

THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Scottie Scheffler

Press Conference

AMANDA HERRINGTON: We'd like to welcome Scottie Scheffler to the interview room here at THE PLAYERS Championship. Scottie just days removed from your win at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard, your second win in your last three starts. When you looked at the start of the year, did you have any idea that you'd get your first two wins in such a short time?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: No, not really. I was just really focused on the first couple of events to start the year. I took a nice break after the Bahamas, started practicing right in the beginning of the new year, and I didn't really have -- I didn't really put too many expectations on myself. So I was just trying to really get ready for Palm Springs, and then after that just out here trying to compete.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Making your second start at THE PLAYERS Championship. What can you take from previous experience here into this week?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I mean, I like the golf course a lot. It rewards good shots and punishes the bad ones.

I think I've only played three competitive rounds here in THE PLAYERS. I missed the cut last year, and then two years ago I had a good first round but obviously it was canceled. So I really don't have too much experience around the golf course in tournament conditions, but I know the golf course pretty well just from playing junior tournaments here and from seeing it on TV.

It's a good test of golf, and as long as I'm playing well, I should score well out here.

Q. Have you had any type of celebration since Sunday night?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: We went out to dinner on Sunday briefly, and then we drove here, so I wouldn't say too many crazy things happened.

It was a nice dinner. And then my grandma lives here, my parents are staying with her, so we went over there, hung



out and relaxed yesterday, but nothing crazy.

Q. You've been in contention through your last three starts. Is it harder to maintain your mental game going into this tournament or your physical game going into this tournament?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I mean, I would say mentally for sure. Physically I feel great. Mentally maybe a little bit worn out. I got some good rest yesterday, and I'm taking it pretty easy today and tomorrow, so I should be rested come Thursday.

Q. A long time ago, last month, you didn't have any TOUR wins, but if you get your third in four starts this week, you could potentially become World No. 1. You'd need a few things to break your way in addition to that. But is that jarring to you? Does that sort of boggle your mind?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I didn't know that until you just said that, so -- I wouldn't say I really pay too much close attention to stuff like that. For me I'm just really focused on this event and this tournament and kind of getting ready.

This golf course provides a much different challenge than last week does, and I'm just trying to prepare for that.

Q. There's so much focus on getting that first win and breaking through and whatnot. Did that first win inform your second one, or did it make the second one somewhat more doable when it came to crunch time?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would say that I think most of the expectations about getting a first win are stuff that's from the outside. That's never something I put on myself.

I like competing and I like playing well, and so that's always my goal going into the week, and I don't really think about getting over the hump or monkey off the back or anything like that.

I will say second time around it definitely felt a little bit different being in contention. I don't know exactly why, but maybe it was just kind of a different set of challenges on that golf course where I was focused on trying to make pars versus making a bunch of birdies in Phoenix, but it



definitely felt a little bit different.

Q. A little bit of a parallel in your career and what happened to David Duval. It took him three years to win, and then he won three in a row in '97. Do you feel like once you've kind of mastered this trick of winning that you've got the potential to go on that kind of a run?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: You know, golf is a pretty funny game. You don't really -- I don't really expect too much going into events. I'm always just trying to play good golf.

I'm sure something like that could happen. I definitely don't think that it won't, if that makes sense.

I guess I'm already a bit behind. I only have one in a row right now so I've got to win two.

Yeah, I think it's just funny. I think it's almost more of a coincidence that I won twice in three starts versus there being anything outside of that. I really don't know how to answer that, to be honest with you.

Q. How much did your Ryder Cup experience play into you closing out the two victories? Obviously that's a different kind of pressure, but did that help you maybe mentally get over this hump to win a stroke-play event?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think the Ryder Cup was definitely kind of a stepping-stone, if that makes sense, in my career. That was always a tournament I always dreamed of playing. I always wanted to be on that team. I love the Ryder Cup. I love playing for my country.

There was a few guys on that team that kind of had my back and basically -- I don't know if they voted me on the team or whatever it is, but there was a few guys on the squad that wanted me to be a part of that team, and it gave me a good bit of confidence and belief in myself. That kind of maybe catapulted me a little bit for sure. That was definitely something I didn't see happening that early in my career, but I was very blessed to be on that team, and it was really cool.

Q. Have you ever won back-to-back weeks?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Maybe in high school. Not that I can --

Q. Nothing stands out?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Actually I think I did in college. I think I won maybe our last regular season event, and then I

think I won Big 12s in a row. I don't know if it was back-to-back weeks but it was back-to-back tournaments, I think. You might have to fact check me on that one.

Q. Coming off a win do you think any differently going into the next week?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would say, if anything, trying to get more rest. I think winning and being in contention kind of drains you a little bit, especially on a golf course like we were playing last week. The beginning of this week I'm definitely not going to be doing that extra stuff that I kind of do before these events. I'm definitely taking it a bit lighter at the beginning of the week, kind of knowing that everything is in pretty good form.

Q. I wanted to ask, kind of thinking back now to your time on the Korn Ferry TOUR and how you think that Tour prepared you for what you've been able to do this last month and how your game has evolved from your time on the Korn Ferry TOUR?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I would say the Korn Ferry TOUR kind of helped me learn my routine week to week. In college maybe I'd play 20 events a year and they're three-day events, I'm only gone for five days max pretty much unless it's the U.S. Am or something like that, maybe Western Am. And and it's a lot different getting on the Korn Ferry TOUR. I think my Korn Ferry year I played 30 events, and it's full weeks, too. It's gone for four or five-week stretches at a time.

I definitely learned a lot about what makes me play well week to week. I kind of learned the value of rest then, which was good for me to learn.

Q. You won last week shooting 5-under, three weeks before that shooting 16-under. Is there a different mental preparation for the difference in the courses, especially now in Florida as opposed to the ones on the West Coast?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I would say that last week was funny. The beginning of the week the greens were soft. Like we played a practice round on Tuesday and we had a little game, and I think maybe the winner was like 5-under for nine holes, just because the golf course was completely different. Pins in the middle of the greens, greens were soft, totally different.

I'd played that event two years ago and it got crazy like it did this week, so I kind of knew what to expect, but I didn't expect it to change that fast. By the time we got on the golf course Friday afternoon, it was completely different. The wind had picked up, the greens were insanely firm,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

extremely fast. I think the scoring average Friday afternoon was like three and a half strokes over par, so it had already got to the conditions that it was on Saturday and Sunday.

Last week was kind of an anomaly, I think. It was definitely a strange week. But as far as preparation goes, not too much. I'm still focused on all aspects of the game and just trying to improve.

Q. With Tiger going into Hall of Fame tomorrow, I'm curious what your first memory was watching him and what kind of an influence he was for you personally.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: So my first memories really watching him that I can remember is probably the chip-in at the Masters. I think I was maybe 9 at the time. I don't really remember much before that. The rest of it I kind of have to remember from YouTube.

But he's an inspiration for all of us just the way he plays golf. It's pretty ridiculous. His statistics and the way he plays and swings, it's so radically different from the rest of us how we play golf and approach the game. He's obviously accomplished just a ridiculous amount.

I spent a lot of time on YouTube just kind of watching stuff, watching his swing and just trying to learn little bits and pieces of what I can from that. I mean, it's really hard to put into words what he's done for us out here. He's totally changed our lives.

Q. You've put the question to bed about when are you going to win. How good does it feel to not have to answer that question anymore?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Well, so you want me to be completely honest, I never had to come in this room before, so I didn't really get it asked too much to me. I don't remember doing too many of these, so I didn't really have to answer it too much, so it's not that big of a deal.

Q. Why do you think so many of the top 10 players are 25 and under right now?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I think guys are coming out more prepared. College golf is I think a lot different than it used to be, especially when you kind of play at one of the bigger schools. I think the schedule that we played in college kind of really prepared us to be able to come out here and play good golf just because we're playing similar golf courses, similar conditions.

I've played probably the second firmest greens I can remember other than Bay Hill were maybe a college

tournament. We played some difficult golf courses, and guys are coming out prepared, and we also have that belief now.

I think for me, Jordan really kind of changed a lot of that when he came out here and he won when he was 19, and it was one of those deals where I had a personal connection with him. And so he kind of gave a lot of the guys from Texas like me and Will that belief that we can come out here and play well at a young age. You don't have to wait until you're 25 and 30 to get some experience under your belt. You can come out here and play well.

Q. Who do you think is doing better in the PIP standings, you or your grandma?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Probably grandma. She made more headlines than I did .

Q. Can you identify when the biggest jump you made as a junior player was, and what did that look like?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: That's a good question. Biggest jump as a junior? I would say kind of towards the end of my high school career I finally kind of grew into my body. I had a huge growth spurt maybe my sophomore year of high school, and I didn't really figure out where my arms and the rest of my body were just because I grew and got so much longer. And so I'd really say kind of towards my junior, senior year I kind of started to feel more consistent.

And then I had two pretty nice wins, one of them being the U.S. Junior where it's a really long week. I played against a bunch of really good guys, and that's really the first time you're playing in front of television cameras and stuff like that and there's really a ton of pressure, and I'd say tournaments like that is kind of where I made a jump from being a good junior player to really believing like it's something that I could do for a living.

Q. When did you actually think about not just playing golf competitively well but playing golf for a living?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: For me I always wanted to be out here. I remember when I was a kid at Royal Oaks I used to wear long pants when I would practice when I was 7 or 8 years old, and everybody used to make fun of me, but that's what I did. That's what the pros did, so I wore pants.

I never really -- it's kind of weird, I never like expected to be out here. It seemed like something that I wanted to do. I never was too focused on it until I was out here. I was always just trying to get better. I never really put too much thought into it. I always just tried to keep getting better.

Q. That shot last week under the tree, what's the first thought that's going through your mind when the ball doesn't even get into the fairway?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I didn't really expect it to end up in the fairway. I figured it was going to either be on the green or greenside bunker or way right in the rough. And so where it ended up in the rough, to only advance 30 yards, I just told myself 5 is not a bad score, and that's kind of a comforting feeling on those hard golf courses. So from there I was like I can just make 5 here. I've got a reachable par-5 coming up, it's not that big of a deal. And fortunately I made a 4 somehow, which was kind of a miracle at that point in the round.

Q. Can you recall a bigger par save in your career?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Probably not. No, probably not. That's probably the -- actually there's one. I got up-and-down my last hole in Q-school to get my card for the Web.com, and I would say I probably felt more pressure over that one than I did at Bay Hill just because you're kind of fighting for your career. It's a little bit of a different environment.

I think the one at Q-school, I got up-and-down on 17 and made birdie, and then to get on the number, and all I have to do is par 18. I hit it right down the middle, had like 125 yards to the pin, and I hit the worst wedge shot that I've ever hit in my entire life, like a snap-hook, 150-yard shot that went like 25 yards from the pin. I was on a downslope kind of chipping back to the green, and I'm like, how did I end up here? There's all that pressure of what I'm going to do the next year and those thoughts start coming in, and I ended up chipping it pretty close and tapping it in.

I would say that one I probably felt a little bit more pressure just because the stakes were a little bit different.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Scottie, thanks for joining us today.

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