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The Honda Classic 2016 pre-tournament notes

Dates: February 22-28, 2016
Where: Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
Course: PGA National (Par/Yards: 70/7,140)
Field size: 144
2015 champion: Padraig Harrington
Purse: \$6,100,000 (\$1,098,000/winner)
FedExCup: 500 points to the winner
Format: 72-hole stroke play
Twitter: @thehondaclassic

Honda longest-running title sponsor on PGA TOUR

Title sponsor of The Honda Classic since 1982, American Honda Motor Co., Inc. is the longest-tenured title sponsor on the PGA TOUR, now in its 35th year. Since its inception, the tournament has contributed more than \$30 million to national and local charities, including the Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to provide charitable support for activities that advance and enhance the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of childhood diseases and disorders.

Longest-running title sponsors

Tournament	First year as title sponsor
The Honda Classic	1982
AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am	1986
Shell Houston Open	1992
John Deere Classic	1999
Sony Open in Hawaii	1999

This week in FedExCup history

At the 2012 Honda Classic, Rory McIlroy carded a final-round 1-under 69 to finish at 12-under-par, holding off Tiger Woods and Tom Gillis by two strokes. With the victory, he became the youngest player to win The Honda Classic and in the process moved to No. 4 in the FedExCup standings, 120 points behind leader Kyle Stanley. McIlroy also moved to No. 1 in the Official World Golf Ranking for the first time. The Honda Classic marks the 15th official event of the PGA TOUR's 2015-16 wrap-around season. The 10th year of the FedExCup competition consists of 47 events including the four FedExCup Playoff events.

A look back at the 2015 Honda Classic

Sponsor exemption Padraig Harrington, ranked No. 297 in the Official World Golf Ranking, entered the final round of the 2015 Honda Classic trailing Ian Poulter by three strokes. An even-par 70 to finish at 6-under 274 on Monday was enough to force sudden death with Daniel Berger. On the second playoff hole (par-3, No. 17), a par for Harrington earned him his second Honda title (2005). With the win, Harrington became the first player to win on the PGA TOUR playing as a sponsor exemption since Lee Westwood won the 2010 FedEx St. Jude Classic. Harrington's win, his sixth on the TOUR, came at the age of 43 years, 6 months, 2 days, making him the oldest winner of the event. Runner-up Daniel Berger would go on to compete in all four FedExCup Playoffs events en route to PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year honors.

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

The week of The Honda Classic offers the final opportunity to qualify for next 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 of the FedExCup standings following The Honda Classic.

Field notes

- 23 of the top 30 in the current FedExCup standings, including Nos. 2 and 3 Kevin Kisner and Russell Knox, respectively.
- 26 of the top 50 in the Official World Golf Ranking, led by Rory McIlroy (No. 3) and Rickie Fowler (No. 5).
- 10 of the 14 PGA TOUR winners in 2015-16 including five players under the age of 30: Emiliano Grillo (Frys.com Open), Smylie Kaufman (Shriners Hospitals for Children Open), Justin Thomas (CIMB Classic), Peter Malnati (Sanderson Farms Championship) and Hideki Matsuyama (Waste Management Phoenix Open). This trend of young winners is a carryover from the 2014-15 season that saw a TOUR-record 24 victories by players under the age of 30.
- 12 past champions of The Honda Classic; Padraig Harrington (2005, 2015), Russell Henley (2014), Michael Thompson (2013), Rory McIlroy (2012), Rory Sabbatini (2011), Camilo Villegas (2010), Ernie Els (2008), Mark Wilson (2007), Luke Donald (2006), Vijay Singh (1999), Stuart Appleby (1997).

Player Notes

Rory McIlroy

- The world No. 3 will make his fourth start of the 2015-16 season and eighth start at The Honda Classic.
- Won the 2012 Honda Classic and held the 54-hole lead in 2014, finishing T2 after losing in a playoff.
- 2012 and 2014 PGA TOUR Player of the Year claimed 2014-15 TOUR wins at the World Golf Championships-Dell Match Play and Wells Fargo Championship. He finished 15th in FedExCup standings.
- Has made two European Tour starts this season (Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship/T3 and Omega Dubai Desert Classic/T6).
- Is coming off a T20 finish at last week's Northern Trust Open.

Daniel Berger

- 2014-15 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year and area native posted a final-round, 6-under 64 at PGA National to force sudden death with eventual winner Padraig Harrington.
- In addition to the runner-up finish at The Honda Classic, amassed additional five top-10 performances last season, including a solo-second at the BMW Championship in the FedExCup Playoffs.
- Was the only rookie last season to advance to the TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola.

Rickie Fowler

- The Jupiter, Fla., resident will make his seventh-consecutive straight start at The Honda Classic; best finish was T7 in 2012.
- Top finishes in five starts this season; Hyundai Tournament of Champions/T5, Waste Management Phoenix Open/P2. Won the ABU Dhabi Golf Championship in January.
- Claimed his second and third PGA TOUR titles in 2015 at THE PLAYERS Championship and Deutsche Bank Championship, en route to a fourth-place finish in the FedExCup standings.
- Begins The Honda Classic fourth in the Official World Golf Rankings, a career best.

Phil Mickelson

- Returns for third-consecutive Honda Classic start and sixth overall (1995/MC, 2001/T27, 2002/T11, 2014/MC, 2015/T17).
- Will make his fifth start of the 2015-16 PGA TOUR Season (CareerBuilder Challenge in partnership with the Clinton Foundation/T3, Farmers Insurance Open/MC, Waste Management Phoenix Open/T11, AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am/2).
- In search of 43rd career PGA TOUR win and first since the 2013 Open Championship.
- Has collected three wins in the state of Florida; 1997 Arnold Palmer Invitational, 2007 PLAYERS Championship, 2009 WGC-Cadillac Championship.

Russell Knox

- In two previous starts in The Honda Classic, finished T2 in 2014 (playoff) and T3 in 2015.
- Broke into the winner's circle on the PGA TOUR for the first time earlier this season at the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions in Shanghai. A week later, lost in a playoff to Graeme McDowell at the OHL Classic at Mexico.

Adam Scott

- On the heels of his T2 finish at last week's Northern Trust Open, Scott is poised to make his fifth start in The Honda Classic and first since finishing T12 in 2014. His best finish came in his first start of 2001 (T11).
- Will be making his fifth start of the 2015-16 PGA TOUR Season, with a solo-second at the CIMB Classic his best showing.

- Remains in search of his 12th career, PGA TOUR win and first since the 2014 Dean & DeLuca Invitational (Colonial Country Club).

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).
- Six of the last eight 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, 2015), Luke Donald (2006), Ernie Els (2008), Y.E. Yang (2009), Camilo Villegas (2010), Rory Sabbatini (2011) and Rory McIlroy (2012). Mark Wilson (2007), Michael Thompson (2013) and Russell Henley (2014) are the only United States natives to win since 2005.
- PGA National continues to rank among the toughest layouts on TOUR. In 2015, the par-70 Champion Course ranked as the second toughest course on TOUR outside of the majors, with a scoring average of 71.832. Only the par-72 TPC San Antonio (Valero Texas Open) ranked tougher, with an average of 74.521.
- From 2007-2015, the “Bear Trap” (Nos. 15-17) ranked as the fifth-toughest, three-hole stretch on the PGA TOUR of courses that have been played in each of the last nine years. The field has played that stretch of holes in a combined +2.571 over par since 2007. They played the remaining 15 holes in +3.535.
- Since 2007, 325 of 430 players have hit at least one ball in the water on the “Bear Trap,” for a grand total of 974 balls in the water.