

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
**March 27, 2024**



**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER**

---

**MODERATOR:** We would like to welcome to the '24 Texas Children's Houston Open world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler.

Coming in off two victories, Arnold Palmer and THE PLAYERS Championship, congratulations on those. Nice to have you back here. It's your fifth start at the Houston Open, but your fourth here at Memorial Park. So I guess I'll start with saying how different does the course look this year compared to other years?

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Yeah, it's significantly different. I think the changes are good. The golf course is in good shape, the overseed came in nicely and the greens are rolling really good. Typically this tournament always had really good greens, but sometimes they struggle a little bit with the surrounds of the green. This year, having the overseed, they've got good turf growth and it's in really good shape.

**MODERATOR:** As I mentioned, you won your last two events, you had a week off, but now you're coming in to try and win a third consecutive. You'd be the third since 2017 to do that. What sort of challenge is that for you, how do you like that and what do you think your position is in this week's tournament to do that?

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Yeah, I don't really think much about that kind of stuff. I had a good rest week at home last week. I was pretty worn out after Bay Hill and PLAYERS, so it was nice to get home and just relax. I didn't do nearly as much practice as I typically would have in the last week, so coming in shaking off a little bit of rust the last couple days. But game feels like it's in a good spot, so I feel rested and ready to go this week.

**Q. Have you played hole 17 after the redesign?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Yeah, I played it today. I think it's a good change. I think they had tried to move the tee box up a couple times in the last few years to make it drivable and with the way the green was, it just wasn't a hole that you would really try to drive.

But now the way the green is shaped, you have an area where you can run it up. I think they'll have the tee box moved up on the weekend and it should be a pretty exciting way to finish off the tournament. I think the changes are really good.

**Q. And with the overseed, how specifically do you think it will change how the course plays, I guess, off the tee and then around the green?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** The last few years playing around this place there was a big



premium on driving accuracy, which I think for a long golf course like this was really good. This year it's a bit different with the overseed, they really did not put in much rough at all, which is a bit different. It used to be some holes where it was really, really important to hit the fairway especially with the bermuda rough and now there's not as much of a premium placed on that. You'll see a lot more drivers, people hitting it really far and it will be much more of I'd say a second shot golf course this time around.

**Q. There were a bunch of people at least on social media, I know you don't pay too much attention to that, making a fuss about you shaving the beard after two straight wins. I know you kind of mentioned back at THE PLAYERS that it was just a little bit of laziness. Is that just cleaning it up, I guess?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Well, yeah. It was nice because I didn't have to think about it, but then my beard got so long that it became work. Last week I got a haircut and I was thinking about trying to trim it and I didn't really know how, so I just shaved it.

**Q. You're about to be a new dad out here. Is there any guys that you maybe asked an opinion or what's the best advice you've gotten about this new chapter in your life?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I've got a good group of guys to kind of bounce things off of. I think that's one of the coolest things is how excited everybody gets for us when they find out we're having a baby and everybody says it's the greatest thing in the world and I think that's really cool. I think that's pretty much the unanimous response from everybody. Sometimes you get mixed responses when you're getting married, but anytime somebody hears that we're pregnant, they get really excited and you see their face light up and it's really cool.

**Q. Scottie, obviously a victory Sunday is the ultimate goal, but what would you like to see from your game this week?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I think just more of the same. I want to approach this week with a good attitude, hit good shots.

As far as what I want to see out of my game, obviously I'm going into the tournament hoping to play well so that would be a good result, but at the end of the day I'm focused on attitude and executing shots and stuff like that.

**Q. Scottie, Peter Malnati was just in here and he was talking about the course, said it has a feel of a muni and he means that as a compliment because you don't play too many municipal golf courses on Tour. Do you think it has that muni feel to it in a good way?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I think it's really cool that we can come play a golf course that anybody can come play, I think that's what's special about coming to this place. I think that's a really cool aspect of it.



As far as muni feel, I don't really know exactly what Peter's going after there with that comment, but like I said, it's nice coming to a place that anybody can come play, especially for the locals that live here I think it's a pretty fair price as well.

So I'm amazed at how good of shape it's in really for a golf course that's run by the city, a municipal golf course. It's in fantastic shape this year so we're excited to play, excited to be back here in Houston and excited for the week.

**Q. So since it's been overseeded now, it's not in the fall, it's in the spring, so when you first got here and looked at the course, what did you think when you first saw the difference?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Yeah, I was amazed with how well the overseed came in. That was a nice pleasant surprise. You never really know what to expect when the golf course changes significantly like that. The maintenance team here did a great job, great turf coverage. The areas around the greens, like I said, are in a lot better shape than they had been in years past. The greens are still really good again, but the surrounds is where I've seen the biggest difference.

I think I was just a bit surprised I think with the lack of rough. I think they're probably trying to make it like Augusta, you know, so I guess that's a good thing for prep work.

**Q. You're a proud Texan and is this a tournament that -- I mean, things change, you never can plan for the future, but is this something that's going to be like on your schedule that you really want to play every year?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I like trying to support as many events as I can in my home state. Like you said, I definitely am a proud Texas and so I like to do what I can to support the events here at home. Yeah, it's good to be back. I don't know what my schedule will be like going forward, but I definitely like to try and support the events here in Texas as much as I can.

**Q. Congratulations on your success. You are so good when you're in the hunt, you can hunt titles, you're going for a tournament title. What's it like to be the hunted, No. 1 in the world, and do you feel like you're the hunted, the spotlight's on you, no matter what's happening, people are looking to you?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I wouldn't say I feel like that too much. You know, when you show up at a tournament being No. 1, I don't start at 1 under, I don't start at 2 under, I start at even. You've got to approach every week the same. You've got to put in the same amount of work, you've got to show up prepared.

Like I said, I'm excited to play this golf course, excited for the week. Really pleasantly surprised with how good of shape the golf course is in so I think it's going to be really fun to play and I think it will be good prep seeing how my game is going into the Masters.



**Q. Scottie, Rory's not playing this week, he is playing next week. You're playing this week, then -- have you changed how you prepare for a major? At one time no one played the week before a major, now Rory's playing the week before. Have you changed the way you prepare for a major?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I've done it different ways in the past. Some years I played before Augusta. The year I won Augusta I did not play going into it. As far as this year goes, I'm scheduled to not play next week so I have a week off before the major but some of the other majors I'm playing the week before. Maybe U.S. Open I'm playing the week before. PGA, I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to make it with the baby coming, but typically I would play the week about that one as well.

It just depends, I think I'm still figuring out what works best for me. The only thing I know that I don't like is taking a long break before a major, so like with the way the schedule was this year, three weeks off before playing the Masters would have been a bit too much time for me, I usually like to play a tournament within a couple weeks of a major.

**Q. You didn't play the week before you won the last time at the Masters. Does that kind of figure into maybe trying that again?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I didn't really put a ton of thought into it. I remember the year I won the Masters I won the Match Play and the year before that I had played well in the Match Play, made it to the finals. I ended up losing to Billy in the finals that week. Then I played San Antonio and I showed up to the Masters and I was completely whipped still.

The next year, in 2022, I was still scheduled to play Austin, San Antonio and the Masters. Like I said, I try to support events in my home state and after making it to the finals of Match Play again that year, I didn't want to go into the Masters, you know, tired like I had the year before. So that was why I took it off just because Austin had been such a long week and then playing good at the Masters.

So I guess you could say it worked. I don't really know if that's necessarily the secret sauce, but it was definitely nice being rested going into the Masters so I've taken the same approach in the last couple years.

**Q. Chandler Phillips told a fun story yesterday of you in high school kind of having hurt your ankle playing basketball and then winning states kind of with having to tilt your foot a little bit. Do you recall this and what's your recollection of that?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Yeah, I remember that. I was playing some pickup basketball with my buddies like a week or so before and I rolled my ankle running down the court. Oddly enough, we were playing outside and I think I stepped on one of those giant acorns because all my buddies were like freaking out, like I heard it pop. I was like, my ankle's not broken, guys.



So yeah, I ended up playing in sneakers with an ankle brace on. It was tough because it was my left ankle so getting through the ball was really tough. I think it would have been easier if it was my right ankle because I could have just posted up into it, but the left one really spins and rolls out.

So what I did, if my foot usually sits this way, I just turned it out like that and kind of stayed on my back foot and just used my hands mostly. I think I had a slow first round but I played really good in the second round and ended up winning. I think our team won that year as well, so those were fun times.

**Q. It's been five years since kind of your parting thoughts on the Korn Ferry Tour about the best part of life and sharing it with people around you and kind of building those relationships. Obviously a lot has changed for you in life since that year, but what's kind of your recollection of I guess do you still feel that way and how important is it to kind of maintain those close relationships through the craziness that life might have --**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Yeah, I definitely stand by that statement. It's funny, it seems like you think my life would have changed a lot, but it really only has changed out here. At home it hasn't changed that much. That will change significantly in the next month when our baby comes, that'll be the big change. But at home, no. We still have the same friends, still have a great support system.

It's really special to be able to go home and celebrate with friends. Winning is fun, but it only lasts a few seconds or a few minutes, I should say, then you've got to go started doing all the other stuff so you don't really get to soak it in too much. But when you get home and you get to celebrate with people and those that we're closest to, those really are the most special times and it was nice to get a bit of that last week.

**Q. The last two editions of THE PLAYERS you've kind of had a big lead with people chasing you and then obviously a couple weeks ago you had to catch up to the leaders in front of you. Do you enjoy one of those more than the other, whether you're protecting a big lead or have to chase it down?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** Not really. I don't think it makes a huge difference in which one I would like more. I guess I would like being in the lead more because it would be a little bit easier to win than starting from way behind. Being in the lead, just statistically you would be more likely to win.

I think the most fun is just being in contention. I think that's the most fun that we have on the golf course, it's definitely what we always are working towards. When you're out there and you get all the adrenaline going and you're right in the heat of the tournament, I think those are the most fun times in our sport, so try to get up there as much as I can.



**Q. Do you expect scores this week to maybe be a tad bit lower than they have been in the past just because the rough maybe isn't as penal?**

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I think so. I think this golf course you had to hit fairways out here. You had to, with the way the greens are elevated and with the runoffs and with the way the rough was, you had to hit fairways. Now there's not as much of a premium on that.

But I think we're supposed to get some pretty good winds over the weekend, I think Friday afternoon the winds are supposed to pick up. The golf course is still really, really challenging. I think it's just going to be challenging in a different way this year.

**MODERATOR:** You shot 62 in Round 2 here in 2021 to tie the tournament record. What do you recall from that round and is there something that might help you from recalling that round this week, or is it to long ago?

**SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER:** I did not remember that until you just told me that. I guess my only real comments on that would be it is a golf course kind of like any golf course, any challenging golf course I think where when you start playing well, you can still shoot low scores. So it's kind of one of those places where you've got to be patient, wait for you to get hot and try to take advantage of it as best you can.

The winning scores here typically are not crazy low, so it's nice that you don't have to come out of the gates guns blazing, ready to roll. You can get settled into the tournament. I kind of like the tournaments a bit more when par's a good score, you don't feel like you're losing when you're making pars, so I definitely appreciate that aspect of this golf course.

**MODERATOR:** All right. Appreciate your time, good luck this week.

