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2016 Sanderson Farms Championship pre-tournament notes

Dates: October 24-30, 2016

Where: Country Club of Jackson / Jackson, Miss.

Par/Yards: 72/7,421 yards

Field: 132

2015 champion: Peter Malnati

Purse: \$4,200,000/\$756,000 (winner)

FedExCup: 300 points to the winner

Format: 72-hole stroke play

Twitter: @SandersonPGA

A look back at the 2015 Sanderson Farms Championship

Then a PGA TOUR rookie, Peter Malnati made 495'7" of putts at last season's Sanderson Farms Championship (110'1"/R1, 127'2"/R2, 132'11"/R3, 125'5"/R4) en route to becoming the fifth consecutive first-time winner in as many TOUR events. Malnati posted a 5-under 67 in the final round, held on Monday due to inclement weather, to hold off William McGirt and David Toms by a stroke at 18-under 270.

More on Peter Malnati

- A week after his win in Jackson, Malnati claimed another top-10 finish, T10, at the OHL Classic at Mayakoba, also in a Monday finish.
- In the first start of the calendar year, Malnati finished T6 at the Tournament of Champions in Hawaii.
- With his win and two additional top-10 finishes, Malnati made it to the FedExCup Playoffs for the first time. Following a missed cut at The Barclays, he ended his season ranked 104th in the FedExCup standings.
- In his first two starts this season, Malnati finished T35 at the Safeway Open and T51 at last week's CIMB Classic in Malaysia.

Sanderson Farms Championship and the FedExCup

This week's Sanderson Farms Championship is the fourth event in the PGA TOUR's wraparound schedule that bridges two years with 43 events as part of the 2016-17 PGA TOUR Season and four events in the FedExCup Playoffs that will culminate with the 2017 TOUR Championship and the crowning of the FedExCup champion. At last year's event, Sanderson Farms, Inc. announced a 10-year extension of his title sponsorship of the Jackson event, taking it through 2026. The contract extension begins after this year's Sanderson Farms Championship.

The 2016-17 PGA TOUR Season kicked off with the Frys.com Open and includes seven events during the fall of 2016, all of which will award FedExCup points. After a break, the season will resume in January with the traditional swing through Hawaii before moving to the West Coast.

Every week is significant in the race for the FedExCup – four of the seven winners from the fall calendar of 2015 (Grillo, Justin Thomas, Russell Knox and Kevin Kisner) qualified for the TOUR Championship and two others (Smylie Kaufman and Graeme McDowell) finished inside the top 50.

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Field Notes

- Seven Sanderson Farms Championship winners are in this year's field: Peter Malnati (2015), Nick Taylor (2014), Scott Stallings (2012), Chris Kirk (2011), Will MacKenzie (2008), D.J. Trahan (2006) and Heath Slocum (2005).
- Five major championship winners: Lucas Glover (2009 U.S. Open), Geoff Ogilvy (2006 U.S. Open), David Toms (2001 PGA Championship), Retief Goosen (2001, 2004 U.S. Open) and Angel Cabrera (2007 U.S. Open, 2009 Masters).
- Five players in the top 30 in the 2016-17 FedExCup standings: Patton Kizzire (3), Cody Gribble (17), Chris Kirk (17), Mackenzie Hughes (28) and Whee Kim (28).

Player Notes

Ian Poulter

- Poised to make his first start in the Sanderson Farms Championship, England's Ian Poulter is coming off a T17 finish at last week's CIMB Classic.
- Poulter is playing the 2016-17 season on a Major Medical Extension, with 10 available events to earn 218 FedExCup points or \$347,634 to remain exempt for the remainder of the season. He's well on his way towards that goal as he finished T17 last week at the CIMB to earn 48 FedExCup points and \$101,500.
- Poulter is in search of his third career PGA TOUR victory and first since the 2012 World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions.

Chris Kirk

- The 2011 Sanderson Farms Championship winner Chris Kirk is one of three first-time winners in the last five years at the event.
- Kirk played for the victorious U.S. Team at the 2015 Presidents Cup in Korea.
- After a season with three top-10 performances and a 54th-place finish in the FedExCup standings, Kirk notched a T8 in his season debut at the Safeway Open.

Patton Kizzire

- Coming off his runner-up finish two weeks ago at the Safeway Open, PGA TOUR sophomore Patton Kizzire returns to this week's Sanderson Farms Championship after finishing T4 in last season's event.
- Kizzire's second-place showing at the Safeway Open two weeks ago marked the second consecutive time to open a season with a runner-up finish. At the 2015 Shriners Hospitals for Children Open, he opened his season with a T2 showing.
- Five top-10 showings in his rookie season of 2015-16 resulted in a berth in the FedExCup Playoffs. He made it through the second of four Playoffs events, the Deutsche Bank Championship, before ending his season at No. 82 in the standings.

Cody Gribble

- Of the 21 PGA TOUR rookies competing in the season-opening Safeway Open two weeks ago, Cody Gribble netted the lone top-10 finish with a T8 finish at 14-under 274.
- Gribble, who collected three top-25s in nine starts during the 2014 season on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica, will be making his eighth career start on the PGA TOUR at this week's Sanderson Farms Championship.
- Gribble earned his rookie status by virtue of his 40th-place finish on the 2016 Web.com Tour priority list.

Michael Johnson

- Michael Johnson, the 23-year-old who graduated from Auburn University in May, captured the attention of the golfing world with his third-place showing as an amateur at the 2016 Barbasol Championship in his first-ever start on the PGA TOUR.
- Johnson was a 2015-16 Golfweek First-Team All-American, who also broke the single season Auburn scoring record this year with a stroke average of 70.37.

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- Johnson won three college tournaments in 2015-16, bringing his career total to five (one shy of school record held by Jimmy Green).
- Thompson was a 2016 Jack Nicklaus Award semifinalist.

Tournament Records and Notes

- Nine players have made the Sanderson Farms Championship their first win on TOUR: Peter Malnati (2015), Nick Taylor (2014), Chris Kirk (2011), D.J. Trahan (2006), Luke Donald (2002), Cameron Beckman (2001), Willie Wood (1996), Ed Dougherty (1995) and Brian Henninger (1994).
- Since its 1986 inception, only two players have won the Sanderson Farms Championship more than once; Brian Henninger (1994, 1999) and Fred Funk (1998, 2004).
- First-round leaders at the Sanderson Farms Championship since 2000 who've held on for the win: Bill Haas (2010), D.J. Trahan (2006), John Huston (2003) and Steve Lowery (2000).
- Since 1990 - when the event was neither cancelled nor condensed in rounds, the 54-hole leader has held on for the win 10 times, but not since Scott Stallings in 2012.
- After 19 years at Annandale Country Club in Madison, Miss., the Sanderson Farms Championship moved to the Country Club of Jackson in 2014. Prior to that, it spent eight years in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Sanderson Farms Championship and charity

Century Club Charities, host organization for the Sanderson Farms Championship, continues to make a tremendous impact in the Jackson area, especially at the Friends of Children's Hospital. Friends of Children's Hospital is a nonprofit organization benefitting Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Specifically, the funds raised through the Sanderson Farms Championship go to the Children's Heart Center, a comprehensive pediatric heart surgery program at Batson. Before its formation in 2010, patients had to leave the state for surgery. Since 1994, the Sanderson Farms Championship has raised more than \$11 million for Friends of Children's Hospital and other area charities. Last year, alone, \$1.5 million was provided to Mississippi charities, with a record \$1.109 million going to Friends of Children's Hospital.

2015-16 FedExCup Notes

- The four winners of the FedExCup Playoffs events in 2016 were all inside the top 15 in the Official World Golf Ranking: Patrick Reed (The Barclays/14), Rory McIlroy (Deutsche Bank Championship/5), Dustin Johnson (BMW Championship/2) and McIlroy (TOUR Championship/3).
- 2016 FedExCup champion Rory McIlroy made history as he surpassed Tiger Woods for the most all-time FedExCup Playoffs wins, becoming the first player to capture four Playoffs titles with wins at the Deutsche Bank Championship and TOUR Championship.
- Rory McIlroy, who entered the TOUR Championship at No. 6 in the FedExCup standings, became the third FedExCup champion who ranked outside the top five heading into the TOUR Championship, joining Jim Furyk (2010) and Bill Haas (2011).
- Dating to the 2014 Deutsche Bank Championship, 10 of the 11 winners in the FedExCup Playoffs have been under the age of 30.
- During the 10th season of the FedExCup, a record 11 different players (Emiliano Grillo, Smylie Kaufman, Justin Thomas, Russell Knox, Kevin Kisner, Brandt Snedeker, Adam Scott, Jason Day, Dustin Johnson, Patrick Reed and Rory McIlroy) held the lead in the FedExCup standings this season, with Day holding the lead the longest period, a total of 11 weeks.
- Adam Scott (T4/The Barclays, 4/Deutsche Bank Championship, T4/BMW Championship, T8/TOUR Championship) is the fourth player to finish inside the top 10 in all four FedExCup Playoffs events in a single season, joining Rory Sabbatini in 2007, Padraig Harrington in 2009 and Dustin Johnson in 2012.

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- For the first time since the inception of the FedExCup in 2007, two rookies (Emiliano Grillo and Si Woo Kim) qualified for the TOUR Championship. In 10 years, only nine of the 300 players to qualify for the Playoff Finale have been rookies.

Additional 2015-16 season notes

With nine straight seasons with a PGA TOUR title, Dustin Johnson owns the longest active streak of seasons with a TOUR victory.

Dustin Johnson led the TOUR in Adjusted Scoring Average (69.172) to earn the Byron Nelson Award. Johnson also finished first on Official Money List (\$9,365,185) to earn the Arnold Palmer Award.

With a T6 finish at the TOUR Championship, Johnson led the PGA TOUR in top-10 finishes in 2015-16 with 15, tied with Jordan Spieth (2014-15) for second-most since Vijay Singh recorded 18 top-10 finishes during the 2005 season.

Continuing a trend from past seasons, 14 different winners under the age of 30 accounted for a total of 18 PGA TOUR titles in 2015-16.

The 2015-16 season featured 16 first-time winners, the second-most in a season since 1970, and two short of the record of 18 (2002). The start of the season set the pace for first-timers to dominate in 2015-16 with the first five events being won by players earning their first PGA TOUR victory.

With his 13th career PGA TOUR title at the season-ending TOUR Championship, Rory McIlroy owns the most wins on the PGA TOUR since 2010 ahead of Jason Day (10), Dustin Johnson (10) and Bubba Watson (9).

Scoring records:

- Jim Furyk's 58 in the final round of the Travelers Championship marked the first-ever sub-59 round in an official PGA TOUR event. Furyk is also one of just six players to shoot 59 on the PGA TOUR, having done so in the second round of the 2013 BMW Championship.
- There were three rounds of 63 in the major championships to tie the 18-hole major record: Robert Streb (PGA Championship), Henrik Stenson and Phil Mickelson (The Open Championship). Stenson's final-round 63 was the lowest-final round score in Open Championship history and his Stenson's 264 total score broke the 72-hole total score in a major of 265 by David Toms at the 2001 PGA Championship.

Of the six multiple winners in 2015-16, three won in back-to-back starts: Dustin Johnson (2016 U.S. Open, World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Invitational), Jason Day (2016 Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard, World Golf Championships-Dell Match Play) and Adam Scott (2016 The Honda Classic, World Golf Championships-Cadillac Championship).

A total of 29 of 44 stroke play events in 2015-16 were determined by a one-stroke margin (16) or a playoff (13).

Two events were won in wire-to-wire fashion last season and current world No. 1 Jason Day was the champion at both. Day led from start to finish to claim the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard in March and again at THE PLAYERS Championship in May.

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