



2009 SHELL HOUSTON OPEN

Contact:

Mark Williams

Media Official

904-655-5380

markwilliams@pgatourhq.com

Dates:	March 30 – April 5, 2009
Where:	Redstone Golf Club, Tournament Course, Humble, TX
Par/Yards:	(72/7,457)
Field:	144
FedExCup points:	500 to the winner
Purse:	\$5,700,000
Winner's Share:	\$1,026,000
Format:	72-hole stroke play

KEY STORYLINES

Star Power

The 2009 Shell Houston Open will have its best field in history -- Sergio Garcia, Phil Mickelson, Padraig Harrington, Camilo Villegas, Ernie Els, Rory McIlroy, Fred Couples and Greg Norman are among those scheduled to appear.

Presidents Cup captains compete

Presidents Cup captains Fred Couples and Greg Norman will be able to keep an eye on their respective, prospective team members while both tee it up at the Shell Houston Open. Both players will be in Augusta the following week for the Masters Tournament.

- Norman earned an exemption into the following week's The Masters with a T3 finish at the British Open (Royal Birkdale) in 2008; will be playing in sixth SHO and first since 2002. Earlier this year, Norman played the tri-sanctioned, Johnnie Walker Classic in his native Australia in February, missing the cut. He also finished second (with partner Jay Haas) at the Champions Tour Skins Game in Hawaii earlier this year.
- Couples played college golf at the University of Houston, where he was a roommate of CBS golf host Jim Nantz; will be playing in 17th Shell Houston Open, the site of his last PGA TOUR win (2003). Couples' best finish this season was T3 at the Northern Trust Open.

Houston Golf Association

The Shell Houston Open's host organization, the Houston Golf Association, has been conducting PGA TOUR events since 1946, making Houston's tournament the 10th-oldest on the TOUR's schedule. The only breaks have been 1948 when there was no tournament and in 1969 when the HGA co-sponsored the U.S. Open at Champions Golf Club.

Since 1974, the Houston Golf Association has generated more than \$51.6 million for local youth-oriented charities through various golf-related activities.

The HGA ensures that funds generated by the Shell Houston Open are put to work locally so that the proceeds of its PGA TOUR event directly impacts the local community. HGA also underwrites the costs of a junior golf tournament program and The First Tee of Houston/Redstone.

One PGA TOUR player with recent HGA ties is Chris Stroud, who has one top-10 this season (T6 at the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am).

Houston Golf Association's Birdies for Charity program has used the power of the Shell Houston Open PGA TOUR event to annually generate six-figure contributions for local charities since 1999. Contributors making the minimum pledge are able to guess the total number of birdies that will be made by PGA TOUR players Wednesday through Sunday. On average since 1999 there have been 1,641.6 birdies per tournament. Goodson Honda has donated a 2009 Honda Fit, a hybrid automobile, for the grand prize in the "Guess the Birdies" contest. Through 2008, Birdies for Charity has generated more than \$4.7 million for local worthy causes.

FedExCup leaders

Geoff Ogilvy, with 1204 points, remains the leader of the FedExCup standings after the Transitions Championship with Phil Mickelson just 51 points behind. Transitions Championship winner, Retief Goosen jumped from 37th to 5th in the standings. Steve Stricker (7th) and Charley Hoffman (10th) are the only two players in the top-10 of the standings yet to register a victory this year.

Glance at the field

Phil Mickelson

- Second in FedExCup standings, 51 points behind Geoff Ogilvy.
- 36 career PGA TOUR wins is tied for 12th all-time with Lloyd Mangrum.
- Six consecutive seasons with multiple wins is most among any active player.
- Third time recording two PGA TOUR victories prior to the Masters Tournament:
 - Buick Invitational, BellSouth Classic
 - 2005 (AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, BellSouth Classic)
 - 2009 (Northern Trust Open, WGC-CA Championship)

Sergio Garcia

- First appearance at Shell Houston Open.
- Two wins in state of Texas (2001 MasterCard Colonial; 2004 EDS Byron Nelson Championship).

Padraig Harrington

- Heads towards the Masters with the opportunity to capture third straight major title.
- Will make fourth consecutive start at Shell Houston Open, with best finish of T24 in 2007.

Camilo Villegas

- Three top-10s in six starts, including T5 at WGC-CA Championship last time out.
- 2009 FedExCup runner-up is currently 22nd in FedExCup standings.
- No. 7 in Official World Golf Ranking.

Ernie Els

- Playing Shell Houston Open for second time (T17 in 2003); has posted two-10s in 2009.

Rory McIlroy

- 19-year-old from Northern Ireland finished T5 at the WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship in United States professional debut.
- Other United States finishes in 2009 include T13 at The Honda Classic at T20 at WGC-CA Championship.

Steve Stricker

- With limited status in 2006, play at Shell Houston Open (solo third) on Sponsor Exemption sparked two consecutive PGA TOUR Comeback Player of the Year Awards (2006 and 2007).
- Seventh in 2009 FedExCup standings on the strength of T3 at 50th Bob Hope Classic, second at Northern Trust Open and T4 at Transitions Championship.

Winner Wagner defends

- The Amarillo, TX, native, who made the Shell Houston Open his first PGA TOUR victory, returns to defend his title.
- Win at the 2008 SHO earned him his first trip to the Masters where he finished T36.
- First first-time winner of the Shell Houston Open since Robert Allenby in 2000 and the 13th overall.
- With his win at the 2008 Shell Houston Open, moved from 188th to 18th in the FedExCup standings. Eventually finished 52nd in final FedExCup standings.
- Looking for first top-10 since T10 at season-opening Mercedes-Benz Championship.

European flavor

With Redstone Golf Club's Tournament Course being set-up as close as possible to conditions at Augusta National, European players feature heavily, making final preparations for the Masters Tournament. Here's a look at the Europeans who are playing at the Shell Houston Open and their current Official World Golf Ranking (through Transitions Championship).

Paul Casey (12)	Lost to Geoff Ogilvy at Accenture MP final, earning best finish on TOUR
Darren Clarke (76)	One of only three players to have won multiple WGC events
Sergio Garcia (3)	Earned seventh PGA TOUR win at 2008 PLAYERS Championship
Padraig Harrington (5)	One week later, looks for third straight major championship title
Robert Karlsson (8)	First Swedish player to win European Tour Order of Merit (2008)
Martin Kaymer (20)	European Tour Rookie of the Year in 2007
Rory McIlroy (17)	Jumped from 172nd to 16th on OWGR in just 18 months
Alvaro Quiros (26)	Won 2009 Qatar Masters. Led European Tour in Driving Distance (2006-08)
Henrik Stenson (9)	In 2008, won World Cup with Karlsson, and Nedbank Challenge by 9 strokes
Lee Westwood (15)	Finished 3rd at 2008 U.S. Open, 1-stroke out of Woods/Mediate playoff
Justin Rose (24)	Runner-up at 2009 Dubai Desert Classic became 1 st time father in February

ADDITIONAL STORYLINES

Shell and Kevin Harvick/NASCAR

Kevin Harvick, who drives the No. 29 Shell Penzoil car in the NASCAR Sprint Cup, will be on the grounds at Redstone Golf Club Wednesday after making a visit to a local school. Harvick will also visit the Media Center and make a Skybox appearance later in the day.

Course set-up

With The Masters played the following week, the Houston Golf Association has attempted to replicate the conditions of Augusta National to attract the world's top golfers. Joe Ogilvie, a member of the HGA Board of Directors, strongly encouraged the tournament to embrace its position on the schedule with the course set-up.

- The "first cut" at the Rees Jones-designed Tournament Course is 1 1/2 inches, just like at Augusta.
- The banks around the greens are shaved, creating chipping areas and hazard areas that come into play more often on errant shots.
- The greens are as fast as the spring weather will allow.
- Fairways are mowed with the grain into the players, reducing the roll.

McIlroy observed by peers

Rory McIlroy has piqued the interest of at least five major championship winners.

"He has the composure. He has all of the components to be the best player in the world, there's no doubt. It's just a matter of time and experience, and then basically gaining that experience in big events, that takes time, and I mean, geez, he's only 19. Just give him some time, and I'm sure he'll be there."

-- **Tiger Woods**

“Ball striking wise at 19, he is probably better than Tiger was at 19 – his technique is better I think”

-- **Mark O'Meara**

“He's one fine golfer. He's a nice guy and he's got a great attitude on the golf course. I do believe he will go on and do great things in the game. Very impressive.”

-- **Padraig Harrington**

“He's hungry, so he's going to be a major factor in world golf. I think you're probably looking at the next No. 1 in the world with him. He's got all the tools.”

-- **Ernie Els**

“He is the real deal. My caddie (Alistair Matheson) said to me, ‘If you want to be the second-best player in the world, you've got to be better than Rory.’ “

-- **Geoff Ogilvy**

Internationals involved

Greg Norman will have particular interest in the Internationals in the field who could make his Presidents Cup team. K.J. Choi (South Korea), Camilo Villegas (Colombia), Jeev M. Singh (India), Ernie Els (South Africa), Stuart Appleby (Australia), Andres Romero and Angel Cabrera (both from Argentina), along with recent winner Y.E. Yang (South Korea), are all eligible candidates for the Shark's side.

Four rounds in the 60s rare

No players managed to record all four rounds in the 60s at the 2008 Shell Houston Open. Throughout the last 15 years of the tournament (dating back to 1994), just four players have achieved the feat, each winning the tournament that year – Mike Heinen/1994, Vijay Singh/2002, Fred Couples/2003 and Stuart Appelby/2006.

Mike and Mike in the Morning

ESPN Radio's Mike Greenberg and Mike Golic will host Mike and Mike in the Morning from the Champions Pavilion at Redstone Golf Club, play in the Shell's Pro-Am and raise money for the V Foundation for Cancer Research. Shell and the Houston Golf Association auctioned a prize package with the proceeds (\$47,500) benefiting the V Foundation. The winner, Frank Thomas of South Pittsburgh, TN, receives round-trip airfare for two, hotel accommodations, pro-am spots alongside Greenberg and Golic and tickets to the tournament's opening round. The Mike and Mike show airs in Houston on KFNC (97.5 FM).

Kodak Challenge

The par-four, 488 yard, 18th hole at Redstone GC Tournament Course is one of 30 holes in the Kodak Challenge, celebrating beautiful holes and memorable moments on the PGA TOUR. In 2009, 30 PGA TOUR tournaments will feature a designated Kodak Challenge hole. Players must play at least 18 of the 30 Kodak Challenge holes throughout the season to compete for \$1 million and the Kodak Challenge trophy. A player's lowest score relative to par on his best 18 Kodak challenge holes will be counted. The player with the lowest cumulative score relative to par wins.

The Big Ball Washer

The eight-acre lake running adjacent to the par-four, 18th hole at Redstone Golf Club Tournament Course was dubbed the “Big Ball Washer” by a caddie, after his player deposited a tee shot in the lake in rounds one, two and three of the 2006 Shell Houston Open, the first year the tournament was played at the Redstone Tournament Course. That same year, the lake claimed 59 balls, according to ShotLink. In 2007, 53 balls were rinsed, including one by eventual champion, Adam Scott, who hit his tee shot into the lake at the 72nd hole. Last year, 41 balls found the lake, making a total of 153 balls in three years.

Redstone stats - The final-round scoring average at the par-72 Redstone Golf Club's Tournament Course in 2008 was 71.722, while the cumulative average for the week was 72.068. The par-4 18th hole ranked as the toughest all week with an average of 4.389, making it one of the PGA TOUR's toughest finishing holes. The par-5 eighth hole was the easiest of the week at 4.656.

