

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

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Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

**Andrew Novak**

**Ben Griffin**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome the 2025 Zurich Classic of New Orleans champions Andrew Novak and Ben Griffin. Guys, an incredible finish coming down the stretch. Ben, you've had your fair share of close calls on TOUR and you've been chasing this for a while. How gratifying is it to hunt this one down?

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I think for both Andrew and I, it felt like it was only a matter of time out here. We both put ourselves in the mix a bunch, especially this season, but even going back to last season. Yeah, just a lot of hard work between both of us, and for me personally, it means the world to finally get it paid off or to finally get it done. I couldn't think of a better guy to get it done with, right here with Andrew.

**Q. Andrew, coming off the emotion of being in that playoff in Hilton Head last week, how were you able to reset, refocus and put together another strong performance and get the job done?**

ANDREW NOVAK: Yeah, I played well last week down the stretch, which was good to look back on. That was a positive. There have been times down the stretch where I've had chances and haven't played particularly well. So I took some positives into this week.

You never really know when you're going to get your first one, but we put ourselves in position again. Luckily I had Ben there for me today, and he carried down the stretch. So exciting to get our first win together.

**Q. For two guys that have come close and been waiting for this moment, I'm curious, what was it like having that delay with a three-shot lead almost having to sit on this moment finally happening, and what was it like coming back out trying to get back into it?**

ANDREW NOVAK: Yeah, we had the delay yesterday. It was almost the exact same. We were on 10 tee yesterday, we were on 8 green today. We kind of went, sat down for

an hour, reset, went back out there. It wasn't the start we wanted, going bogey-bogey straight out of it.

But honestly, it was an hour and a half delay, but it never rained, so the sun baking on the greens, it firmed up everything. The greens were getting really crispy, browned out. It made it play very difficult when we got out -- it almost really was a different golf course when we went back out there. A lot of firmer bounces basically.

I think we did a decent job adjusting to that after we recognized it, and definitely I would say after the delay pars were a pretty good score. There probably weren't a ton of birdies being made after we went back out.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, he basically said everything, but I probably would say starting with a three-shot lead, going into the round, we were pretty motivated to kind of expand that, and you never want to make it as close as you do down the stretch. Fortunately for us I think we did a great job hanging in there, both of us. Andrew gives me some credit, but he hit some phenomenal shots down the stretch, as well.

17, that tee shot is not easy with the wind off the right, after just seeing Frankie do what he did. It was awesome to see that stay on land and was an awesome moment for both of us when I got it down.

**Q. Andrew, you're on a pretty epic run right now. I'm curious how you've felt the last few weeks up until maybe an hour ago, that balance of you're probably having the biggest career-changing run of your career thus far but also that frustration of coming so close. Where did you fall in the balance with that?**

ANDREW NOVAK: That's a good question. I think I've done a pretty good job not getting overly frustrated with the close shaves. I've been trying to take as many positives from each as I can because the idea is I can put myself in that position as many times as I'm able to. I want to get better each time I'm in that position. I want to be more comfortable. I want to have things that I can look back on and improve on.



Yeah, it's frustrating, but it's also nice going into a tournament knowing you're playing well.

Coming into this week, I knew I was playing well. Ben has been playing good golf. This is a perfect golf course for us. There was a lot of confidence coming into this week for sure.

**Q. Speaking of birdies, can you take us through the 17th hole? You and the team that you were partnered with were tied going into the 17th. Take us through it. That was the key hole of the tournament. You two birdied, they bogeyed. There was another team in there, the Højgaard brothers, they ended up birdieing on 18, but your birdie on 17 basically won the tournament. Can you take us through that hole?**

ANDREW NOVAK: Yeah, the tee shot, they moved the tees up. It was 183, tucked pin over there on the left, wind in off the right. My play didn't really change much based on what they had done. Obviously I watched him just hit it in the water, but I'm trying to put it out there to the right, let the wind work it back, and basically just work it up the green. It got moving a bit more than I would have liked on the wind, but the way that that green kind of sits, once it's landed on ground, it probably is going to stay.

It was just off the green, but it wasn't a terrible spot to leave it for Ben. That's really a hole where you're just looking to make 3 and go to 18. But Ben had a different idea.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, super, super proud of Andrew's execution on that tee shot. It's not an easy hole, especially down the stretch. It was a pivotal hole, as we saw.

One of the biggest things, and I've touched on this a couple times in interviews, is you have to stay aggressive on the PGA TOUR until that last putt is holed, and I'm very proud of him for stepping up and taking on that shot and leaving me in a position to -- it speaks for itself, the putt, just to get it started and see it drop. That definitely changed the momentum.

We could almost feel -- if you go back to 15, the momentum almost switched to Jake and Frankie when my second shot ended up on the back fringe, Andrew rolls it up and we have about five feet for par, they're sitting with eight or nine feet for birdie. All of a sudden there could have been a two-shot swing there very quickly.

I'm proud that I was able to knock that putt in. They obviously missed, and we felt like that was a good opportunity for us to make a statement on the last few. I didn't make the putt from the fringe on 16, but again, Andrew sacked up and executed that shot.

Then 18, we both did an awesome job of staying aggressive to our targets. Put it in the fairway, Andrew hit a great iron in the perfect spot to kind of chip it up the green and make a 5 as easy as possible for us.

**Q. Ben, you kind of touched on it with how critical that 17 birdie putt was. Was that kind of almost that sense of relief, like oh, all right, we've got a little bit of distance, especially since you hit that back nine, come out of the delay with two bogeys and it was just a grinding par, par, par? Was that the moment where it was like, we can take that breath and maybe go into 18 a little bit more relaxed?**

BEN GRIFFIN: Definitely some relief but more just fired up. That was huge for us. I looked over, I made the putt, and all I was doing was looking for someone with a green shirt on because I knew we matched. And sure enough, Frankie was wearing a green shirt, so I almost fist bumped him. I was like, oh, wait, he's the guy who just hit it in the water; I probably shouldn't do that, then found Andrew.

No lead is safe on TOUR. You've got to stay aggressive down the stretch. That was huge for us. 18, it's still not the easiest finishing hole when you're trying to lock up a TOUR win. So really proud of the way we both executed shots on 18, and I'm proud of the way Andrew lagged up that 12-footer for me to tap it in.

**Q. Ben, could you give us some background on what led to your partnership in this tournament and also maybe how you felt it helped the team's confidence or how nice it was to have a partner who had been playing the way Andrew had been playing the last month?**

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, we were both really excited, I think, to play with each other, and it's been awesome to follow Andrew's success the last few weeks. I just missed out on both the Masters and the RBC Heritage, but leading up to that, Andrew was playing incredible golf. I was playing pretty good golf. I had gotten in the mix a little bit earlier on in the season.

But my last two -- the last month I didn't play two of the weeks, and the other two weeks I finished maybe a top 20 and a top 40. My game was fine.

But yeah, the partnership kind of was easy. We've talked about partnering up the last couple years, and obviously looking now, we should have just started from the get-go two years ago but that was probably my fault when one of my college teammates Ryan Gerard needed a spot a couple years ago and we paired together.



But yeah, me and Andrew have known each other since junior golf, since probably we were 14 or 15. He's from the triangle, Cary, Raleigh area in North Carolina, I'm from Chapel Hill. He ended up growing up in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, I was in North Carolina, but we still played a lot of Carolinas Golf Association events together, different opens.

Then as we went into college we didn't really play against each other that much until kind of the summertime; he was at Wofford, I was at North Carolina. Our schedules were just different, and then -- you guys still played great events. We just for some reason didn't play the same ones.

ANDREW NOVAK: We didn't get invited to those events.

BEN GRIFFIN: We both lived in Sea Island, more or less for me the last five years. I just made the move down to Florida further south, but we've played in a ton of money games together in Sea Island. We've trained with the same strength coach, Randy Myers there, for four or five years. We've done just about everything in our career together.

Andrew has been one step ahead of me I would say since I got into professional golf. He was on the Korn Ferry TOUR and then I got on the next year. Then I fell off, he stayed on. He got his TOUR card, I got on the Korn Ferry TOUR and got my PGA TOUR card, so I was one year behind him, but we kind of made the same progress together on the PGA TOUR, and then if you look at Andrew on the PGA TOUR the last four seasons, he's gone from the 126 to 150 category to Top 125 to Top 100 last year and now obviously he's in the mix to -- you probably moved to like 5 or 6 now in the FedExCup, so it's been really cool to see his progress.

I think it's just a full-circle moment. Andrew said that earlier, of us sitting up here together getting our first win. I feel like we've had similar tracks to where we are today.

**Q. Since Ben already broke that down that way, for Andrew, Ben has talked about before taking a day job a few years ago and not sure if he could keep doing this grind. To do it together because you've known each other this long but also to see where he's fought through and your own fight, could you take me through that feeling of doing this together with two guys who had to really fight to get here?**

ANDREW NOVAK: We've done a lot of work together at home. We've seen each other work. We've seen the time and effort that each other have put in. I think it really is full circle that now we win together.

It seems like a movie, really. It seems like a movie script, like it's not real. But it's just perfect how it all came together.

Yeah, Ben was on Korn Ferry when I was on PGA TOUR at first, but we'd still be at home, he'd be putting in the work. I kind of knew he was going to bounce back once he had his little sabbatical. When he came back, the mindset was there, the focus was there.

It kind of locked you in almost. You got your priorities back in order, I guess.

Since then, you didn't last very long on the Korn Ferry TOUR; you were right out here where you belonged.

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