

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Russell Henley

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the defending champion of the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard, Russell Henley, to the media center. Russell, thanks for joining us again. One year ago you were sitting in that seat. If you can take us back to winning Arnold Palmer's tournament and winning here at Bay Hill.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, pretty crazy showing up here and being the defending champion. I mean, like I said last year, I watched this tournament since I was a little kid, and to see all the amazing finishes coming down 18, and to do that and to play well under pressure and win this tournament, it's just a dream come true. It's still kind of crazy to think that I did that. So I'm just really thankful and I'm excited to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of amazing finishes, take us through that back nine last year and including the chip-in for eagle on 16.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I slowly got momentum on the back nine. I kind of came out of the gates a little shaky, making some bogeys on the front. But got some momentum, birdieing 12, birdieing 14. And then a chip-in eagle on 16 really flipped the momentum, for sure. Once that chip went in on 16, I knew the tournament was far from over, I only had a one-shot lead, and I had two really difficult holes to play, so I knew I had a lot of work cut out for me. I knew Collin was playing great and I knew he would play great under pressure like he always does. Just a lot of different ups and downs of emotions and really proud of myself for just hanging tough all day and seeing it all the way through.

THE MODERATOR: If you can talk about the state of your game this week, as you try to win this back-to-back for the first time since Matt Every in 2015.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Matt, you got any tips for me? (Laughing). Yeah, I took three and a half months off in the fall. This will be my fifth event this year. So I feel like I'm starting to feel a little better and get more and more clarity

about the game. I'm excited to be in Florida and playing this tournament. I think it's going to be a good weather week. It's going to be warmer than it was on the West Coast. I'm excited to play a firm golf course. I just love the challenge of this place. So I'm really excited.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Mentioning how you're feeling better about your game. What were you not feeling good about? Was there one thing that just kind of wasn't working the way you wanted it to?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Well, I don't feel bad about it. I think the start of this year, taking a long break, I came out of the gates a little bit kind of bouncing back and forth with different feels and different swing thoughts and things like that. Just didn't feel like I was clear on everything I was doing. That led to a little more bouncing around. All in all, three top 20s, two 19ths and a top 10, I still played pretty solid, but just haven't felt like I've been kind of in a rhythm of playing tournament golf, so I'm just excited to keep the year going.

**Q. Does that give you more confidence when you're kind of tinkering a little bit but you're still finishing pretty well?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, it does. It does. That's kind of what I've tried to do in my game is to be as consistent as I can, make every week count. I think that's allowed me to get my ranking up higher and all that. And it gives me more chances to win tournaments and finish in the top 5 and top 10 and all that. So something I try to stay, you know, do everything really well as much as I possibly can, and it is nice to see results like that when I'm not feeling my best.

**Q. You mentioned that you took a couple months off. Your game is starting to come through. This is a place where you've won. Human nature would tell you that you probably have elevated expectations. Like, you proved last year you can win here. Maybe your game isn't exactly where it was. How do you balance those**



**things out for your expectations this year?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I think we're all always, well I know I'm always battling expectations. I think that's just kind of part of being a human and being a pro golfer. So I just try to keep putting the work in is kind of how I battle that. I try to just show up, get my workouts in, get my practice in. Try to get as clear as I can. Try to put the good prep in on my practice rounds. Just really try to put emphasis on the specifics of my game plan because that's all I can really do.

**Q. Are you better at accepting the results when you do that now than you were when you first came out on TOUR?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I think I definitely am. I mean, whether I win or miss the cut, I mean, seems like life just keeps going, and I still got to go practice golf the next week and just keep doing my job the best that I can. I think I move past poor results and good results and just keep moving forward better than I did when I first got on TOUR.

**Q. On the same vein, but in your equipment, yesterday you had two drivers in the bag on the range. But they're both TSi3s, which are years and years old at this point. What's the strategy to go back to those, and then what's the difference in those two drivers that you've got in the bag?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: One is just a backup. Kind of a boring answer. I just always carry a backup in case one of the face caves in. I never really hit a driver hard enough to where a face would cave in, but they tell me that that happens to some players, so I just always keep a backup. I've been hitting that driver for a while. Not any changing going on.

**Q. You have a 1-iron in the bag which is the only --**

RUSSELL HENLEY: 1-iron?

**Q. According to the photos you've got a 1-iron in there.**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Really? I need to double check the bag. Charlie, did you slip a 1-iron in my bag? I didn't know I had that in there. Yeah.

**Q. Stir the nest a little bit. There's a lot of talk about the tournament next week, THE PLAYERS, how important it is. Just your gut feeling opinion, major, not major?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: I mean, I think it's a major. It's our

home tournament. I don't know the statistics on like what they say, like best field in golf or whatever, but, I mean, it is. And the history with that tournament? I mean, I've always considered that a major in my mind. It's just such a tricky golf course and it rewards great shots, typically. It visually is very intimidating. I feel like if you have a good week there you've done a lot of really good things.

You look at the past champions and nobody is really, it hasn't really favored any one player. People typically don't win it back-to-back, unless you're Scottie. But it's, yeah, it's a tournament I always look forward to, I love the challenge of it, and it's one of, yeah, I consider it a major.

**Q. If you want to win majors, where would you put it? It would be pretty high on your list, wouldn't it?**

RUSSELL HENLEY: Oh, definitely, definitely. I mean, winning there, when you win on a golf course like that, with that kind of history, I mean it proves you can do it anywhere, I think, for sure. Those closing holes are really tough, I would imagine, when you're carrying a lead.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Russell, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Thank you.

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