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Dates: March 30–April 5, 2015
Where: Golf Club of Houston, Humble, Texas
Par/Yards: 36-36--72/7,441 yards
Field: 156
2014 champion: Matt Jones
Purse: \$6,600,000 (\$1,188,000 to the winner)
FedExCup: 500 points to the winner
Format: 72-hole stroke play
Website: shellhoustonopen.com
Facebook: TheShellHoustonOpen
Twitter: @shellhouopen

Shell Houston Open and the Masters Tournament

The Shell Houston Open continues to embrace its pre-Masters date with similar course setup and conditioning at the Golf Club of Houston in terms of mowing patterns, green speeds (12 on stimpmeter), chipping areas and minimal rough (1 ¼ inches). Currently, 36 players in the Shell Houston Open field are scheduled to compete the following week at the Masters Tournament and the event is the final opportunity for players not exempt for the Masters to play their way into the year's first major championship.

Shell Oil Company

Shell, one of the original founding partners of The First Tee and a First Tee Trustee, is the title sponsor of the Shell Houston Open for the 24th year dating to 1992 and is the third-longest current title sponsor behind Honda (1982) and AT&T Pebble Beach (1986).

Matt Jones at the 2014 Shell Houston Open

With a 42-foot birdie on the 72nd hole to cap off a final-round 6-under 66, Matt Jones forced sudden death with 54-hole leader Matt Kuchar. An even more dramatic chip-in for birdie back at 18 on the first extra hole gave Jones his first career PGA TOUR victory. With the victory, he became the third consecutive Australian-born player to win on the 2013-14 PGA TOUR behind John Senden (Valspar Championship) and Steven Bowditch (Valero Texas Open).

More on Matt Jones

- After his 2014 win, Jones made it through the first three FedExCup Playoff events before finishing the season ranked 67th.
- With 11 starts so far this season, Jones has amassed two top-10 finishes, both of which came in his last four starts; T7 AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, 3rd/Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard.
- Jones will make his sixth start at the Shell Houston Open: Win/2014, T38/2013, MC/2011, MC/2010, MC/2008

Notes on the field

- Fifteen of the top 30 in the Official World Golf Ranking including Jordan Spieth (No. 4), Sergio Garcia (No. 8) and Jimmy Walker (No. 10).
- Fifteen of the top 30 in the FedExCup standings including current leader, Jimmy Walker.

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- Fourteen major champions with a collective 25 major championship titles.
- Seven past Shell Houston Open winners: Matt Jones (2014), D.A. Points (2013), Hunter Mahan (2012), Phil Mickelson (2011), Paul Casey (2009), Johnson Wagner (2008) and Robert Allenby (2000).

Phil Mickelson

- World Golf Hall of Fame Member Phil Mickelson will make his 11th Shell Houston Open start and eighth consecutive. In addition to his 2011 win, Mickelson tied for fourth in 2012.
- Among his 42 TOUR wins, four are from the state of Texas (1996 AT&T Byron Nelson Championship, 2000 and 2008 Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial and 2011 Shell Houston Open).
- Mickelson's most recent win on TOUR is the 2013 Open Championship, his fifth major championship title.
- Comes off a T26 finish at the Valero Texas Open.

Jimmy Walker

- After claiming his second PGA TOUR victory of the season at last week's Valero Texas Open to become the season's first multiple winner, San Antonio resident Jimmy Walker will make his 11th start in the Shell Houston Open, with a T24 in 2014 as his best finish.
- Coupled with his Sony Open victory earlier this year, Walker now has five wins in his last 37 starts after starting this TOUR career 0-for-187.
- Walker, who began the final round at TPC San Antonio with a four-shot lead at 9-under 207, finished with the same margin of victory at 11-under 277. Walker finished four strokes clear of Dallas' Jordan Spieth.
- With his win in San Antonio, Walker climbs to 10th in the Official World Golf Ranking and remains No. 1 in the race for the FedExCup by 486 points over Spieth.

Jordan Spieth

- Recent Valspar Championship winner Jordan Spieth will make his third Shell Houston Open Start a week after finishing runner-up to Jimmy Walker at the Valero Texas Open. Spieth birdied four of his last five holes Sunday at TPC San Antonio to finish four strokes behind Walker. With the finish, Spieth jumped to No. 4 in the Official World Golf Rankings.
- In his two other starts at the Shell Houston Open, Spieth missed the cut in 2014 and finished T50 in 2013.
- In the 2013-14 PGA TOUR Season, Spieth collected eight top-10 finishes and went 2-1-1 in his first Ryder Cup appearance. In eight starts this season, Spieth has collected one win and three additional top-10 finishes.
- In eight starts so far this season, Spieth has now collected five top-10 finishes, including his win at the Valspar Championship and a runner-up finish last week in San Antonio.

Sergio Garcia

- Sergio Garcia will make his third start in the Shell Houston Open. With rounds of 67-65-73-70—275 (-13), Garcia claimed solo fourth at the Golf Club of Houston in 2014. He finished T77 in 2009.
- Garcia will make his sixth start of the 2014-15 PGA TOUR Season this week, having already collected a pair of top-five finishes (T2/CIMB Classic and T4/Northern Trust Open).
- An eight-time PGA TOUR champion, Garcia is in search of his first TOUR win since the 2012 Wyndham Championship.

Rickie Fowler

- In 2014, Rickie Fowler became the first player since Tiger Woods in 2005 to claim top-five finishes in all four majors in a season. His finishes in 2014: T5/Masters, T2/U.S. Open, T2/Open Championship and T3/PGA Championship.

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- Fowler will make his fourth start at the Shell Houston Open and comes off a sixth-place finish in 2014.
- Fowler remains in search of his second career PGA TOUR victory (2012 Wells Fargo Championship). In six starts this season on the PGA TOUR, his lone top-10 finish is a T3 at the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions in early November.

Ernie Els

- 2013 World Golf Hall of Fame Member Ernie Els will return to the Golf Club of Houston this year for a seventh start in the event. Of his five previous starts, he collected top-20 finishes in 2003 (T17), 2009 (T14) and 2012 (T12).
- The 19-time PGA TOUR winner makes a return to the state of Texas this week 21 years after claiming his only other Texas tournament title, the 1995 AT&T Byron Nelson Championship.
- Els has made six starts on the PGA TOUR this season, with a T13 at the Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard in his last TOUR start as his best showing.
- Els comes to Houston in search of his first win since the 2012 Open Championship.

Tournament notes

- Two players have won the week prior to the Masters Tournament and then gone on to win in Augusta – Sandy Lyle (Greater Greensboro Open) in 1988 and Phil Mickelson (BellSouth Classic) in 2006.
- Should Matt Jones successfully defend his Shell Houston Open title, he would become just the second player in tournament history to do so. Vijay Singh achieved with wins in 2004 and 2005.
- Should Matt Jones win at the Golf Club of Houston and then next week at the Masters, he would become the first player to win in successive weeks since Billy Horschel won last season's BMW Championship and TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola en route to winning the FedExCup title.
- The Shell Houston Open has had 22 playoffs—more than any event on TOUR other than the U.S. Open (32). Three of the past five champions have been decided by extra holes (Paul Casey/2009, Anthony Kim/2010 and Matt Jones/2014).
- Three of the past seven winners of the Shell Houston Open made it their first TOUR title (Johnson Wagner/2008, Paul Casey/2009 and Matt Jones/2014).

2014-15 PGA TOUR Season Highlights

It took 20 events for the first multiple winner to emerge on the PGA TOUR this season (Jimmy Walker/Sony Open in Hawaii, Valero Texas Open). The last, longer stretch came in 1994 when Nick Price won his second event (Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial) in the 21st event of the campaign.

So far in the 2015 calendar year, eight of the 13 winners were in the top 50 in the Official World Golf Ranking at the time of their respective victories: Patrick Reed (23), Jimmy Walker (17th at Sony Open in Hawaii, 13th at Valero Texas Open), Bill Haas (41), Brooks Koepka (33), Jason Day (8), Dustin Johnson (16) and Jordan Spieth (10).

Through the Valero Texas Open, eight of the 20 events have been determined by a playoff. The Valspar Championship three weeks ago marked the fourth consecutive week with a playoff finish following the Northern Trust Open, The Honda Classic and the Puerto Rico Open.

The trend of young winners on TOUR has continued early into the 2014-15 season as eight of the 20 winners have been under the age of 30. Among the eight players are:

- 24-year-old Patrick Reed, who became just the fifth player since 1991 to win four times before the age of 25, joining Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Rory McIlroy and Sergio Garcia with his victory at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions.

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- 21-year-old Jordan Spieth, with his win at the Valspar Championship, became the fourth different player since 1940 to win twice on the PGA TOUR before reaching their 22nd birthday. The others were Tiger Woods, Sergio Garcia and Robert Gamez.

The rookie class of 24 players including 21 under the age of 30, is off to a strong start, led by Canadian Nick Taylor, a 2013 graduate of the PGA TOUR Canada and a 2014 graduate of the Web.com Tour. Taylor won the Sanderson Farms Championship in October and sits 41st in the FedExCup standings. Other rookie members in the top 50 in the FedExCup standings include Daniel Berger (20), Justin Thomas (43) and Tony Finau (51).

Notable changes for the 2014-15 PGA TOUR season

- Starting in January 2015, winners of the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard and the Memorial Tournament presented by Nationwide will receive a three-year PGA TOUR exemption and a three-year exemption into THE PLAYERS Championship.
- The 2015 Presidents Cup team eligibility for the U.S. Team will be based on FedExCup points instead of money. Presidents Cup points for the FedExCup Playoffs will be weighted the same as World Golf Championships (550 for first place, 315 for second, etc.).
- The Top 125 Money List from the previous season, established following the conclusion of the 2014 Wyndham Championship, will remain as an exempt category in 2014-15 for standard, open events only.

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