

# WM Phoenix Open

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

## Nick Taylor

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Nick Taylor into the interview room, our defending champion here at the WM Phoenix Open. If we can get some comments on your recollections of winning this tournament here in your hometown last year.

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's been a fun year to kind of reminisce, I guess, coming back here. I do practice here a lot, so I've been here since I won last year, but over the last two years the experiences of being in the final group, the crowds are always incredible, and to have that atmosphere and to pull it out last year after being so close the year before was amazing, so it's been nice to kind of run on that high and to have some success to start this year, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little about that success winning the Sony Open in Hawai'i and how much that sets you up for the rest of the year.

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it definitely helped. I was only in the first two Signature Events, so it really opened up my schedule, the majors, obviously.

To kind of end the year didn't play my best, but to be able to start the year, regroup in the off-season and do well was great.

**Q. I know after the Sony, you talked about the idea of the "Mr. Playoff" and what you feel in those moments. This obviously being one of those spots last year. If you don't mind going over again what are you feeling, and at a certain point do you start to believe when it happens enough that this is just what's going to happen, that this is what I'm going to do?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I guess you get confidence when you get in those situations the more you pull out successful outcomes. But I'm just as nervous in those situations as probably anybody else.

I feel like I have more clarity in those Playoffs of what I'm trying to do. Anything you try to work in golf, if you're over a swing or a putt and there's doubt or there's indecision, it's

probably not going to end up well, and for some reason in those situations, I have a lot of clarity and no doubt.

Not always that's going to have the best outcome, but for the putts to go in when they need to and the shots to pull off, it's been a lot of fun.

Of course, every time it happens you get more confidence in that situation, and yeah, it's been fun to be able to pull it out. Those situations, if they end the other way and I lose all three of those Playoffs, it's obviously a different story of where my career is really at, so to be on the other side of that every single time has really been kind of a catapult of where my career has gone.

**Q. With the putting and the rolling the putts in, does it seem like the hole gets bigger each time when you're rolling in successive putts like that? How does the confidence carry you?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, the confidence definitely carries me. Again, those situations with the crowds, the intensity, it's fun to rise in those moments and you kind of can feel the energy.

I think if I even look back to the Canadian Open I feel like the Canadian crowd was definitely on my side, that it was more so that energy pushes me towards making those putts, and then the same thing the other two playoffs. It's just fun being in those moments. You kind of relish it, and I think it locks you in and narrows your focus.

**Q. Having won a couple weeks ago, is there something you're carrying into now trying to keep that streak going?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I obviously have a lot of good vibes coming back here from the last two years. I've played this golf course a bunch, so my game feels really good. Winning but having a couple weeks after that where just playing solid golf, I feel like I'm carrying that into here and a lot of good vibes when I come back.

**Q. Kind of similar to what they were saying, it's obviously very hard to win on TOUR, and you are**



**pretty good at capitalizing on the opportunities when you're in contention. I think you've basically won every time you've been in the top 5 recently. How does that speak to your mindset when you're given those chances on Sunday because obviously for everyone out here that's not necessarily often. How does that speak to your mindset and how you walk into Sunday knowing that you have a chance to win?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I think so much in golf is taking advantage of the opportunities that you're given, if it's anywhere from trying to get your PGA TOUR card that I've had to deal with in the past or keeping your card or -- I feel like in those situations in the past, I've been able to take care of or take advantage of those opportunities.

Again, I just feel like I have more clarity when I'm trying to win. It's not necessarily I'm stepping on the tee expecting to win or be there in the last few holes, but just get back to the simple things of the process, and I've done a really good job when I get in those moments.

A lot of things I'm working on my with team is trying to do that Thursday morning, which I know will get me in those positions more often hopefully. But I've been able to take advantage when I have gotten those chances to try to win.

**Q. I read somewhere that you would want to have been a college coach had you not been doing what you're doing now. Talk to me about that, and if that's a possibility for you after -- I don't want to be too premature, but after.**

NICK TAYLOR: I think when I've answered that question, I had such an amazing experience when I went to University of Washington with Matt Thurmond as my golf coach and just how he impacted everyone on our team, how we became more mature on the golf course, off the golf course. We had so much fun when we were there, that my experience was so good that I think I always thought if playing didn't turn out, that was something that I wanted to do and try to have that impact on younger generation players that he did on me.

Yeah, I have a little involvement with the University of the Fraser Valley, which is back in my hometown of Abbotsford, throughout the year, but it's something I'd definitely be interested in. But right now I'll keep playing as much as I can.

**Q. I know how much you wanted to be on that team last year at Royal Montreal; did missing out on that light a fire a little bit in this off-season?**

NICK TAYLOR: For sure, yeah. I wanted to be on the

team for sure. I think the months leading up to it, there was just probably too much pressure putting on myself to try to prove myself to be on that team, even though I was obviously in the standings high enough where I had the potential to have a pick.

Yeah, I regrouped kind of after -- Memphis was disappointing not making the top 50 and then right after that not getting a pick, so it was kind of a couple gut punches and then kind of reassessed. I didn't think I needed to reinvent the wheel with my golf game; I just felt like there was some outside stuff of -- I felt like the whole thing last year was trying to qualify for things. You're always looking ahead, which in golf is not a great thing.

I just worked a little harder on the mental side, tried to tweak up a few things mechanically in my golf swing, and it's never a guarantee for success when you come out, but to have a hot start has obviously been nice.

**Q. You kind of alluded to it there. Do you feel like you were chasing it a little bit too hard, and are there times now after that experience that you can feel that you're trying to chase something too hard and trying to get ahead of that and kind of go back to center in a way?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I think talking with my wife, with my team starting this year, we've taken that all out of it. I think we're excited to have a year where I was just playing a normal PGA TOUR schedule; I wasn't trying to qualify for the Olympics, I wasn't trying to qualify for the Presidents Cup team and have that kind of in the back of your mind. It was just let's go play as good as I can and kind of stick to what I know is best for my game and my results.

So it was a good reset kind of in the off-season.

I played a little more than I wanted to. Not that I played particularly great in the fall, but felt like I saw signs of the game coming back to where I wanted it to be, and it's been nice to kind of see the hard work pay off.

**Q. Why do you think it is that that chase can sometimes have a detrimental effect?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, honestly I don't think it was necessarily the chase, I think it was more of a protection type thing, and I know for me when I play golf, if I'm trying to protect against bad things or protect a lead, it's not great for me.

I'm better when I'm actually trying to chase things down. I think that's what I settled into last year, the last few months, of trying to protect the spot I was in on the team or trying not to play bad, which is never a good thing.



I've tried to learn as much as I can from it and hopefully not kind of settle back into that ever again.

**Q. I know you were on the PAC with Josh Teater last year. I don't know how well you know him, but he had a big breakthrough on the KFT last week, a 15-year victory drought. What does it say about someone to just persevere through 400 starts between wins and get it done and just the uniqueness of that in this game?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it's huge. I don't know Josh super well, but obviously we've been around each other a lot over the years. I saw the interview, the emotion obviously. He was considering not even playing golf two months ago, and it's very impressive.

I hope he keeps playing well and gets his card back because his story is great, and to have 400 starts in between wins is obviously quite a long time. The perseverance is incredible.

**Q. You have a chance to go back-to-back this year, and Scottie Scheffler and Hideki Matsuyama, they won consecutively a few years ago. Is there anything from their approach to the game that you try to emulate when you're in this position?**

NICK TAYLOR: You know, both are obviously incredible players, major champions. The way Scottie has played the last two, three years, there's a lot to emulate or you want to emulate with him. Playing with him on Sunday two years ago, I think was definitely a shift in my career really trajectory of not winning but feeling like I could stack up at certain times certainly with him.

Yeah, it's been a great two years since that tournament.

Even what Rory said last week, anything you're trying to do that Scottie is doing, you're probably going to be a better player for it, if that's less mistakes, if that's being more precise with wedges, irons.

But yeah, it'll be fun to play with Hideki this week, and he's obviously been playing great the last six, seven months, as well. Yeah, it'll be fun.

**Q. I was kind of wondering in your own words if you could kind of describe just individually what would you deem as success for golfers, and from your own perspective, what would you define as success throughout the entire PGA TOUR tournament outside of just winning at the end, just from an individual standpoint?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, that's a good question. I feel like you leave the golf course satisfied if the entire day you've made decisions and you're concise with those decisions and you've committed to those decisions and the mental side, swing as freely as possible.

Golf is really hard. The execution part is really difficult. But if you kind of leave each shot that you went through the process correctly, you went through it in a way that you're satisfied with that and the execution can be good or bad, I think you leave satisfied that day.

Obviously you always want to win. You always want to have the best result possible. But there's a lot of bounces in this game that don't go your way, and a foot carry over a bunker can go to tap-in range for birdie or it can plug in the lip and you make bogey. Some weeks those go your way, sometimes they don't.

It's amazing over the years how for me personally I look at it where there is those small bounces that you get when you do win and you notice it maybe more recently right after you win that you've just got to take it with how it comes because sometimes you're on a stretch where you're in a few divots that tournament or a few plugged bunkers and some weeks you get away with it.

If you can leave the course satisfied with your process of hitting the shots, I think you're leaving in a good spot.

**Q. Last year you mentioned it was a marathon of a week. How were you able to not only find a rhythm within all the stops and starts but then know, prepare yourself for the perfect point on Sunday to say, okay, I'm going to go for it and press on the gas and do it?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, to start the week, at least the first couple days, I got the nice side of the draw. I think the Thursday morning was brutal with some wind, some rain, so that was a nice break.

Then playing really nicely that Friday, but I think I had 30 holes that day, so a lot of times it's a long day, but if you're playing well, the more holes you kind of want that day.

The two things I remember kind of, they were just unique for that week, was the turnaround from the finishing the round to re-teeing. I think I had nine minutes, maybe 12 minutes between the third round and the fourth round, and you're kind of scrambling not knowing what to do; do I grab a quick bite, do I run to the putting green and hit a couple putts? You can't really go to the range here because it's kind of a walk down.

Yeah, both times when I restarted doing that, I kind of was a little out of sorts. But able to kind of settle myself as the back nine came in, and obviously made a nice finish there.

But yeah, it was an interesting week with having two days essentially of playing 30 plus holes. It was unique.

**Q. There's a lot of Canadian golf fans that come down for this tournament. How does the Canadian support at this tournament compare to other ones on TOUR, and how does that impact your play?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it is great this week. Canadian fans are vocal and it's awesome seeing them out here. I think the West Coast is definitely the best, at least for me growing up on the West Coast, you get a lot of fans coming down. The Canadian Open for us is second to none, but the West Coast tournaments definitely get a good turnout, so it's a lot of fun.

**Q. Talking about the last two years, the second place and the win, your previous eight starts here were pretty ho-hum I would say --**

NICK TAYLOR: Or bad.

**Q. Or bad. I'm wondering if there's anything other than repetition, playing this course a lot outside of the tournament that sort of unlocked it for you.**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, it was interesting for me to look at because out of all the West Coast courses, it was one that I had never just had great results, and when I looked at it really, it was mostly putting. I just had a really hard time reading these greens.

I think it probably was beyond frustration because I live here; I should see these greens, I should know them like the back of my hand. They're so subtle out here; a lot of valley effect and this and that, and I think eventually I just said, I'm not thinking about any of that stuff, I'm just going to try to read it. Obviously you put a little more time in on the golf course.

And there's definitely -- it's not a coincidence that Dave Markle, my caddie, his first Waste Management was two years ago, and I think early on I remember the first round we're kind of reading a putt and I could tell he agreed with me but maybe saw something a little different, and it was the same thing; I missed it where I was kind of reading it, and he's like, yeah, I saw a little more, and I'm like, well, don't do that again; just tell me where you see it because I've had trouble here.

Started making some putts early in that first and second

round, and I think seeing the ball going in, gaining a little more confidence with the reads has made all the difference. I think last year I was 1 or 2 in putting for the week, so when I look at those first eight years, there's a huge difference.

**Q. This could be back a ways, but do you remember either the first time you played in front of a crowd or were struck by fans watching you play?**

NICK TAYLOR: Maybe a junior tournament or something where there was maybe a few people. I do remember vividly my first Canadian Open when I was an amateur. That was in 2008, so that was kind of my first big experience with fans. The month prior to that I qualified for the U.S. Open and that was a Torrey Pines, so that was a whole new experience. That was people that I've never experienced in my life.

So yeah, those were the first two big, big ones. It's something I don't think you never necessarily get used to it. Like you do, but there's still nerves. That doesn't change. Especially when you get in the hunt, there are more people around, it's a fun feeling to get, but I think the more you do it, you just know how to kind of maybe manage the feelings and the sensations that you kind of get.

**Q. Kind of back to my earlier line of questioning about chasing, is there anything currently that you feel like you're chasing, whether it's a feel or a shot shape or distance or some stat or anything?**

NICK TAYLOR: Not really. I think like anyone, you kind of try to come back to center of just trying to get as good as you can be. I guess a lot of stuff I feel like on the golf course I try to work on is with the mental side, kind of having an open look of the future of essentially in that round, anything is possible.

I think in the past when I've struggled, if I have a poor start, I try to script kind of I've got to birdie this hole, gotta par this, do that, and I try to leave that open and let things come. I think it's helped with the acceptance part of golf, which you definitely need to be high level. That's the kind of stuff I've been working on.

**Q. I know you're a Seahawks fan; do you watch a good amount of NFL?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, I've definitely watched a decent amount. I've joined some buddies about four or five years ago in a fantasy league, so I watch probably more than my wife likes to admit, but it's been fun, yeah.

**Q. What's your take on the Chiefs and how they're so**

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**successful?**

NICK TAYLOR: I know you're a Bills guy, so I can't -- it's impressive. They get it done. That's the best way of putting it. When they played the last couple games, I had no stake in the fanning of whoever it was they were playing but they got some calls at the right time, so I'm sure as a Bills fan it's been frustrating.

**Q. Not on the refs' take at all, I don't want to apply Scottie to this, but is there a tie between Scottie and the Chiefs in terms of you watch them play and you just feel like they'll find a way to get it done somehow?**

NICK TAYLOR: Yeah, Chiefs being at the top of the NFL the last two years, I'm sure at times they haven't looked like the best team, and that's where I would compare Scottie -- Xander had an amazing run last year at the majors, but I feel like Scottie is kind of at the top of the golf podium, if you want to call it that, probably the last two and a half years, so I'd give him consistency maybe a bit more of how -- maybe the eye test versus the results. The Chiefs just keep winning, so it's impressive that way.

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