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2014 The Honda Classic pre-tournament notes

Dates: February 24-March 2, 2014
Where: Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.
Course: PGA National (Par/Yards: 70/7,241)
Field size: 144
2013 champion: Michael Thompson
Purse: \$6,000,000 (\$1,080,000/winner)
FedExCup: 500 points to the winner
Format: 72-hole stroke play
Twitter: @thehondaclassic

How Michael Thompson won the 2014 Honda Classic

Michael Thompson's 1-under 69 in the final round, capped off with a birdie-4 at the 72nd hole, was good for a 2-stroke margin of victory over Geoff Ogilvy. Thompson was one of just four players to break 70 in the challenging, final round. With his win, Thompson ended a streak of international winners of the event, dating to 2008. Scores of 67-65-70 in rounds 1-3 gave Thompson a share of the 54-hole lead with Luke Guthrie. Guthrie's 3-over 73 in the final round helped pave the way for Thompson's first PGA TOUR win in his 61st start on TOUR.

More on Michael Thompson

- A week after his win at The Honda Classic, Thompson kept the heat on in Miami, finishing T8 at the World Golf Championships-Cadillac Championship. His third and final top-10 finish of the season also came in the form of T8 honors, this time in late spring at the Memorial Tournament.
- Thompson successfully navigated his way through the first three of four FedExCup Playoff events, The Barclays (MC), Deutsche Bank Championship (T53) and BMW Championship (T62).
- Thompson finished a career-best 66th in the 2013 FedExCup standings.
- Thompson has finished inside the top 20 in three of his four starts this calendar season.

Last chance to qualify for the World Golf Championships-Cadillac Championship

The week of The Honda Classic offers the final opportunity to qualify for the following week's World Golf Championships event, the Cadillac Championship down the road at Trump National Doral. Players not previously eligible can qualify by being inside the top 50 in the Official World Golf Ranking or the top 10 or the FedExCup standings following The Honda Classic.

A look at the field

1. Seven of the world's top-10 ranked players are scheduled to appear at this year's Honda Classic:
 - No. 1 -- Tiger Woods will be making his fourth start in this year's Honda Classic, and third straight. Prior to last year's T37 finish, Woods closed with an 8-under 62 in 2012 en route to a T2 finish. Following five wins in 2013, Woods was named the PGA TOUR Player of the Year for a record 11th time.
 - No. 2 -- 2013 Masters and The Barclays winner Adam Scott will make his first start on the PGA TOUR since a T8 at the Sony Open in Hawaii. Scott has made three previous starts at PGA National, but not since missing the cut in 2011.
 - No. 3 -- 2013 FedExCup winner Henrik Stenson is poised to make his fourth consecutive start in the event, with a T21 in 2012 his best showing. The grand finale to Stenson's 2013 PGA TOUR Season included wins in the FedExCup Playoffs at the Deutsche Bank Championship and TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola. Stenson, the No. 1 overall seed in last week's World Golf Championships-Accenture Match Play Championship, was eliminated in the first round.
 - No. 5 -- Reigning Open Champion and World Golf Hall of Fame Member Phil Mickelson will make a much-anticipated return to The Honda Classic this year. With previous starts in 1995 (TPC Eagle Trace/MC), 2001 (TPC Heron Bay/T27) and 2002 (TPC Heron Bay/T11), Mickelson will be competing at PGA National for the first time.

- No. 7 -- Zach Johnson will make his third career start at The Honda Classic. He previously finished T30 in 2008 (PGA National) and T13 in 2004 (CC at Mirasol). In his first three starts of the 2014 calendar season, he won his 11th TOUR title at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions, finished T8 a week later at the Sony Open in Hawaii and T3 a week after that at the Humana Challenge. After an extended break, Johnson lost last week in the first round of the World Golf Championships-Accenture Match Play Championship.
- No. 8 -- 2012 Honda Classic champion Rory Mcllroy will make his sixth consecutive start at this year's event. Mcllroy withdrew following last year's first round due to a severe toothache. A six time winner on the PGA TOUR, Mcllroy is in search of his first TOUR win since the 2012 BMW Championship. In late fall, Mcllroy birdied the 72nd hole of the Emirates Australian Open to best Countryman Adam Scott by a stroke.
- No. 9 -- Eight-time PGA TOUR winner Sergio Garcia is scheduled to make his fourth start at The Honda Classic this week, and first since a T50 in 2010. Garcia, who last won on the PGA TOUR at the 2012 Wyndham Championship, won on the European Tour last month at the Commerce Bank Qatar Masters in a playoff against Finland's Mikko Llonen.

Player	OWGR	2013 FedExCup finish	Current 2014 FedExCup position
Tiger Woods	1	2	225
Adam Scott	2	4	101
Henrik Stenson	3	1	144
Phil Mickelson	5	9	83
Zach Johnson	7	5	8
Rory Mcllroy	8	50	104
Sergio Garcia	9	22	56

2. Jupiter resident Rickie Fowler finished third at last week's World Golf Championships-Accenture Match Play Championship, his best finish on TOUR since a T3 at the 2013 Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard. Fowler lost to eventual champion Jason Day 3 and 2 in the semifinals before defeating Ernie Els in the Consolation Match.
3. Coral Gables resident and two-time heart transplant patient Erik Compton will return to PGA National this year, hoping to reignite the fire from last year's event. With rounds of 69-68-70-70—277 (-3), Compton took home T4 honors, a career-best finish. Compton makes a return to the PGA TOUR this season by virtue of a 99th-place finish in the 2013 FedExCup standings. Compton comes to this year's Honda Classic with nine starts on TOUR already under his belt. His best showing among them is a T19 at the Farmers Insurance Open.
4. West Palm Beach, Fla. native Brooks Koepka and Jupiter resident Peter Uihlein are among the sponsor exemptions. Koepka will be making his seventh career PGA TOUR start at this year's Honda Classic and fourth of the 2013-14 PGA TOUR Season. In his first start this season, he finished T3 at the Frys.com Open. The former Florida State All-America has won four times on the Challenge Tour and plays full-time on the European Tour. Uihlein, the former U.S. Amateur winner while playing at Oklahoma State, is a European Tour member who will be making his eighth professional career PGA TOUR start at The Honda Classic. His best career finish was T6 at the 2013 Puerto Rico Open presented by seepuertorico.com.
5. Other notable sponsor exemptions include 20-year-old Matteo Manassero of Italy and England's Paul Casey. Casey, a former winner of the Shell Houston Open, has had limited starts the last several years on TOUR due to various injuries.
6. Chris Kirk sits fifth in the FedExCup standings on the strength of a victory at the 2013 McGladrey Classic and a runner-up finish at the 2014 Sony Open in Hawaii. He is one of 14 players inside the top 30 in the FedExCup standings playing at The Honda Classic.

Tournament notes

- Twelve players have made The Honda Classic their first career TOUR title. Since 2000, five players have achieved the feat; Matt Kuchar (2002), Padraig Harrington (2005), Mark Wilson (2007), Y.E. Yang (2009) and Michael Thompson (2013).
- Since 1980, only four players have won The Honda Classic in their first attempt; Tim Herron (1996), Matt Kuchar (2002), Todd Hamilton (2004) and Padraig Harrington (2005).
- Five of the last six winners of The Honda Classic have finished the season of their win inside the top 30 in FedExCup standings (Michael Thompson finished No. 66 in 2013).
- Jack Nicklaus (1977-78) is the only player to successfully defend his title at The Honda Classic.
- International players have dominated The Honda Classic in recent years, with wins by Padraig Harrington (2005), Luke Donald (2006), Ernie Els (2008), Y.E. Yang (2009), Camilo Villegas (2010), Rory Sabbatini (2011) and Rory Mcllroy (2012). Mark Wilson (2005) and Michael Thompson (2013) are the only United States natives to win since 2005.
- PGA National continues to rank among the toughest layouts on TOUR. Again in 2013, the par-70 ranked as the toughest course on TOUR outside of the majors, with a scoring average of 71.318.

- Now in its 33rd year, the American Honda Motor Co., Inc. has been a title sponsor on the PGA TOUR since the 1982 Honda Inverrary Classic, making it the PGA TOUR's longest-running title sponsor. Honda is followed on the list by AT&T, which began sponsoring the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am in 1986.

2013-14 PGA TOUR Storylines

Structural changes to the PGA TOUR

- The Honda Classic marks the 15th official event of the PGA TOUR's new wraparound 2013-14 season schedule. In the fall of 2013, four tournaments that formerly made up the Fall Series along with two events being played as official events for the first time were contested, beginning with the Frys.com Open in October and concluding with the OHL Classic at Mayakoba in November. For the first time, these six events awarded full FedExCup points.
- With the addition of six fall events, year eight of the FedExCup consists of 45 events in 43 weeks, including the four FedExCup Playoff events. Only two weeks will have multiple events (WGC-Cadillac Championship/Puerto Rico Open presented by seepuertorico.com and WGC-Bridgestone Invitational/Reno-Tahoe Open).
- Last fall, for the first time, 50 players earned their PGA TOUR cards for the 2013-14 PGA TOUR Season through the Web.com Tour Regular Season money list and the inaugural Web.com Tour Finals.