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2016 Valero Texas Open pre-tournament notes

Dates: April 18-24, 2016

Where: San Antonio, Texas

Course: TPC San Antonio – TPC Oaks Course

Par/Yardage: 36-36--72/7,435 yards

Field size: 156

2014 champion: Jimmy Walker

Purse: \$6,200,000 (\$1,116,000/winner)

FedExCup: 500 points to the winner

Format: 72-hole stroke play

Twitter: @valerotxopen

Jimmy Walker at the 2015 Valero Texas Open

On a wind-blown TPC San Antonio layout last year, Boerne's Jimmy Walker began the final round with a four-stroke lead (over Jordan Spieth), before his 2-under 70 on Sunday was enough to win by the same margin, over runner-up Spieth. After a first-round score of 1-under-par 71, Walker trailed by four, but led outright after rounds two and three after posting scores of 67-69, respectively. The victory in San Antonio moved Walker into the top 10 in the Official World Golf Rankings for the first time in his career.

More on Jimmy Walker

- Walker played his first 187 events on the PGA TOUR without a win. His Valero Texas Open victory marked his fifth TOUR win in his 37 starts.
- Highlighted by his victories at the Sony Open in Hawaii and Valero Texas Open last season, Walker amassed a total of six top-10 finishes, earning him a position on the U.S. Presidents Cup Team for the first time.
- So far this season, Walker has collected three top-10 finishes in 11 starts, with his best being a share of fourth at the Farmers Insurance Open.
- Walker will be making his 11th career start in this week's Valero Texas Open, with a T3 in 2010 his only other top-10 finish. 2010 marked the first year the event was held at TPC San Antonio.

Notes on the field

- Seven of the top 30 in the FedExCup standings, led by No. 4 Brandt Snedeker.
- Two former FedExCup champions: Brandt Snedeker (2012) and Billy Horschel (2014)
- Nine of the top 30 in the Official World Golf Ranking; Branden Grace (11), Patrick Reed (13), Brandt Snedeker (16), Zach Johnson (17), Brooks Koepka (18), Phil Mickelson (19), J.B. Holmes (21), Jimmy Walker (26) and Matt Kuchar (27).
- Forty-two time PGA TOUR winner and World Golf Hall of Fame Member Phil Mickelson will make his fourth start at this year's Valero Texas Open. His best finish is a T30 in 2015. Among his 42 TOUR wins are four from the state of Texas (1996 AT&T Byron Nelson, 2000/2008 DEAN & DELUCA Invitational and 2011 Shell Houston Open). Mickelson's most recent win on TOUR was the 2013 Open Championship, his fifth major championship. Through nine starts this season, Mickelson has claimed three top-5 finishes and he leads the TOUR in scoring average (69.440) despite missing the cut in his last start at the Masters Tournament.
- 2008 and 2009 Valero Texas Open champion Zach Johnson is poised to make his sixth start in the event and fourth at TPC San Antonio; 2010/MC, 2014/T6, 2015/T20. Johnson, a 12-time winner on the PGA TOUR, is looking for his first win since the 2015 Open Championship. With the exception of 2011, Johnson has won at least once a season on the PGA TOUR. So far in the 2015-16 PGA TOUR Season, he has collected three top-10 finishes in 11 starts.
- Ten-time international winner Branden Grace earned his first PGA TOUR win last week at the RBC Heritage with a final-round 66. Grace, who went 5-0 as a member of the International Presidents Cup

Team last year, will be making third consecutive start in this week's Valero Texas Open. He finished T79 in 2014 and T30 last year. He will be making his ninth start of the 2015-16 PGA TOUR Season. In addition to his win in Hilton Head, Grace's other top-5 finish this season was a T5 at the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions last November.

- Brandt Snedeker claimed his eighth career PGA TOUR win earlier this season at the wind-swept Farmers Insurance Open. The 2012 FedExCup champion will be making just his second start at the Valero Texas Open this week, having finished fourth in 2011. Snedeker's seven wins since the start of the 2011 season are only surpassed by Rory Mcllroy, Tiger Woods and Jason Day.
- Nineteen-time PGA TOUR winner and World Golf Hall of Fame member Ernie Els will make his third career start at the Valero Texas Open, having finished T3 in 2010 and missed the cut in 2014. The four-time major champion is looking for his first top-10 finish since a T5 at The Barclays in 2014. Els posted a 5-under 66 in Sunday's final round of the RBC Heritage last week to claim a share of 14th place.
- Charley Hoffman will be making his 11th consecutive start at this week's Valero Texas Open, where he has never missed a cut. Last year's first-round leader has finished in the top-15 nine times, including a T2 and T3 showing in 2011 and 2013, respectively. Last year, he finished T11 and boosted his career earnings at the event to \$1,766,770.
- Bryson DeChambeau finished T4 last week his professional debut last week at the RBC Heritage to earn a top-10 exemption into the Valero Texas Open. Last year, DeChambeau became the fifth golfer in history to win both the NCAA Division I individual championship (at SMU) and the U.S. Amateur in the same year, joining Jack Nicklaus, Phil Mickelson, Tiger Woods and Ryan Moore. In his final amateur event at the Masters two weeks ago, he finished T21 after contending early in the week. All of DeChambeau's irons and wedges are cut to the exact same length, 37.5 inches. Their lie and bounce angle are also the same. Only the lofts are different.
- Notable sponsor exemptions include:
 - Ryan Ruffels, 17, was born in the United States, but moved to Australia after his father, tennis professional Ray Ruffels, received a job offer there. Ryan had a notable amateur career in Australia which included becoming the youngest player in the PGA Tour of Australasia's history to make the cut, achieved at the 2013 Queensland Open. Ruffels turned professional in January and made his first professional PGA TOUR start at the Farmers Insurance Open where he finished T43. He is fluent in both Spanish and English.
 - Brad Dalke, a freshman at the University of Oklahoma, won the 2015 Junior PGA Championship last August to earn his way into the 2016 Valero Texas Open. The native of Hobart, Oklahoma was a four-time, first-team AJGA All-America.

Drive beyond \$100 million

Together with the Benefit for Children, the Valero Texas Open eclipsed the \$100 million for local and regional charities after last year's event, nearly all of which came since 2002, when Valero became the tournament's title sponsor.

Tournament notes

- Players in the Valero Texas Open with Texas collegiate connections include:
 - Baylor University – Jimmy Walker
 - University of Houston – Curtis Reed, Curtis Reed
 - Lamar University – Chris Stroud
 - Southern Methodist University – Colt Knost, Kelly Kraft, Bryson DeChambeau
 - TCU – J.J. Henry, Tom Hoge, Robby Ormond
 - Texas Lutheran University – Cameron Beckman
 - Texas A&M – Ryan Palmer, Bronson Burgoon, Martin Pillar
 - University of Texas – Justin Leonard, Jhonattan Vegas, Omar Uresti
 - University of Texas Arlington – Paul McConnell
- 2016 marks the seventh consecutive year of the Valero Texas Open being contested at TPC San Antonio, a Greg Norman design with Sergio Garcia serving as design consultant.
- Past Valero Texas Open champions in the field: Tim Herron (1997), Justin Leonard (2000, 2001, 2007), Zach Johnson (2008, 2009), Brendan Steele (2011), Ben Curtis (2012), Jimmy Walker (2015).
- Since 1970, there have only been four international winners of the Valero Texas Open, three of whom emerged since 2010: Steven Bowditch (2014), Martin Laird (2013), Adam Scott (2010) and Nick Price who, in 1992, defeated Steve Elkington in sudden death at Oak Hills CC.
- Due to exceptionally strong winds last year, the first round scoring average of 76.785 became the highest average of a single round at the Valero Texas Open since moving to TPC San Antonio in 2010.
- Dating to 1922, the Valero Texas Open is the third-oldest non-major on the PGA TOUR calendar behind only the BMW Championship (1899) and RBC Canadian Open (1904). It's also the longest-running event on the PGA TOUR to be held in the same city.

2015-16 PGA TOUR Season summary to date

The 2015-16 Season marks the 10th season of the FedExCup, and the winner's circle to this point has been shared by both young and established stars.

The season kicked off last fall with five consecutive first-time winners including two from the high school class of 2011, Emiliano Grillo (Shriners Hospitals for Children Open) and Justin Thomas (CIMB Classic). That 2011 class includes five PGA TOUR members – 2015 FedExCup champion Jordan Spieth, 2015 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year Daniel Berger, Thomas, Grillo, Patrick Rodgers along with Web.com Tour member Ollie Schniederjans.

In the 2016 calendar year, nine of the 16 winners have major championship titles on their resumes including Masters champion Danny Willet. He is joined by Jason Day (2), Charl Schwartzel, Adam Scott (2), Bubba Watson, Jason Dufner and Jordan Spieth along with two winners have also won the FedExCup in Brandt Snedeker and Spieth. Highlights of this period include:

- The reigning FedExCup champion Spieth, still only 22, picked up right where he left off last year, winning at Kapalua by eight strokes in early January.
- Day, also a five-time winner last year, won back-to-back tournaments in March at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard and the World Golf Championships-Dell Match Play to move to second in the FedExCup standings and returning to No. 1 in the Official World Golf Ranking. Day now has nine career PGA TOUR titles and has won six of his last 13 PGA TOUR starts.
- With his win at Trump National Doral, Scott became the first player to win in back-to-back weeks since Billy Horschel at the 2014 BMW Championship and TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola.

Veteran stars have struck back after the early-season success of the twentysomethings, as nine of the 16 winners in 2016 have been players in their 30s.

In the race for the FedExCup, one season with three playoff losses, Kevin Kisner rebounded with his first TOUR win at The RSM Classic, taking the lead in the FedExCup standings that he did not relinquish until Snedeker surpassed him with his victory at the Farmers Insurance Open. Snedeker maintained his lead atop the FedExCup standings through The Honda Classic. With his back-to-back wins at The Honda Classic and WGC-Cadillac Championship, Scott overtook the No. 1 spot after the WGC-Cadillac Championship and continues to lead the FedExCup standings over No. 2 Day.