

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**PETER MALNATI**

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**MODERATOR:** Welcome Peter Malnati into the media center here at the Texas Children's Houston Open.

Peter, you're coming off your first win in nine years at the Valspar Championship, what's these last few days been like for you and how do you feel coming into this week?

**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, it's been a whirlwind. In all the best ways, it's been a whirlwind. I've tried to really enjoy it and soak it all in. But there's been -- I can't tell you how many people, how many people have texted and called and I've gotten some, you know, I don't know if anyone happened to see this or not, but I was a little emotional after the win and some of the, some of the people that have reached out, you know, it brings those emotions back up again just to see how, you know, how cool this all is.

But definitely a couple days now in, able to turn my sights a little bit forward and realize, hey, you know, this doesn't need to be viewed as like the pinnacle, it could be the start of something.

So I would not say I'm entirely focused yet on playing and working again, I still am enjoying it a little bit, but starting to get back into that mode of like wanting to do my job and keep building from here.

**MODERATOR:** You've played this course a couple of times in the past, what are your thoughts on it and how do you feel about it this week?

**PETER MALNATI:** It's a completely different course. I played nine holes yesterday and being a different time of year and now with the cool season grass having overseeded, the course is just -- this used to actually -- the two times I played this before, I think I'd probably possibly be in the minority of Tour players who would say this, but I kind of love the fact that it did have a bit of a muni feel. It felt like a course that any Houstonian could just come out and play, and that's not something we really get on Tour a lot. We tend to play perfectly manicured, you know, country club type feeling courses that are just in immaculate condition.

That's how this course has been -- that's not how this course has been when we played it in the fall. It's been a little rough around the edges. This year it looks much more like what we're used to on the PGA TOUR, it's immaculate, no blade of grass out of place and that's obviously a really good thing. Huge complement to the staff here for the job they've done to get this that way.



But because of that, it really doesn't feel like the same course we played and it will play much differently. So I'm excited. I feel like it's kind of -- even though it's not the first time we played this event here, it feels kind of like the first time we played it here and I think everyone would sort of echo that.

It's really fun to be spoiled and play perfect golf courses all the time, so this one fits right into that and I'm super excited. It's a great golf course in that it has tons of variety. There's several extremely long holes, there's a couple of great short holes, some really, really good par 3s. It will be, it will be another very, very exciting PGA TOUR event.

**MODERATOR:** We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. First of all, congratulations on that win. I did watch it on TV and you were emotional, it was good emotions, so congratulations.**

**PETER MALNATI:** Thank you.

**Q. The fact that you were already going to play in this tournament, you know, you had to be -- you were already committed on Friday and you end up winning last week, was there any thoughts of taking this week off and just relaxing or just doing whatever you need to get done or do you want to just kind of keep playing while you're hot?**

**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, I definitely, as much as -- like maybe Scottie Scheffler and those guys, maybe they're so good at winning that they just -- it's normal for them and they're right back in their normal routine the next day. It certainly isn't the case for me yet. So there was definitely the thought on Sunday night and Monday morning like, oh, my goodness, I could use a week to just wrap my head around this like new reality that I have.

But I was -- I come back to this a lot, 16-year-old me dreamed of playing in one PGA TOUR event and now obviously I'm not the same place I was at 16-year-old me, I'm not even the same place I was last week starting the Valspar Championship. This is still one PGA TOUR event, I dreamed of playing in these so it's not like a burden to play in a PGA TOUR event ever. I was committed to this event and I'm here and I'm incredibly excited to tee it up again on the PGA TOUR.

**Q. I'm sure you addressed this, but what's the story with the yellow ball? How long have you been playing with it?**

**PETER MALNATI:** I switched to it in the summer last year at the 3M Championship and really, really a lot of research went into it, studied the physics of everything, and that's completely untrue. My three-year-old son likes it, that's the reason.

**Q. With all the changes in kind of the last 72 hours for you, have you really had time -- I know you said you thought about whether you wanted to play this week, have**



**you had time to maybe think about how much your schedule's going to change in the next month, six months, just all that comes with the win?**

**PETER MALNATI:** You know, I've only been able to think about the good things that are going to happen. I haven't thought about the tough decisions I'm going to have to make in terms of where I will take a week off here or there now.

One thing that I've done in my ten years on Tour, I've made awesome relationships with host organizations, tournament staff, volunteers. So like to call a tournament director and say I'm going to have to drop your event this year will be really hard for me, so I haven't bothered thinking about that yet because that is going to be so hard.

But what I have thought about is like the places where I was unsure I would get to play where now I know I'm going to be playing. I joked but wasn't joking in my press conference after the win that I've always told the tournament director at the Travelers Championship that that's my major on Tour because I love the course. It was certainly -- you know, I would guess prior to last week you would have to say if you asked Vegas, it was more likely than not that I wouldn't be playing the Travelers Championship this year and now I am. I thought about all the positive things that are going to come from this.

Obviously no one plays every week, no one can play every week, so it's not really a negative that I'm going to drop events from my schedule, it's just hard for me because of all the relationships I've formed in all the towns that we play. It will be hard to have those conversations and tell people I'm not coming.

At the end of the day, you know, four days ago no one cared if Peter Malnati was in their field or not really. Now hopefully it's just the reality of no one can play every week so I'm going to have to drop some events. The exciting great things that come from this are obviously what are top of mind, front of mind right now and that's, I'm just -- my family and I are all kind of over the moon about it.

**Q. Nine years between wins, now that you've had a little bit of time to process, seems like you still are, what are the biggest difference between winning this week? Was it getting to celebrate just with the family compared to nine years ago?**

**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, yeah. And the other thing, I feel like nine years ago at Sanderson Farms sort of -- this isn't the right way to frame it, I sort of won almost by accident. I was there, we had terrible weather that week, I had to play 27 holes on Monday and when I went out to play those 27 holes on Monday, I was in good position starting the day but my only thought was, you know, I'm in the at the time the Nationwide Tour, the Web.com Tour category, now Korn Ferry, every single point that I can get will help me get more starts. So my only thought starting that day was do your best, move up, try to have a good finish and get some points. I never even thought winning the tournament was possible.

This win was significantly different in that I went into the weekend and Sunday knowing that



if I go do my job, if I go play well, I'm playing great, this course is great, I could win the tournament.

So from the moment I teed it up on Sunday, you know, my thought process was do your best on each shot, but like the narrative in my head had already started like you can win this golf tournament. That was kind of cool to sort of deal with that whereas like in Jackson when I won, and so lucky to win the Sanderson Farms tournament, I just kind of was out there like if you told me at the beginning of that Monday that, hey, Peter, you can finish 12th and not play, I would have been like thank you, thank you, take it. So that was like I called it I almost won by accident. This win was more like -- it felt different in that sense. At the end of the day the result at the end feels amazing both times.

**Q. This course with being in the spring and the overseed how would you say specifically the course will play different this week I guess both off the tee and then around the greens?**

**PETER MALNATI:** It's interesting, like I think this is a pretty challenging course, but these conditions are going to make it easier. Like I was really surprised yesterday, I played the back nine really late yesterday and it was nice, it was really peaceful, but my very first drive on 10 I just tugged it a little no big deal, but I was definitely going to miss the fairway left.

In years past like you couldn't control it at all out of the rough. I got there and it was like, it was like I might almost prefer to hit out of this overseed first cut rough. It's like a first cut length, perfectly immaculate grass.

You still need -- it's important that you drive it decently well because you've got to keep it, you've got to keep it in the overseed. And some of these holes are so long that if you get off on the wrong angle, it's just going to make them extremely long. So it's not like driving won't matter, but you can certainly get away with a little more dispersion off the tee now than you could in the fall.

Then also around the greens you could really get some of those like I'd call them like normal golfer lies when we played here in the past. Like you could get some grainy, sandy kind of make you real nervous sort of lies for chipping the ball.

Now, like this overseed around the greens is absolutely pure. The greens are still challenging because of the way they sit up and run off. Like there will be some guys, maybe me, but there will be some guys that look silly around the greens because the greens are a challenging design, but you're going to have really pure lies around the green so you'll have the option to play different kinds of shots and won't be able to blame the turf for anything that goes wrong. So in theory it should make the course play a little easier, but there's still plenty of elements out there that'll be challenging.

**Q. On 17, how do you think that will play different? Did you play hole 17 yesterday?**



**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, I did, I played it yesterday from the back tee. Almost like they definitely moved the green, made it really, really cool approach. From the back tee it doesn't change the hole tremendously, but with the tee up it's very much a cool drivable hole now. I think it will be fun to watch guys have a go at it because the green, like obviously if you go for it, likely miss would be left of the green, the green slopes toward the water from left of the green, so you have to see some guys do some great short game in. Somebody, maybe they'll make it drivable on Sunday and you'll see someone step up and make a really bold play and hit one right on the green and have an eagle putt on Sunday. I think that would be really cool.

**Q. You talked about the differences between winning nine years ago and winning last week. I'm curious about the shots you hit down the stretch at Valspar, in particular the tee shot on 17. Like how much will that pay off six months from now, two years from now? You went out and got that tournament, you went out and won that golf tournament.**

**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, that was really cool because you never know, I never know until you do it how you're going to react in those situations. I've worked extremely hard and my game, my game, particularly my long game has been improving, but for it to hold up in that situation. I was talking about it last night on the phone, you know, from it really seemed like, and I don't know if this is right or not because I don't know what other players do. I was watching the boards, but I'm not watching coverage, I don't know. It seemed to me like I had the feeling that after my putt went in on 12, I felt like I was in control of the tournament. That's how it sort of felt to me.

So from that point on I really only hit one bad shot and it was my approach into 16. That's pretty cool. That's really, really cool to play that stretch of holes, which has got a lot of tough demanding shots on it. And I only hit one shot that I really felt like -- obviously I drove it in the bunker on 18, but that was a really good drive, it was so close. I only hit one shot in the last seven holes that disappointed me. That to me was such a buoying thing to say like, hey, you've done the work and your game's ready for that situation, that's cool.

**Q. And secondly, as you know, it's been a challenging couple of years in the professional game. Do you have a sense why your story seems to resonate maybe even beyond just the casual golf fan? You're standing there crying on the 72nd green with your son in your arms in his superhero cape, it just seems to have transcended the game.**

**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, I think at the end of the day -- do you remember like we can all probably remember when we were kids, and we were all kids at different times, but the things that moved us that we watched. I remember watching Jordan and the '97 Bulls, I remember watching Tiger in the 2000 Masters. I didn't care one iota what Jordan's contract was. I didn't care one iota what the winner's check at that U.S. Open was.

And I think people are sick of that. I think people are just sick of the narrative in golf being



about, you know, contracts on LIV, purses on the Tour, guaranteed comp on the Tour. I think people are so sick of that. They want to see sport, they want to see -- they want to see people who are the best in the world at what they do do it at a high level and celebrate that, celebrate the athleticism, celebrate the achievement.

Obviously this is a business and to the top players who drive a lot of the value in this business, we've got to compensate them fairly, we've got to make that happen. But I think we're doing that above and beyond, and the narrative, the storylines, the conversation needs to come back to the product on the course and what we do.

I think for me that was like I just, I just feel like no kid dreamed when they were watching Jordan dreamed of having his salary, they didn't care about that. They dreamed of being in that moment, hitting that shot. I think that's what our fans care about too and that's what they want to see.

I hope those tears that I was crying on that 18th green had nothing to do with my share of that, what was it, an \$8.4 million purse last week. My tears had nothing to do with my share of that. I'm going to enjoy it and we're going to use it to do a lot of good in this world, but it had nothing to do with that.

And I don't think our fans care about that either. I hope that connected with some people and I hope that that can be -- I do think everyone out here who plays and competes would agree with me on that. I just hope that can be the story that we tell can come back to the best athletes in the world competing on the biggest stage in the world and doing it to show off this amazing skill that we have that can be so entertaining for people. I want that to be our story.

**Q. I want to ask, too, you're playing with Scottie this week. How much have you played with him, if at all, and what impresses you about his game and just the crazy numbers that he's had recently?**

**PETER MALNATI:** Yeah, like I kind of joked when I saw my pairing come out, yeah, makes sense they're putting all the best ball-strikers on Tour in a group, they want to see us out there just have a ball-striking contest, me and Scottie and Will, it will be great.

I got to play -- anytime anyone asks me about Scottie I bring it back to Tiger because I watched Tiger play when I was a kid. I played with Tiger when he was, I would think he would not mind me saying this, like well past his prime. I played with him in 2019 the last two rounds at Riviera and he went on to win the Masters a couple months later, so even though he wasn't prime, he was still pretty good.

The thing that impressed me when I played with Tiger was even 2019, a little bit hobbled, well past his top form, he was by far the best iron player I've ever seen, ever, ever seen. So to see that Scottie Scheffler over years now has put up similar type strokes gained numbers to Tiger, that is phenomenal. I haven't played with Scottie in probably three or four years. I played with him at -- well, whatever it was called, the tournament at Mayakoba. You could



see obviously how impressive he was, but like to see him sustain that performance over years and put up Tiger in his prime type approach numbers, and on top of that he's also one of the best drivers of the golf ball, it's no wonder this guy is No. 1 in the world by a lot.

**MODERATOR:** Thanks, Peter. Good luck this week.

**PETER MALNATI:** Thank you.

