

Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Scottie Scheffler

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the defending champion Scottie Scheffler to the media center here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Scottie, welcome back to Bay Hill. Your five-stroke victory last year was the largest since Tiger in 2012. What sticks out to you about your performance last year, and what you're carrying into this week?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, last year I had a really good week. Especially the final round, I think I may have been tied going into the final round, but came out on a difficult day where the winds were up, and had a really nice round to finish off the tournament. Definitely gave me a little bit of a jump start to the year. A lot of confidence going forward.

Yeah, golf course seems like it usually is this week, the greens are already pretty firm. Hopefully the rain holds off and the conditions will stay the way that Bay Hill likes them to be, and should be up for another fun challenging week here.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go right into questions.

Q. You mentioned it, do you feel like you need a jump start right now?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Jump start for?

Q. For your season.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: No. I'm here, ain't I? You know what I mean? It's always nice to play good, and I try to ride momentum from good rounds and good tournaments, and there's no better momentum than you can have than being able to show up tied for the lead on Sunday and have a great round and kind of put away the tournament and be able to coast down the last few holes. Do I feel like I need a jump start? No. Would I like one? Definitely. Yeah, why not.

Q. Xander returning after a three-year break, or whatever it's been for him, you came back after, what

was it, a month or so, whatever time off, because of the hand. You can hit balls fine, you don't forget how to play golf, but in terms of just getting into the routine of tournament golf what did you learn from that? Did you come back right away, does it take a couple rounds?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I think it's challenging any time you're coming off an injury. That first time you step back out inside the ropes, it's different playing competition tournament golf, and there's definitely challenges to it and it takes a little bit of time to get used to. I'm a big routine guy and so being injured and being out of my routine was definitely an unusual thing. Xander's a guy that's fairly routine as well so I'm sure there will be some adjustments, but it's definitely good to have him back out playing. Seeing guys get injured is never a fun thing to see and you just hope they get back to full strength as quickly as possible. Being injured is not a fun thing in this game.

Q. Do you feel like you're a little bit behind still where you would like to be with your game for this year because of the injury, or do you feel like you're about at the caught-up-where-you-want-to-be stage?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I would say that I feel caught up. It was a really nice last couple weeks I had at home to get ready for this week. It was, not rushed to start Pebble, but it was definitely quicker than my off-season prep usually is, just by nature of the injury. So having a couple weeks at home after having a few weeks playing on the road, where I can continue to work out, continue to work on my body and get ready to come back out and play, it was definitely very helpful to have a couple weeks at home, for sure.

Q. I don't know if you saw Rory's comment after he won Pebble, but he said he was trying to learn from you and emulate parts of your game. What was your reaction or what is your reaction to Rory saying he's trying to learn from you about things he could do?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I think we all can learn a lot from each other. I've been a guy that always has my eyes open when I'm watching guys. I've learned from Rory's game over the years, I've learned a lot from a lot of players out



here. I think the talent level out here is very deep and I think that's what a lot of great players do is they're able to learn from their mistakes, but they can also learn from what others do well. So Rory may have seen some stuff he liked in my game, I certainly like some stuff in his as well. And I felt like over the years, just being surrounded by a lot of professionals, that I've learned a lot from a lot of the guys out here and there's a lot of guys that do some stuff really well that I try to learn from.

Q. A year out from the putter switch last year when you won here, just as you look back at that week, what stands out about the putter and just kind of how quickly you had success with it?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, well, it was definitely really nice to have quick success with any sort of equipment change. That's important. When you're going through kind of those I think changes in equipment specifically, if you come out the first week and have terrible results you're more likely to blame the equipment than you are yourself. So it was definitely nice to get out here have a good week on the greens and have good tournament results, that definitely gave me some confidence with the new equipment moving forward.

When I look back to a year from now I think about how different I feel over the ball on the greens. Any time the ball's not going in the hole I think you, myself especially, you try and do anything you can to almost force the ball in there, and that's not how golf is, you can't force things in this sport. You especially can't force things at PGA TOUR events. Feeling more free, not lining up the ball, just getting over, leaning into my athleticism and focusing as much as I can out there on just playing the game. Those are some of the big differences for me when I look back to kind of where I was a year ago.

Q. A bit of a nuts and bolts question here, but in the PGA TOUR documentary you and Randy both talked about how at the Masters you were holding the club up and once you put it down it kind of changed the position of your left thumb. I'm just wondering how you monitor that now, is there anything specific you do, have you made any changes because of that just to kind of keep an eye on that?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: The reason I monitor my grip so closely is because, as my body starts to feel different over the ball, my grip is usually the first thing to change to kind of adjust to what my body's doing that day. That's why I use the reminder club as often as I do. It's not a perfect science so anything extra that I'm doing, I wouldn't say so, it's just kind of one of those deals, you know, I think we have an understanding that you're not going to be perfect

every week and a lot of times during the tournament week is time when it's time to go compete. And when I'm at home I'll do some stuff to monitor it, but when it comes to tournaments, a lot of times when I show up to the tournament, what I have starting on Tuesday, Wednesday is what I'm going to have coming into the tournament and Sunday. It will be pretty rare for the light bulb to just go off on Wednesday afternoon. It's more likely I try to approach it that it's more like when I show up to the tournament I want to be prepared and when I'm here I'm practicing to get ready for the tournament. I'm not hopefully not trying to figure out my swing or my grip.

Q. The season started in January, your season started at Pebble Beach. But coming up on the stretch here, defending this week, two-time defending next week, Masters. Does this feel like more intensity starts for you at this point in time in the season where you really are grinding more or not?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: I wouldn't say so. Last year's tournament doesn't really have much of an effect on this year's. Don't really understand the point there. Yeah, it was great, I have had success on these golf courses, and so I can lean on those good memories, but at the end of the day it's like last year doesn't mean much when it comes to this year. Feel like I'm in a good spot with where my game is. I had a good couple weeks at home to work on things and get in the gym some more and continue to get my body to where it feels like it needs to be for the season, and I'm excited about the work and feeling rested and ready to go this week.

Q. When you first came back was there any concern about your grip because of the hand injury, did you have to guard against that at all a little bit or make sure you didn't get into any bad habits because of favoring it possibly?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, for sure. That was the first thing we looked for when I started hitting balls again was to make sure that I wasn't going to adjust to it. Because I had an injury to my right hand, my right hand is pretty dang important to the golf swing, I'm a right-handed golfer, and that was a very important aspect of getting started after the surgery was making sure that I didn't, A, come back too quick and mess up my swing, or grip, and B, make sure that I was in a comfortable position to where I could hold the club the way I want to and then swing the way I want to.

Q. How long did that take? Did you feel you were fine with it by the time you got to Pebble Beach?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Oh, yeah. I wanted to be fine



before I came out to play. I talked about it a little bit at Pebble was really putting in a lot of work the week before with my swing and hitting a lot of balls and making sure my body and my hand were ready to come play three weeks in a row. Worst case scenario for me would have been coming back too early and then having to take some more time off to let my hand heal. That would have been what I felt like was a huge mistake. So making sure that I could come back, get back into my normal playing and working out and my normal routine for a tournament week and home weeks, that was a really important aspect to me coming back making sure I could get back to my normal routine.

Q. Can you talk about what items do you currently have on display in the golf room at your house, any awards and trophies or cardigans or jackets right now?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: My golf room is a bit of a mess at the moment. I got some trophies up, but there's also a lot of crap on the ground. It's kind of the room right now where when I have time I'll go in there and organize it, but right now it's just a bit of a mess.

Q. You've said publicly that you don't really love the format of the TOUR Championship. In your role on the PAC have you been advocating a certain change or is there something you've heard that you are in favor of?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: There's a few different formats that I think we're looking at right now. Some of 'em good, some of 'em were bad. I'm not really going to go into details of those formats because we're still ironing them out. Yeah, I think being a part of the PAC is an important position right now for the TOUR, because we do have a lot of input on the direction of where we're going with things. And with where the PGA TOUR is right now I think we're in a really good spot where we have good competition, and I think when it comes to the FedExCup I want to have some of the purest forms of competition and really crown a true winner. Is starting strokes the best format for that? Right now I would say probably not. And so that's kind of why I think we're looking at different stuff. And the position where I am on the PAC, we have a lot of great guys on it this year that are all at different levels of the TOUR, whether it be guys that are just now getting their card or guys that have been around for a while, and then you have some great players and some players who are trying to work towards greatness. I think we got a good balance and good perspectives and feel like we're working in the right direction for sure.

Q. Of the tournaments that you've won multiple times, which course, where would Bay Hill rank among them

that you think you could win for a third time?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: (Laughing). I have no idea. That stuff doesn't really -- I don't really think about it too much. I feel like when I'm playing good golf I can compete on a number of different golf courses. I don't really feel like I've ever stepped up to a course and be like, Man, it would be really tough for me to win this week. I feel like if I'm in a good spot with my game, if my swing feels well then I should have a decent chance at winning the tournament. There's certain golf course that's I love to compete on with their history. This being one of 'em. I'm definitely excited for this week, I'm excited to try to tackle this golf course again this year. It's typically one of the most brutal test that's we see all year. And this one's funny because I feel like if you came here and played a month later and the rough was shorter and the greens were soft it would feel like an easy golf course. But with the way they set it up for this tournament it's so brutally difficult that there's just such a drastic difference on this course between normal play and the way we play it. So it's just an interesting place to play and it challenges us in a variety of ways for sure.

Q. Two things: A lot of this is weather dependent, but how would you compare the degree of difficulty with Bay Hill and Torrey Pines?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: A lot of it is weather dependent. Usually at this tournament the conditions of the golf course are so difficult and that's what makes it challenging. Torrey Pines you can play it wet and firm and I think it's still going to be really hard. Around this golf course if you don't get a lot of wind and the greens are pretty soft, the scores would be pretty different than they are. But every year we come here it's typically windy in central Florida and the greens are always really firm and the rough is about that long (indicating), so it's pretty challenging. But day-to-day I would say Torrey Pines would probably be just because of the length of the course, I mean it's so long, and.

Q. Cold air.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Cold air, on the ocean. Here it's going to get hot and the ball will go further and it plays a little shorter. So they're both extremely challenging, but definitely I would say the time of year we see 'em is definitely a very different type of challenge.

Q. The other thing, a little bit out of left field, but if you go back to when you were a kid, how much did you enjoy practice compared with just going out and playing and did that balance ever change as you got older?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: That's a good question. I go to



the think about it. I would say I've always really enjoyed both. When I think back when I was a kid I had some good buddies that I would go out and practice with at the course and we would practice and have competitions, go out and play. And got to hang around the pros and hit balls with them, and it was just such a treat for me as a kid being able to go out and play golf. Then when we got to go on the course and compete with your buddies and messing around and talking trash. Still some of my best friends to this day are the guys I grew up playing golf with. When I think back on those memories I loved both. And now some of my favorite things is as a professional I love being able to go out by myself and just grind and I love being able to practice. And I still love cutting it up with my buddies on weekends and playing money games and gambling. I played last weekend and one of my buddies who is not a very good golfer, he's like a 10 handicap, he beat me in our side bet for the day. And I was talking with Phil and that's kind of one of the great things about golf is I can go out with a guy who is going to shoot 90 and I can give him enough strokes to where we'll have a good competition. That's what makes it so fun about the game of golf. So I don't think my position has ever changed on that, it's always just been really fun.

Q. Did you handle losing very well?

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, I mean, he holed a bunker shot on 18 to win. So it was kind of -- I got out of the way because I thought he could potentially shank it, and he ended up holing it. So it was kind of one of those -- it was pretty fun. I didn't like losing, and I handed him the money and then I told him, I was like, Thanks, man. Now I got to go play a golf tournament next week, so appreciate the confidence boost that I just lost to a 10 handicap (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Scottie, thanks for the time and best of luck this week.

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER: Yeah, of course.

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