

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER IS NOT READY TO GIVE UP THE TROPHY

The British Open

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The oldest championship in golf is now the last major on the calendar. The British Open has 166 years of history behind it, and so it doesn't need a catchy slogan for Scottie Scheffler and everyone else to know it will be eight months before anyone plays another major.

Scheffler became the "Champion of the Year" at Royal Portrush last summer with another command performance on golf's biggest stage. The world's No. 1 player is not one to look back on all the trophies he has won in the last five years, but he has caught himself glancing at all the names engraved into the base of that silver claret jug.

"The perfect size trophy _ not too big, not too small, and you get to drink out of it," said the golfer from Dallas. "It will be very tough to hand it back ... but I'll be fighting like heck to get it back on Sunday."

The 154th edition of The Open Championship returns to Royal Birkdale on July 16-19 along the Lancashire Coast in northwest England, which tends to produce some of the biggest crowds. The Royal & Ancient is expecting upward of 300,000 fans this year. It will be the last chance for Scheffler to make it three years in a row winning a major. In the modern era of majors that date to 1934, only seven other players have done that _ Peter Thomson, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Brooks Koepka.

Scheffler is the last of 10 names added to the base of the claret jug since Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland last took possession in 2014, and the Masters champion

is keen to get a seventh major and join Harry Vardon with the most majors by anyone from the Old World. English hopes lie with Tommy Fleetwood, who grew up a short walk from Birkdale, and Matt Fitzpatrick, whose three wins this year are more than Scheffler and McIlroy combined.

BIRKDALE'S CHAMPIONS

Royal Birkdale didn't host a British Open until 1954, but it has built a reputation as the best links course in England, with a roll call of Open champions as strong as any. Of the nine previous champions (Peter Thomson won twice), all but one are in the World Golf Hall of Fame or certain to be there when they become eligible.

BIRKDALE'S CHANGES

Even though Royal Birkdale has been a regular part of the British Open rotation for the last 72 years, the R&A felt changes were in order. That includes

one McIlroy believes will be "a big talking point." The par-3 15 is a new hole that can play as long as 241 yards. "Too long," Australian golfer Adam Scott said. Previously, the 15th hole was a par 5. That hole is now No. 14, and the old 14th (a par 3) is now a short-game practice area. Also, the short par-4 fifth has been redesigned to eliminate the blind shot and tempt players to drive the green.

THE HOMECOMING

The British Open hasn't had an English-born winner on an English links in 57 years. The last was Tony Jacklin in 1969. If that's not enough pressure, Fleetwood has the rare opportunity to win a major in his hometown. He used to sneak onto the royal links after hours as a boy, and he already is among the most popular players in golf with the grace he shows in wins and tough losses. This will be his second Open at Royal Birkdale. Only this time, he is the reigning FedEx Cup champion and among the top 10 in the world.

THE FUTURE OF SPIETH

A return to Birkdale is a reminder for Jordan Spieth, once looked up as golf's "Golden Child," has gone nine years without a major and four years without any victory. Even with changes to the course, memories are strong. Spieth famously took a penalty drop on the practice range right of the 13th hole and salvage bogey, then went birdie-eagle-birdie-birdie to win the third leg of the career Grand Slam at age 23. Even in a game that can move slowly, time passes quickly.

Scottie Scheffler kisses the trophy after winning last year's British Open at the Royal Portrush Golf Club, Northern Ireland, July 20, 2025.



FACTS & FIGURES

Event: 154th Open Championship, aka The British Open

Dates: July 16-19

Site: Royal Birkdale Golf Club, Southport, England

Par: 70

Length: 7,156 yards

Field: 156 players minimum.

Playoff (if necessary): 3 holes, aggregate score.

Prize money: TBA (\$17 million in 2025).

Winner's share: TBA (\$3.1 million in 2025).

Defending champion: Scottie Scheffler

Last year: Scheffler stretched his lead to seven shots during the final round in another major runaway. He closed with a 3-under 68 at Royal Portrush for a four-shot victory, his second major of the year and the third leg of the career Grand Slam.

Last time at Royal Birkdale: Jordan Spieth overcame a wild ride on the back nine with a birdie-eagle-birdie-birdie stretch to pull away with a 1-under 69 and a three-shot victory over Matt Kuchar. Spieth had the third leg of Grand Slam at age 23.

British Open champions at Royal Birkdale: Jordan Spieth (2017), Padraig Harrington (2008), Mark O'Meara (1998), Ian Baker-Finch (1991), Tom Watson (1983), Johnny Miller (1976), Lee Trevino (1971), Arnold Palmer (1961), Peter Thomson (1954 and 1965).

American run: Americans have won the claret jug the last three years, their longest streak at the British Open in 20 years.

Key statistic: Rory McIlroy is the only player to win a major this year while being ranked in the top 10 in the world.

Worth noting: The British Open has gone the longest without a back-to-back winner (2007-08) of the four majors.

Television (all times EDT): Thursday-Friday, 1:30 a.m. to 4 a.m. (Peacock), 4 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (USA Network); Saturday, 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. (USA Network), 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. (NBC); Sunday, 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. (USA Network), 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. (NBC).