I'm kind of the opposite in that sense. She's always very excited, and yeah, I've been able to reflect a little bit on kind of where the game has taken me the last few years and it's very special, but I try not to focus too much on the past or the future, just try and stay in the present and just kind of keep my head down, like I said.



Q. So to ask about the past then, last season -- or 2022 now, four wins, fewer wins in 2023, more consistent. Compare the two years. Do you have one that you prefer over the other?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: It's hard to say. They really were two different years. I kind of burst out on the scene in 2022 at the beginning of the year and was able to win the Masters, a dream tournament for me to win, and this year coming out I had by far my most consistent season. I think it's hard to say. I wouldn't really say I have a preference. The consistency really is great, but I also love winning a lot.

I didn't feel like I won enough in 2022 and I didn't feel like I won enough in 2023. I think I felt like that every year of golf. Anytime you don't win I think you want to win the tournament and it's just one of those deals. I think you never win enough, really.

Q. Were you surprised at all that you won this year?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: You know, I just think it depends on what the guys kind of looked at for their vote. I guess this year they really kind of appreciated my consistency. Like I said, I was very proud of that. The way I played the entire year, I think I maybe only had one or two starts that were -- that I would categorize as not great, but other than that I had a lot of starts where I just played really solid golf and to do that for an entire season out here I think is very difficult. I'm very proud of that aspect of my game.

Q. You went until July until you finished out of the Top 12, which is just a stupid number. Do you remember being really upset about that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: About not finishing in the Top 12? What tournament was it?

Q. The British, wasn't it? Scottish? British?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: British? Oh, yeah, I was just glad to make the cut that week. I had to get up and down on 18 to make the cut.

No, like I said, golf's a frustrating game, so it's pretty rare for me to leave a week being perfectly satisfied with where my game's at. I don't think that's really happened in my career so far. I think that's pretty rare for that to happen to anybody. I think as golfers we're kind of weird in the sense of you're always just trying to improve that little bit at a time and never really being satisfied. So it's a tough balance.

Q. It's a brutal question, but it comes up every time there's a really close race. Whose year would you

rather have, yours or Jon's?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Like I said, I don't focus too much on the past or the present -- or sorry, past or the future, and looking into the past, I'm very proud of the body of work that I put in, the consistency that I put in last year I'm very proud of. I'm proud of both of my wins -- or I guess all three of them now, including the Hero. Yeah, it was a really solid year and I'm proud of how I played.

Q. If we can't talk about the past or the future, what are we supposed to be doing with you sitting here in the present?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, we could talk about my pro-am today. I hit a good shot into 1.

Q. Well, I have to go back to the past. What's important to you? Is important to you consistency? Is it important to you ball striking? Is it winning? Where do you prioritize what you value the most?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: So my priority list, at the top, like how I define success, has always been my approach. If I show up to tournaments and I'm prepared and I'm ready to play and I show up with a good attitude and a good approach, so that means not getting too frustrated, not overthinking things, just trying to go out there and execute the shot and controlling what I can control, and that's my approach.

Once I hit the ball, I can't control whether or not the putt's going to go in, whether it's going to hit a bounce and bounce offline or if I'm going to get gusted by the wind. All I can control is my approach, and when my approach and attitude are great, then that's a successful week. That's pretty much my top priority at all times.

Q. How did the Ryder Cup go for you --

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, we lost.

Q. -- in that context, in the context you mentioned? Did you feel like your --

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: My approach? Yeah, I did a really good job of staying in the present that week. That's just a tough -- it's a tough tournament to really gauge how you play because, like, I could have very easily won two of my matches and lost two of 'em. The first match out, Jon just played incredible golf. Sam and I, I think we were a couple under in our best ball -- or in our alternate shot. I don't even know if we made a bogey in that match and we lost like 4-down, I think.

Just sometimes you just go out and you get beat. Then we go out that afternoon. I played great golf, and then we had a match where the guys we were playing against had two eagles in the last three holes to tie the match. I won one of those holes with a birdie on 17.

So that was a match where I played really good, and then we went out the next morning and Brooks and I just played really bad. It was one of those deals where I got off to a bad start. I think I hit it in the rough on 1, and then he hit it into the trees from there, and then I missed the green on 2, and then I hit an awful chip on 3, and all of a sudden we're 3-down and then things just kind of started to spiral out of control and obviously I was not pleased with how that match finished.

Go out on Sunday and I played another really good round of golf, shot 6- or 7-under and ended up tying that match to Jon. It was one of those ones where he was really playing great golf that week and sometimes it's hard to keep up with that. But I was proud of how I fought that week. My approach was really good. I took that frustration from the match on Saturday into a good attitude on Sunday. Yeah, I would say I'm proud of my attitude that week, for sure.

Q. Because you've had so much success and been so consistent over the past two years, what's your process of compartmentalizing something like the Ryder Cup loss afterwards, just because the bumps have been so few for you so far?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I mean, I kind of just -- I mean, we went on vacation after the week. We had some friends there. Life goes on after wins, life goes on after losses. I try not to keep any of that stuff with me for too long. It was obviously a frustrating week, but my attitude was good, I felt like my preparation was as good as it could have been, and I just didn't perform. That's part of my approach. Like, if I show up to a tournament and I feel like I've done everything I can to play well and I go out there and I have a good attitude and I don't play well, that's okay. I can't play good every week, I can't win every tournament, and that's not my expectations.

My expectations I place on myself is to go have a good attitude and be prepared and then the rest isn't up to me. So after having tough losses, yeah, you kind of just -- life goes on. We went on vacation, then I went home and put up the clubs for about a month, which was great, and then got back to work.

Q. What do you feel like the factors were that contributed to the ball-striking performance you had all year?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I think it had a lot to do with my body. When I was in college, I fought kind of some injuries and I think it affected my swing pretty drastically, and I got into a lot of bad habits. It takes awhile to get those things out of your system. So when it came to showing up here on TOUR, I got good workout program, I improved my diet significantly, and my body started to feel a lot better. All that stuff over time, making those little improvements, I think just really paid off into a year where I hit it really good most of the year.

Q. Jim Furyk said this really well years ago, and I would be curious how it applies to you. He said that losing can sting more than winning can feel good. Do you buy into that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Sorry, say that again?

Q. The sting of --

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Oh, yeah. Well, I mean, in golf, you lose a lot more than you win. So if you're going to take the bulk of it, you lose significantly more often, so you probably remember a lot more of that.

Winning is a pretty ecstatic feeling. Being able to give Teddy a hug, give Mere a hug on 18 is such a tremendous feeling for me, especially when my family is there. Losing hurts, I wouldn't really know what to say about if I hate losing or love winning, because I really hate losing and I really love winning.

Q. Which one lasts longer?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I was about to say, I don't know which one lasts longer. Like, you think about the Ryder Cup, that would probably be one of the tougher ones for me to swallow, going over there, not winning a match and feeling like I played good enough to win a couple matches, our team not being able to win. Then, like, you ask me that question, and I was like, well, I just kind of went on with my life. I really did. Like, we just went on vacation. Then we were over there with some great friends, had the trip of a lifetime, being able to, all six of us going over there, having fun, before having kids and all that stuff, is great.

After I won the Masters, we just went home. So, I really don't know what to say. I don't like to lose at all, I hate the feeling, and I love the feeling of winning, I really do, it's a tremendous feeling, it's a great thing to have at the end of years and years of hard work. It's extremely gratifying to see the fruits of that labor and be able to win.

Q. Lastly, are you any more excited going into this year than you were 2023?

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Any more excited? No, I was excited to play last year. I'm pretty excited to go out this year. I'm excited for the new schedule. I was able to map out a lot of tournaments I'm going to play in, and I think it's going to be a really fun year. Adding in some new tournaments with the designated events or what are they? Designated events?

THE MODERATOR: Signature.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Signature events.

Q. (No microphone.)

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: (Laughing) I took a break. With the signature events and then mixing in some of the other tournaments throughout the year that I love it play. I'm excited to go out and compete. I feel refreshed after taking a long break. This is really the first year in my career where I've had a significant time off. It was really great for Meredith and me just to be at home and enjoy some time there, and be with our family, be with our friends, and just get refreshed to come back out and compete this year.

Q. (No Microphone.)

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah. I think so. Did we commit to Pebble, Blake? Yeah, we're in.

Q. What are some of the things you were going to try to work on for 2024?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Mostly just continuing to improve my body, make sure everything's moving correctly. I think, in turn, that helps my ball striking. Then continue to refine my touch around the greens, improve my bunker game, and then putting, obviously, just kind of get the feel of the ball coming off the blade. Put myself in as many pressure situations as I could at home, whether it be playing hammer or wolf games, whatever it is. If somebody makes a birdie putt before me, they hammer. That simulates tournament pressure for me, which is great.

So, to be able to do that at home for a while, and just have fun and cut up with my buddies a little bit has been great. I think I put in a lot of good work as well.

Q. On putting, I don't know if we talked about this before, but you had a stretch obviously from May until a big chunk of the year; just like Jon did the previous year at the start, everything looked fine, they just weren't going in. Then I always wondered if -- and this isn't an analytics thing, I don't think -- but when a guy keeps hitting it to 12, 15, 18 feet, does it make it feel

like you're not making as many, than if you were scrambling half the time? Have you given any thought to that or heard that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would agree with that. I think there's a couple reasons for that. First of all, golf's a funny game. You can hit a lot of good shots and a lot of good putts and sometimes it's just not your week. You go through stretches where, like the beginning of the year for me in 2022, where it seemed like everything was going in. I was chipping in, rolling in putts, things were going my way. Then the margins get so small. The shot here or there at the beginning of the week is the deference between you holding the trophy at the end of the week and coming in second.

I think when you see guys -- so let's -- I'll say it this way: If you look at the top-10 players in the world, consistently they're always the best balling strikers. Ball striking week-to-week keeps you at the top of the leaderboard, and it's the guy that happens to hole the putts. So, when you see guys, especially like if you look at my year last year, when you see me on TV a lot putting from 10 to 15 feet, I can't control where that putt is. If you hit 6-iron into the green, you can't always control where that putt is. If you're hitting a greenside bunker shot or chip you know where the kind of putt you want to have is going to be from, so that's an element you can control.

Sometimes, when you don't see the putts going in, it's not always easy to gain momentum when you're putting from 10 to 15 feet. Sometimes it's nice to get a few putts at the beginning of the round from maybe 4 to 8 feet where you just see the ball go in the hole. Sometimes that can help momentum. Golf's a funny game. There's a lot of different stuff that goes into a round of golf. I would agree with your statement that, when you see guys putting for birdie a lot and they don't go in, they're still going to be at the top of the leaderboard, versus you see somebody putting for par from 12 to 15 feet, they're not showing that on TV, because he's not anywhere near the lead.

Q. If there was a putt from 15 feet that your life depended on, who do you want putting it? It can't be you.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I was about to say, it's my life, isn't it? (Laughing). Who would hit it? I would probably take my buddy Sam. Yeah. Take Burnsy. If I can't choose myself. Because he may want to --

Q. You can't choose yourself.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Can't choose yourself. Yeah, I take Burnsy.



THE MODERATOR: All right, Scottie, we appreciate your time. Congratulations, once again, and best of luck this season.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: All right. Thanks, ya'll.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

