

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

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Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

**Ben Griffin**

**Andrew Novak**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the defending champions of the Zurich Classic of New Orleans, Ben Griffin and Andrew Novak, back into the media center. Ben, as you're getting the microphone set up there, we'll start with you. Talk a little bit about how excited you are to play with Andrew as you guys try to repeat this week.

BEN GRIFFIN: Repeat the question, sorry. What do we look forward to?

THE MODERATOR: Coming back and trying to be the first team actually to ever defend in the team format.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, we're excited. I think both of us are coming in playing pretty well. Not quite as hot as we were kind of last year coming into this event, but I think both of us are trending in the right direction. We were texting a bit about that last week. Yeah, we're coming in with a good amount of confidence.

Obviously we're familiar with the golf course. We like the vibe. We play well in partner golf together. So it will be fun to defend for the first time for both of us and, you know, give it a good shot and hopefully win it again.

THE MODERATOR: Andrew, take us back to last year. What do you remember most about winning?

ANDREW NOVAK: Really just winning. That's what I remember most.

BEN GRIFFIN: It's memorable.

ANDREW NOVAK: In golf, you really don't get to do it much. Unless you're Scottie or Rory or one of those lucky freaks, you don't win that much. I hadn't won since before COVID on the Korn Ferry Tour. So just the fact that I got to go lift a trophy and be a winner for that week was pretty special, because I had done multiple years of not doing that.

BEN GRIFFIN: Do you remember being on stage singing in front of all the Zurich partners?

ANDREW NOVAK: Nope.

BEN GRIFFIN: On the mic with the band in your background?

ANDREW NOVAK: Nope, that video does not exist.

BEN GRIFFIN: And beads everywhere. That's your biggest memory.

ANDREW NOVAK: Dinner was good.

BEN GRIFFIN: Dinner was great.

THE MODERATOR: How did that win help propel you to the year that you had? Two extra victories after that. Talk about the season and what this tournament did for it.

BEN GRIFFIN: Just built a lot of confidence. I think both of us always had the belief that we were going to win until you actually do it, and then you kind of can really build some confidence.

For me moving forward, I knew I was starting to play some really good golf and just wanted to keep playing as many events as I possibly can. Just felt that confident in my game, and I just wanted keep giving myself chances.

Yeah, didn't take long to win again, and a lot of it was kind of being freed up from finally winning on tour and having the job security and not really thinking about a whole lot except trying to compete against the best in the world and try to beat them.

That's why the top players and best players in the world continue to do that is because that's where their minds are always at, and it's important to kind of keep that mindset even when times might be a little tough.

So, for instance, at the start of this year I haven't had that great of a start. Historically, compared to my last few



years, it's been actually pretty similar. I kind of have to remind myself to focus in on trying to win every single week and make sure I'm doing the right work to get myself there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Andrew, even if you don't remember too much about your win, when you are driving up a driveway here and you are a part of the defending champion team, does it feel different, or do you sort of look at the week and the weeks coming up to it a little bit differently?**

ANDREW NOVAK: I don't know why it felt different. I mean, obviously because we won, but yeah, I do think walking into the clubhouse today and pulling in and registering, it does feel a little bit different. Just a little bit more confidence coming in here.

I don't show up to many tournaments usually where I'm kind of the betting favorite, or at least not recently with having come in off a couple of signature events and a major.

It is a nice little different vibe. A little bit of extra confidence coming into this week. It's still a golf tournament. We're going to have to go out. We don't win just because we show up. We're going to have to play well.

Yeah, I think vibes are good. Been texting with Ben the last few days. Yeah, maybe a little different this year.

**Q. What would you say is the thing that helped you guys partner well last year, and what are you looking to try and build on this year as a team?**

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, we've just played a lot of golf together, growing up in junior golf, a little bit in college. Granted he was at Wofford, so we didn't see him a ton. No shots at Wofford there.

ANDREW NOVAK: We didn't get a little Make-a-Wish.

BEN GRIFFIN: I know. That's actually a quote from Andrew from last year when we won. He was like, yeah, I was at Wofford, so we never saw him (indiscernible).

ANDREW NOVAK: No. We'd maybe see Clemson once a year. We saw Duke, like, once.

BEN GRIFFIN: You guys had good three-point shooters, though, in March Madness over the years. You guys beat North Carolina.

ANDREW NOVAK: Twice. Twice.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, it's tough.

ANDREW NOVAK: Yeah, golf team couldn't compete, no.

BEN GRIFFIN: What was your question?

**Q. What about your partnership worked last year, and what are you going to try to do to be effective this year?**

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, we just played a lot of golf together. We know each other's games really well. It's not like we're just a random team that kind of comes about, and you kind of have expectations of the other guy and maybe there's a little bit of added pressure because you want to hit perfect shots for your partner.

Me and Andrew both know that we're going to hit bad shots, and we've both seen each other hit really bad shots, and that honestly takes pressure off of us, because we're not too worried about getting out of position.

We know each other's games well. We've had a lot of success in Sea Island and money games. We've had success here at this tournament. I think you can kind of see the vibe. We like to have fun and keep things pretty loose. I think it's important to keep this guy a little loose. He gets a little serious on the course sometimes.

ANDREW NOVAK: I'm working on that. The timing of this event is nice.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah.

ANDREW NOVAK: I'm going appreciate --

BEN GRIFFIN: We'll talk football or something out there, even though I don't follow it as well as you. I don't podcast.

ANDREW NOVAK: We don't need to talk football.

BEN GRIFFIN: It's fun. Really fun tournament. We're obviously excited to be partnering up and try to have fun out there. Again, we don't have crazy expectations of each other, but we know we're both capable of obviously winning. It's nice to kind of come in with those feelings.

**Q. We talked to you guys last month at the media day. There was some concern about the way the schedule fell and would they be able to attract as many star players because of the timing of the schedule? Looks like it's down a little bit, but trying maybe to get you all to talk a little bit about the competitiveness of the tour**

**anyway. For the general public that may not see some of the star names, Rory McIlroy here this week, but yet still how difficult it is to win a tournament on this TOUR even if it's not filled with top-10 players?**

ANDREW NOVAK: You may not know some of the names in this tournament yet, but you will. There's some kids playing in this tournament that you better get to learn their names sooner rather than later. Some of them have decided to pair up together, so that's going to be a bit of an issue, but we'll have to deal with that Thursday to Sunday.

Yeah, just because you don't know the names yet doesn't mean you won't.

BEN GRIFFIN: Yeah, the field is very strong. Everyone that's on the PGA TOUR or has a conditional PGA TOUR card, they're still incredibly talented golfers. Maybe they just haven't broken through yet.

Obviously the spotlight every single week on TOUR tends to be the top few names. That's just the nature of how media works. That's what people kind of want to see sometimes. But there's so many golfers on the PGA TOUR. Every week, obviously the signature events are a bit smaller at 72-man fields, but most weeks out here at 144 guys, there's a lot of horses in the race. Everyone that's earned their way into the field has just the same amount of chance of winning as anyone else.

It's just a matter of executing the shots and getting over the hump. Yeah, there's tons of guys coming off the Korn Ferry Tour with a ton of talent, a ton of kids out of college that are really strong and good players. Just because there might not be every single guy that's in the top 20 in the world here doesn't mean that it's going to be a gimme week for a top pair like me and Andrew.

It's still very strong. That's the cool thing about the PGA TOUR. Yeah, like you said, just because you haven't heard their names, you're probably going to very soon. Everyone has their breakthrough moments. Fortunately for me, it was here last year. Now look at me now. I was a pick for the Player of the Year last year. Going into this tournament last year I wasn't talking to any media.

It's cool what things can do, what you can do on the PGA TOUR. Every single week can change your career. Hopefully someone's career isn't changed this week because we win again, but it happens very often.

ANDREW NOVAK: Every week guys out here play well. I mean, two years ago Rory and Shane won here. Of course, they did. That's Rory and Shane, but they were in a playoff. Do you know who they played in that playoff?

Anybody? Okay, Chad Ramey, Martin Trainer. Any week it can happen.

BEN GRIFFIN: One shot better and they aren't the winners.

ANDREW NOVAK: Exactly.

**Q. I'll ask, I don't know why you would change any strategy after winning, but same strategy as last year? Who tees off on which hole, which ball you play, that sort of thing.**

ANDREW NOVAK: Haven't even really discussed that.

BEN GRIFFIN: I forgot that we had to do that.

**Q. I'm glad I brought it up for you, then.**

BEN GRIFFIN: I think we'll keep it the same.

ANDREW NOVAK: I assume we're keeping it the same. It worked pretty well.

BEN GRIFFIN: Golfers aren't really that superstitious. We're doing everything the exact same as last year. We'll probably eat at the same restaurants, sleep in the same beds. We're not that superstitious, though. I promise, yeah.

**Q. Last year you went 62, 61 in four ball. That's obviously a really great score. There's pressure when you are playing with a teammate and alternate shot. You don't want to let your teammate down, but at the same time in that format, do you feel after, like, maybe you make two, three, four pars in a row that we're almost, like, giving ground because there have been 59s, 60s? That's common in that format.**

ANDREW NOVAK: There's enough birdie holes, you want to make sure to get the birdie holes out here when it's in best ball, and then steal some of the others.

I think last year we did a pretty good job of I'd have a stretch of holes where I played well, and then Ben would maybe cover when I was struggling. That just kind of happens.

BEN GRIFFIN: You chipped in a lot.

ANDREW NOVAK: I did, yeah. You chipped in once.

BEN GRIFFIN: Once.

ANDREW NOVAK: We can work on that. There is some

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

of that. Maybe you got to get a little bit lucky. My good holes don't line up the same as his. At the end of the day, it's just best ball. You're playing aggressive, trying to go for the birdies, putting yourself as many opportunities as possible. It's just attack.

BEN GRIFFIN: I think you see a bigger dispersion in alternate shot too. That's what separates the good teams from the teams that are going to win. Doing your damage in the alternate shot is pretty important.

With that being said, you can shoot yourself out of the tournament fast in alternate shot, so you have to play really smart, aggressive golf in alternate shot. Obviously you need to make the birdies in the best ball to keep yourself up there, but I think historically the teams that are kind of winning are playing really solid or even really some of the best rounds in their alternate shots. That's where you pick up the most ground.

Yeah, if we make a few pars in a row -- like we better eagle a couple in a row. It's tough, but we can make up ground.

ANDREW NOVAK: Did we make an eagle last year?

BEN GRIFFIN: I don't know. We will this year, if we didn't.

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