

26ICUT23 – THE OPEN/PUNTACANA - #23 – MASTER SCRIPT

A1 RORY NAMING PAST 30 OPEN CHAMPIONS

PRODUCER: You said before, you can name the last 30 Open Champions. We're going to put it to the test.

MCILROY: Okay. When do we start?

PRODUCER: '95.

MCILROY: John Daly. '96, Tom Lehman. '97, Justin Leonard. '98, Mark O'Meara. '99, Paul Lawrie. 2000, Tiger Woods. 2001, David Duval. 2002, Ernie Els. 2003, Ben Curtis. 2004, Todd Hamilton. 2005, Tiger Woods. 2006, Tiger Woods. 2007, Padraig Harrington. 2008, Padraig Harrington. 2009, Stewart Cink. 2010, Louis Oosthuizen. 2011, Darren Clarke. 2012, Ernie Els. 2013, Phil Mickelson. 2014, me. 2015, Zach Johnson. 2016, Henrik Stenson. 2017, Jordan Spieth. 2018, Francesco Molinari. 2019, Shane Lowry. 2020 wasn't played. 2021, Collin Morikawa. 2022, Cameron Smith. 2023, Brian Harman. 2024, Xander Schauffele. 2025, Scottie Scheffler.

PRODUCER: Nailed it.

MCILROY: I'm trying to think if I could go back to my birth year. '89 was Calcavecchia. '90 was Faldo. '91 was Sandy Lyle. No, '91 was Baker-Finch. '92 was Faldo. '93 was Norman?

PRODUCER: Yes.

MCILROY: St. George's? Yeah. '94, Nick Price.

PRODUCER: Yeah.

MCILROY: Yeah, there you go.

A2 TITLES

(NO COPY)

A3 INTRO RORY

HOPING TO ADD HIS NAME TO THAT LIST ONCE AGAIN IN 2026, RORY MCILROY WILL RELY ON EXPERIENCE AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, PATIENCE ... A TRAIT INGRAINED IN HIM BY THREE-TIME OPEN CHAMPION JACK NICKLAUS.

A4 – JACK ON THE FIRST TIME HE MET RORY

NICKLAUS: Rory first came to me when he was 19 years old and he was playing in the Honda Tournament

MCILROY: In 2009, I just played in the Match Play. I got knocked out on the Saturday, so I flew over to Palm Beach early for the Honda Classic, and I was going shopping with my dad in Palm Beach Gardens. pulled into the car park and Jack was getting into his car and we were getting out. And, you know, I was like, that's Jack Nicklaus.

NICKLAUS: Somebody suggested that maybe you ought to go over and have lunch with me. So, he came over and we talked, and he was having trouble finishing golf tournaments.

ANNC: Rory McIlroy, making his debut on the US PGA TOUR this year.

MCILROY: It was amazing. You know, I went for lunch with him earlier on this year, and I felt as if sometimes I was struggling to close tournaments out.

NICKLAUS: And he's like, I can't finish. I can't seem to do the right thing in the last nine holes of the tournament to finish. So, we talked about it, not only being positive, but being patient. I said, just be patient. You know, I remember Joe Black who ran the TOUR years ago, came to me. And I was having trouble finishing up my first year on TOUR. I had three seconds [place finishes] before I won the U.S. open. He said, "Jack, just be patient." He said, "Just shoot that 32 or three the last nine holes and you'll win your golf tournament."

MCILROY: You know, he had a few, a couple of nice things to say, and he was very much into patience and not, you know, nearly let other guys make the mistake and capitalizing on that. And it was great to speak to him. And, you know, I did. I took a lot out of that conversation.

NICKLAUS: A couple weeks later, he went off to Charlotte.

ANNC: How about making it? Good call. He does indeed. Ten-under par. Welcome to the big time, Rory McIlroy.

NICKLAUS: I think he shot 63 the last round. So, I dropped him a note and I said, "I told you to be patient, but this is ridiculous. And he was he was really good."

MCILROY: And that was the, you know, the start. And I actually developed a relationship with him. It was really nice of him to, you know, take time out like that to help me.

A5 – SEGUE SCHEFFLER AND RANDY SMITH

THE FLOODGATES HAVE CERTAINLY OPENED FOR RORY MCILROY SINCE THEN, INCLUDING HIS WIN AT THE 2014 OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP.

THE DEFENDING CHAMPION WILL LOOK AT A REPEAT FOLLOWING HIS HUMBLE REMARKS LAST YEAR WHICH PUT GOLF INTO PERSPECTIVE FOR MANY FANS ... ACCORDING TO LONGTIME COACH RANDY SMITH, IT'S HUMILITY WHICH WAS INSTILLED IN THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM FROM AN EARLY AGE.

A6 – SCHEFFLER AND RANDY SMITH FEATURE

SCHEFFLER: Usually, I'll call him in a tournament and say this, and this is happening.

SMITH: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa ,whoa.

SCHEFFLER: He'll call me.

SMITH: Time out. The best I get from him is a text of doing much better. Everything's fine. Thank you very much.

PRODUCER: At what point did you see the potential with Scottie?

SMITH: I think on the very first day he came in with his parents and somebody said, you need to see this kid hit balls. He's a pretty good 6- or 7-year-old little kid. You know, watched, and there was something totally different about him than the rest of that crowd. And that's when it got my attention. Big got my attention.

SCHEFFLER: My family's always been great support for me. Randy Smith has been my long time teacher since I was 6 or 7, so he's definitely been the figure for me specifically for golf, just kind of helping me stay focused, staying consistent. The golf stuff's obviously very important, but I think most of the stuff we work on, he's kind of like a second father figure for me. So it's a special relationship that we have.

SMITH: His attitude stayed very consistent. He was fun to be around. He was engaging, and it wasn't so much that he was carrying a lot of pressure with him. You could see it. It was just I'm ready to go. Let's go have some fun. And that didn't change. And then the victories started. And once they started, it's been an absolute ball to watch.

SCHEFFLER: Randy and I don't take ourselves too seriously. We have some fun together. And you know, some of my favorite memories of this game are just hanging out with Randy.

B0 – BREAK 1

B1 – GENESIS SCOTTISH OPEN WINNER

ANNC: The skies have brightened over the Renaissance Club for the final round of the Genesis Scottish Open // a decorated list of leaders battling for this national open.

BUT IT WAS TOM KIM WHO STOOD TALL ABOVE THE REST.

ANNC: At 16, Tom Kim with his second. This looks promising. How good is this right here? Tom Kim! What a time to deliver.

ANNC: Got it! Thomas the Tank is steam rolling through the Renaissance Club today.

ANNC: Now Tom Kim, who has not won on the PGA TOUR in 1,001 days ... (14:30) So perfect. Tom Kim with a bogey-free 64. Ties the best round of the day and what a time to do it. Only a holed approach by Min Woo Lee could have any influence on that top position.

ANNC: This is it. This has to go in. There you have it. Tom Kim is the winner of the Genesis Scottish Open.

KIM INTERVIEW: I told myself, just mentally and physically; I was all there. This one, I really didn't want to let it go and I'm glad I didn't.

B2 – FEC STANDINGS

AFTER CAPTURING HIS 4TH CAREER PGA TOUR VICTORY AND HIS FIRST SINCE 2023, TOM KIM MOVES UP 16 SPOTS IN THE FEDEXCUP STANDINGS.

B4 – TV TIMES – THE OPEN

THE TOUR HEADS TO THE FINAL MAJOR OF THE YEAR ... THE 154TH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP AT ROYAL BIRKDALE.

FORMER PROFESSIONAL AND CURRENT SKY SPORTS BROADCASTER NICK DOUGHERTY JOINS US TO SHARE WHICH PLAYERS HE HAS AN EYE ON THIS WEEK.

B4 – NICK DOUGHERTY WITH TALENT

O'LAUGHLIN: We now welcome in Nick Dougherty to The Drop. And Nick, I think I've seen you at every Open Championship that I've covered, maybe seven now. And you've experienced this championship both as a player and now a broadcaster. Do you know what number Open's this is for you?

DOUGHERTY: Oh, goodness. I've done more as a broadcaster. I know that. Unfortunately, I only played four of them as a player, but it's obviously, for us being British, it's the one that really stands out for us.

O'LAUGHLIN: And that's why I'm excited to dive into some of our English players who are near the top of the world Rankings. We've got Matt Fitzpatrick, Tommy Fleetwood, Justin Rose. Which of them do you think is best positioned to win at Royal Birkdale.

DOUGHERTY: It's a tough shout. I would have to say Matt Fitzpatrick, just based on how he's played throughout the year, how he's playing right now. I just think he's got all the attributes. In fact, I'd go so far as to say if I had to pick a favorite in total, it might be Matt Fitzpatrick. My heart, though, is singing for Tommy Fleetwood, so because I would love that to be the story as much as this is very much a home for me, and I grew up playing a lot of golf in this area. I was a member of Formby Golf Club, it is literally home for Tommy Fleetwood. He did used to creep on that golf course as a kid with his dads and play a few holes. He is from Southport and they'll be out in force to support him.

O'LAUGHLIN: Well, I don't think you could write a better storyline than Tommy Fleetwood getting it done this week. But outside of our English players, is there somebody whose game is just well suited to the course in what should be spectacular conditions out there?

DOUGHERTY: You know, interestingly, it's the fairest I would say, of The Open venues, and it's the flattest probably fairways, certainly not flat as a venue. So, you get really nice flat fairways. You tend to not get awful bounces, which is a feature of links golf. And so, who does that lean in towards? Yeah, Scheffler, quite clearly and interestingly, I've spent some time with Adrian from TaylorMade and he chatted to Scottie recently about, right, Scottie do you want us to build you something for The Open? You know like a driving iron, something like that. And he goes, no, I'll just hit it lower. I mean that is the nature of how he goes about it. He's got this skill set that he's got all the shots. Russell Henley, I think's a bit of a dark horse. I think he's been playing great golf and he's consistently played really nicely at Royal Portrush. Chris Gotterup, we know he's in great form. He obviously played beautifully at The Open and he's one of those American players that now and then you see just takes to it like a duck to water when they come across for links golf.

O'LAUGHIN: Well, let's get a little of your bias. Who's your pick to win? Who do you have?

DOUGHERTY: My head says Fitzpatrick, but my heart says Tommy Fleetwood. So, I'm going to go with that because it's just always way more fun, isn't it? And I think if he stays out of the way of the romance of it, let us do that. You just do what you do, Tommy. And that could be one of the greatest stories told in Open history, hopefully.

O'LAUGHLIN: All right. All eyes on our English players. Thanks so much for joining us, Nick.

DOUGHERTY: Pleasure.

C0 – BREAK 2

C1 – REJOIN

TEERING IT UP AND LOOKING TO RECLAIM HIS MAGIC IS JORDAN SPIETH AS WE CELEBRATE HIS OPEN WIN AT ROYAL BIRKDALE IN 2017.

C2 – INTRO SPIETH

(VO CARRYING OVER FROM C1)

C3 – JORDAN SPIETH 2017 WIN FEATURE

PRODUCER: Where does that stretch of golf rank in your career?

SPIETH: Definitely the best. Yeah, definitely the best, you know, five-hole stretch. I didn't really miss a shot. I missed a tee shot on 17, but I didn't really miss a shot for those five holes at arguably the most important time in my career to do so.

SIMPSON: I think what he showed was just something we don't see often. He had to pull so far deep within to come back from where he was that day on 13, hitting from the driving range. And I mean, he's my competitor, but I was sitting there watching, and I was clapping. You know, it's just, you don't see that every day.

SPIETH: I felt like I stole a shot. It was weird. It almost felt like, you know, I was supposed to make double and I made bogey. And sometimes I can oddly give you, like, momentum. And second, you know, I knew the pressure was now in his court. I thought you have plenty of golf. Even if he makes a couple of birdies, you can make this up. I did it on the next hole, luckily, and then felt like I had the momentum back. So, golf's a mental game and I was just in this space that was not a disaster space. It was a space of like, one, I felt like I problem solved and felt like I gained something. And then two, I felt like you have an opportunity here to go steal this. If you could throw out the whole rest of the week, you say you're one down with five to go in The Open on Sunday, I would have signed up for that when Thursday started, right? I'd sign up for it right now, and I just tapped into that and was able to hit some really nice shots.

DAY: It's really impressive to watch Jordan play. What he did, coming home after what happened on the 13th was, you know, stuff that they, they talk about for a very long time.

SCHAUFFELE: He's just, he's clutch. He has kind of that it factor of wanting it. You write him off, he'll smack you right in the face with, with a long putt or a good iron shot or a good tee shot. You know, he just has that ability to kind of will the ball in the hole and grind it out when he needs to.

SPIETH: I'm excited to see it again. It's a very, very difficult open venue. So, it's an aerial style. There's less of the bouncing up links and more of like, you got to, you got to control your ball and be coming out of the fairway more often. You can't really get away with, you know, trouble from the first tee shot, you know, until the 18th. Ball control is huge there and it was then. And, you know, I've got to get back to the kind of control I had that week to, you know, to feel like I can make a run at it again.

C4 – SEGUE ADAM SCOTT

SINCE MAKING HIS 100TH CONSECUTIVE MAJOR START AT THE US OPEN LAST MONTH, ADAM SCOTT TURNS A PAGE INTO THE CENTURY MARK THIS WEEK AT THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP ... AND FELLOW AUSSIE MIN WOO LEE CELEBRATES BY RANKING HIS BEST OUTFITS OVER THE YEARS.

C5 – MIN WOO RANKS ADAM SCOTT OUTFITS

LEE: Okay, so first one would be like a brown mock neck, high waisted. I don't know if he's wearing a belt or not, but pretty swaggy. I think he's one of the guys that could pull it off, and he did. So, if I'm rating it, I'll rate it a nine out of ten. Very solid.

LEE: All right. The next one would be, okay, little stripe action. Obviously, very sweaty day. Burberry, that's pretty classy. I'd rate it eight out of ten. It's out there, but it's not that different. But it's cool.

LEE: I'll probably rate the hair a ten out of ten. You know, that's a bit of, that's a bit of a flow right there, which I love. I'll tell him to bring it back. Standard Old Navy, it looks like, and like a cargo pad. So, something different to nowadays. I don't know if that was a big thing in the golfing world. I'll rate it a seven out of ten.

LEE: Okay. This is, this is cool. I'm not sure what brand that is, but that is, that's cool. I'll give that a nine and a half out of ten. That's a statement piece. He's wearing a red shirt underneath. You don't really see those colors altogether, I don't think.

LEE: Green jacket. That's a hundred out of ten. I think anyone would look good in it.

LEE: Okay, this, this is kind of wild for Adam Scott right here. Brown pants and red shirt with black stripes. Probably not his best scripted piece. I give it a six out of ten. The shirt is very cool, though. I like the shirt.

LEE: Finishing off with a pretty standard piece. It's like a bladed collar. So, it's not the typical collar, but I'll give that a seven out of ten. Nothing special, but just a chill Thursday shirt.

LEE: I think my favorite is the diamond shirt jumper sweater, as we call it in America. Very cool.

PRODUCER: With the collar popped.

LEE: With the collar. Yeah, yeah, that's the biggest part.

D0 – BREAK 3

D1 – ISCO WINNER

ANNC: It's the ISCO Championship. It's going to take a lot of birdies to be the last man standing and that's what the fans have come to see this Championship Sunday.

CANADIAN TAYLOR PENDRITH FOUND HIS STRIDE ON THE BACK NINE.

ANNC: Can Taylor Pendrith post? Can he find a birdie in these last two holes? Oh! A dart in there! What a timely two. He's at 16-under, ahead by one.

BUT SO DID STEVEN FISK.

ANNC: Fisk fills it up. We are tied at the top once again at 16-under.

ANNC: Fisk, the 29-year-old, he's on the stage here at the 72nd hole where he could decide this Championship. Fisk, got it there, but left all the way.

ANNC: It will be game on. We are going to be going to a playoff.

AFTER THREE GRUELING HOLES OF PLAYOFF GOLF, STEVEN FISK WOULD NOT BE DENIED A SECOND PGA TOUR VICTORY.

ANNC: It's Fisk, in a marathon at the ISCO Championship. Taking care of Taylor Pendrith on the third playoff hole. What a Sunday for Steven Fisk.

FISK SOT: Man, I just love being in that position. I crave it like nothing else. I could give a damn about finishing 60th in a golf tournament. This is what I want to do.

D2 – TV TIMES – CORALES PUNTACANA CHAMPIONSHIP

THE TOUR ALSO MOVES TO PUNTACANA THIS WEEK WHERE FORMER PGA TOUR UNIVERSITY NUMBER ONE BEN JAMES WILL LOOK TO CONTINUE HIS STRONG PLAY AFTER A T15 FINISH AT THE ISCO CHAMPIONSHIP ... MEET HIM FROM HIS TIME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

D3 – MEET BEN JAMES

SARGENT: Ben is without a doubt the best ball striker I've ever seen. I've never, not one time, seen him have a bad ball striking day. Not once in four years. He's such a professional. He's like a 40-year-old man that's already played the PGA TOUR in our program. Before PGA TOUR U, there was no clear-cut avenue. You know, it was a tough path to get to the PGA TOUR. You know, a guy like Ben, he probably would have left two years ago, but I think it's kept him school. He's gotten a degree. I mean, he's good enough to go play out there, and I think having the ability to go do that in college, in your last two years, has meant so much. Not even just a PGA TOUR Card, but if you're good enough, you'll end up with a TOUR Card and if not, a Korn Ferry or Americas. So, I think it's been great for the game of college golf.

JAMES: Starting as a freshman and looking up to the seniors, and now being the seniors and, you know, having freshmen and underclassmen looking up to me, it's definitely different. I try my best to give the best advice and also, more importantly, and just be a good friend, cook someone a meal. Whatever they need, just try to be there for them on the golf course, off the golf course.

JAMES: Let's see how we did. Let's do the cut.

TEAMMATE: It's really good.

JAMES: Michael, eat your greens.

TEAMMATE: My greens? Nah. Maybe I am a child.

SARGETNT: Ben's kind of the voice of our team, and Ben is so motivated to make it in this game. And he has been from day one.

JAMES: But most people don't know this, but I committed here, and I didn't even visit. So, I was 15 years old. Coach Sergeant gave us an offer before the rule about your junior year. My family

and I, like we all talked about it, and we didn't come from much. We knew it was an amazing academic school of great golf school. And as I got better, you know, there were more options, obviously. Decided to stay here, and it's the best decision I've made in my life, probably.

D4 – SEGUE ELIMINATOIR

WHILE BEN JAMES CONTINUES TO ACCLIMATE HIMSELF TO LIFE ON TOUR AT THE CORALES PUNTACANA CHAMPIONSHIP, WE LOOK THROUGH HISTORICAL DATA TO PREDICT WHICH ESTABLISHED VETERAN IS MOST LIKELY TO RAISE THE CLARET JUG AT ROYAL BIRKDALE.

D5 – ELIMINATOIR – THE OPEN

THE 2026 MAJOR SEASON WILL WRAP UP THIS WEEK WITH THE 154TH PLAYING OF THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP, AND WHILE THE BEST GOLFERS IN THE WORLD CROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN AND DESCEND UPON ROYAL BIRKDALE, THE ELIMINATOR IS READY TO TELL YOU WHO IS GOING TO BE THE CHAMPION GOLFER OF THE YEAR.

RECENT HISTORY SUGGESTS IT IS A BIT DODGY TO THINK THAT A PLAYER OUTSIDE THE TOP 50 OF THE OFFICIAL WORLD GOLF RANKING HAS A CHANCE TO WIN A MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIP. 57 OF THE LAST 58 MAJORS HAVE BEEN WON BY A TOP 50 PLAYER, SO WE LIMIT OUR POOL TO THOSE GOLFERS. TO RAISE THE CLARET JUG, YOU NEED TO HAVE ALREADY HAD SOME SUCCESS IN THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP.

11 OF THE LAST 13 WINNERS HAD ALREADY RECORDED A TOP TEN FINISH AT THE OPEN DURING HIS CAREER. WE LIKE THAT CHECK MARK ON A WINNER'S LIST OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND WITH APOLOGIES TO PLAYERS LIKE JUSTIN THOMAS AND LUDVIG ABERG, WE ARE DOWN TO 27 GOLFERS. THE OLDEST MAJOR IS ALSO THOUGHT TO BE THE MOST UNPREDICTABLE, AND ROYAL BIRKDALE EXEMPLIFIES THAT THEORY.

THE LAST FOUR WINNERS HERE HAD FINISHED INSIDE THE TOP 20 OF THAT YEAR'S MASTERS, BUT OUTSIDE THE TOP 30 IN THAT YEAR'S US OPEN. AND WHILE THE OPEN IS ERRATIC, WE KNOW THAT PLAYERS LIKE CHRIS GOTTERUP AND SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER DON'T FIT THAT BILL. WE ARE DOWN TO EIGHT PLAYERS.

WINNING AT THE OPEN IS TYPICALLY ACHIEVED IF YOU HAVE ALREADY TASTED VICTORY THAT YEAR. SIX OF THE LAST EIGHT CHAMPIONS HAD ALREADY WON ON THE PGA TOUR THAT SEASON. THIS ELIMINATES PLAYERS LIKE HIDEKI MATSUYAMA AND PATRICK CANTLAY, AND WE ARE

DOWN TO OUR FOUR FINALIST: RUSSELL HENLEY, VIKTOR HOVLAND, RORY MCILROY AND CAMERON YOUNG.

ROYAL BIRKDALE IS HOSTING ITS 11TH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP AND AS THE BRITISH SPORT'S ADAGE GOES, QUALITY ALWAYS TELLS. AMONG THE CLARET JUG WINNERS HERE ARE JORDAN SPIETH, TOM WATSON, LEE TREVINO AND ARNOLD PALMER. IN FACT, EIGHT OF THE PREVIOUS TEN OPEN WINNERS AT ROYAL BIRKDALE HAD ALREADY WON A MAJOR IN HIS CAREER.

AND THAT CAN ONLY BE SAID ABOUT ONE OF OUR FINALISTS. WITH SIX CAREER MAJOR VICTORIES, INCLUDING THE FIRST OF THIS YEAR AT AUGUSTA. THE ELIMINATOR SAYS THAT RORY MCILROY WILL GET HIS SEVENTH AND WRAP UP THE 2026 MAJOR SEASON AS THE CHAMPION GOLFER OF THE YEAR.

D6 – SHOW COURTESY