

**SCOTT PAREL**

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**MODERATOR:** We're now joined by Georgia's own Scott Parel here at the Mitsubishi Electric Classic presented by Vensure.

Just to start, how's it feel to be back here at TPC Sugarloaf this week?

**SCOTT PAREL:** It's great, it's always great to be in Georgia. I've lived here so much over 50 years of my life and I love Sugarloaf. I usually do OK here, come close a couple of times, so I'm looking forward to being here.

**Q. How's the game shaping up?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** You know, it's coming around. I haven't been playing terrific. I played OK to start and then I struggled a little bit. The last few weeks I felt like I'm pretty close.

**Q. Did you find something last week? You had a top-25.**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Well, my putting, I've been struggling with my putting pretty much all last year and then the beginning of this year. So I've just tried to simplify things, that's usually what it takes. I feel like my putter's closer to where it used to be, so we'll see.

**Q. These greens out here require a little bit of putting.**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Yes, yes, but it's grass that I like. We've got this at home where I play, Augusta Country Club, and stuff that I grew up on. The grass itself is something I'm familiar with. Yeah, these greens are tough, you've got to try to be in the right spot, for sure. But they're in fabulous shape, so if you miss putts out here right now, it's your own fault.

**Q. Looks like there's no storm or anything weird happening, so great week for golf.**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Yeah, I know, I know. It's unusual unfortunately for us, we always seem to run into something here. Yeah, the week looks fantastic. A little bit of nice, decent, warm temperatures and not a whole lot of wind and not a whole lot of threat of rain. Yeah, I know everybody here, all the players, we love coming here, we're always just worried about the weather. When we see a good forecast, we get excited.

**Q. I wanted to get into your background of how you got here. This is not the typical path of the Champions Tour.**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Yeah.



**Q. How did you -- first of all, how did you get from Michigan to the University of Georgia?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Well, I was just born in Michigan. My parents moved us down here to Augusta when I was 7, so I grew up in Augusta basically from third grade on. We ended up here through my dad, through work.

Went to the University of Georgia. This is home for me. My bio says I'm from Pontiac, Michigan. I'm not really from -- I was born there and that was about the end of it.

But yeah, it's an interesting path. I didn't play golf in college and really didn't have any aspirations to really play golf in college. I wanted to go to Georgia and I knew I wasn't a good enough player at that time to be able to play golf at Georgia. I didn't even want to try to walk on. Walking on there kind of means you say you're on the team, but there's really not a whole lot else that comes out of it.

So I just wanted to concentrate on going to school, getting my degree. I got a degree in computer science, wanted to work in the IT industry, which was pretty new back then in 1986 when I finished. Yeah, so did that for 10 years.

Honestly, I never really had any inkling of thinking about being a professional until I was probably like 30 years old and I started playing a lot of really good golf, amateur stuff. I contended actually up here in Atlanta one year, I forget what year that is. I was leading I think going into the final day of the state am. Didn't play very well, but made it to the round of 32 in the '94 U.S. Amateur.

When I started playing golf and basically just being a weekend golfer but still being able to compete like I was, we're fortunate in Augusta we've got such a great -- at that time we had such a great run of amateur events all summer long. We would play like nine or 10 events in all the courses in the area every weekend basically during the summer. Then we would have like a Ryder Cup match between Georgia and South Carolina since we're right there on the border.

So there was a lot of good amateur golf, a lot of good amateur competition just right at home. I had a year in '95 where I think I was player of the year there and was shooting a lot of really good scores. Some guys at my club at home were like, hey, you know, you ever think of turning pro? At the time I'm already married and we've got two kids. My wife's not working because I've got a pretty good job at home, she's just taking care of the kids.

I was like, you guys are crazy, I can't quit a job with steady pay. They said, well, we'll pay for you to go to Q-School and see how it goes. So that's what I ended up doing, I ended up taking a week off of work, vacation, and went to Q-School. Got through first stage at Harbor Club. Went to second stage in South Carolina, Country Club of South Carolina maybe. Didn't make it through there, but -- and then went right back to work and kept working.



But after I did that and I started evaluating my golf versus guys who that's what they were doing all the time and I was basically writing code 60 hours a week and playing golf on the weekend and kind of hung in there with them OK, I kind of got to where I was like, you know what, maybe I need to think about giving this a shot.

I just talked about it with my wife and she was the one who -- basically said like, you know what, I'm not going to do this unless I know you're 100 percent. She said, you've got to do it. She said, I don't want you to turn 50 and have been working for 25 years in a cubical and then, you know, think, well, I wonder what would have happened had I done this or had I done that. She said, you've got to do it, we'll figure out a way, we'll make it work. She was the one that basically pushed me out there and said you've got to give it a shot.

And so I did. I quit my job I think in like July that year and started playing mini-tour golf. Went to Q-School. I never played well enough to get out of second stage until 2002, so that was like a five-year stretch where I played nothing but mini-tour golf all around the southeast. I would leave -- we played usually like Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. I'd leave home, play three days, drive back home, be back home on the weekend. I did that for like five years.

Then in 2002 I finally said, all right, this is it, this is going to be my year. Either I'm going to get some kind of status or I'm going to stop, I've got to go back to work. And I kept my hand in it enough to where I could go back to work in what I was doing before.

I qualified actually at Settin-down Creek here. Was low guy to qualify for Bethpage Black that year for the U.S. Open, so that was my first U.S. Open that I had gotten in. Even though I played really poorly, it was just, I got such a vibe there of being in a U.S. Open and for whatever reason, that spurred me on to get status. So I got to final stage that year and then I had status the following year in 2003.

Which I thought was a great thing, but I think I played 18 events and might have made four cuts that year. I mean, I really struggled. It gave me a good idea where my game was and what I really needed to focus on and what I needed to work on. So I just kept grinding away. I think I played 12 years on what's now the Korn Ferry Tour off and on. I had a few years where I didn't have status.

In 2013 when I won on the Web.com in Wichita as a 48-year-old, that kind of was the big, I would say the big milestone for me. At that point I'm already 48, the chances of me getting on the PGA TOUR and really have a lot of success that late in my life is pretty slim. I was like, if I can just figure out a way to get out here on the PGA TOUR Champions, I think I can do OK.

So that's what I did. I went to Q-School right when I turned 50 and I didn't get through the first year, that year, but I went in January, starting doing the Monday qualifying. I Monday qualified for six in a row every week, played when I get in, then I'd go to the Monday, do the Monday. I think I ended up playing like 14, 15 events maybe that year and finished



40-something on the Schwab Cup, which gave me some kind of status.

But then I went to Q-School and I won Q-School that fall. So since then, up until this year I've been exempt pretty much every year. This is the first year now where I'm kind of having to fight for my status again. Finished 51st on the Schwab Cup list last year, had some health issues, had a couple things going on with my heart and whatever, which didn't help me much last year.

I'm feeling good now. My game, I feel like I'm in a good spot, I just need to get starts. I've been lucky enough, tournaments have given me some chances. I've Monday qualified I think in Tucson, I Mondayed in there.

So I'm just going to keep trying to get back to doing like what I was doing when I first started out here and not feel like I'm on easy street so much maybe, I've got to work a little harder. Not that I wasn't working hard, but for a guy like me, I kind of knew going into this what it was going to mean for me to be able to stay out here is I've got to play well every year and if I don't play well, then I know I'm going to lose my status. And I'm fine with that, that's the way it should be. I understand what this tour is about. It's mostly about the guys who earned their way out here through the PGA TOUR. That's their right and that's the way it should be.

For guys like myself, and Steven Alker's an unbelievable story obviously, he's earned his way to be out here way more than I have now forever because he's won so many events, he's got so many points and he'll be able to play out here all he wants now.

But for guys like me, you've got to play well every year, I understand that. I've been super blessed to be able to be out here for eight years. I would have never guessed that I would have won four times and been a regular guy on this tour for eight years. Not that I didn't think I had the game, but it's just so hard. I tell people all the time, it's so hard just to get on this tour for a guy like me in the position I was in.

When you get out here, if you play good golf you're going to stay out here, so it's a matter of can you be consistent when you're in your 50s and not get injured and not have health issues. Every year you've got to be good, you can't have an off year. Like Bernhard Langer, if somehow he had an off year, he knows he's going to play out here as long as he wants. Somebody like me, if I have an off year like I did last year, it's going to be a struggle the next year and I've got to play better to stay out here. That's just kind of the way it is.

**Q. I bet that makes you relatable to people, though. They see a guy like who has come out and made his way and has done well.**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Yeah, I talk to guys, especially in like these events when I play in pro-ams with guys and they all do a quick little Google search on me because they probably haven't heard my name. They're like, wow, 31 years old before you turned pro? You kind of give them that perspective on it and they're like, yeah, it's a cool story.



Is it a story that sponsors care that much about to put in tournaments? Maybe not. But for the average guy, yeah, it's a very intriguing story. It's a story that, like you said, people can kind of relate to. They see, hey, this guy worked in the real world like I did for 10 years. Yeah, it's neat.

And like I said, I've been so fortunate, so blessed to be able to do this for a living and have some success at it this late in life. I mean, it's a blessing, it really is.

**Q. Was there a moment when you realized, hey, I'm good enough to be out here, I do belong?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Yeah, that's a good question. When I first got out here, I was a little intimidated obviously. I'm warming up on the range next to Fred Couples and these guys that I've watched on television forever.

But what I found pretty quickly is that when they play with you and they realize that you can play, they don't have a problem with you being out here, you know what I mean? They feel like -- you feel like you belong. As long as you're able to play and compete, that's kind of how it works.

So when I first got out, like I said, I did six in a row. Like my fifth one in a row for Monday qualifying, I think Bernhard Langer came up to me on the putting green and he was like, you're here again? I'm like, yeah. He's like, did you have to qualify again? I'm like, yeah. He's like, well, they just should start giving you spots.

So when somebody like that, when you've played with him and he recognizes that, you know, you're good enough to play on this tour with us, that kind of is like, OK, I belong out here, I don't have to keep proving myself every week that I belong.

I kind of got that way maybe last year a little bit because I wasn't doing as well and I felt I put my pressure on myself trying to prove that I belong. At some point you're like, hey, I've won four times out here. You don't win four times by luck. Maybe once you do and guys maybe make some mistakes somewhere and you get lucky and you win, but you don't win four times on pure luck.

I think after I won probably the second time out in Sherwood I felt like, OK, I belong out here. I finished third on the Schwab Cup that year. From then until, like I said, until you start to struggle again. Golf is a very humbling game, it will humble you.

So yeah, I'm back working at it again and hope I can get to where I'm in contention a little more regularly, that will mean I'm playing good golf.

**Q. Your wife made a good decision?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** She did. You know, my famous thing that I always say that Mary likes to



tell people, she's like, my husband was a 20-year overnight success, right? You always hear about people being the overnight success. It only took me about 20 years to be an overnight success.

**Q. Anybody ask you to write code these days?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** No, but the funny thing is I played in the pro-am this week on Monday with some guys who own a company like that. I knew they were in kind of IT, but I didn't know how into the stuff, what kind of stuff they were into.

So we were sitting in there after we played and they started talking to me about stuff and all this stuff started coming back into my head about SQL. I told them I used to do some COBOL stuff and they're like, oh, we do COBOL.

Nobody's asked me to do any coding, but it's kind of neat to think back on it. You know what, I enjoyed doing that, I was pretty good at it. I was a decent -- I had decent success as a professional IT guy.

And I enjoyed it, it just wasn't golf. I loved golf. I didn't love being a database administrator. It was something I was good at and I didn't hate it, but I'm passionate about the game of golf. I've always loved golf. To be able to do something you love and get paid for it, it's incredible. It doesn't really even seem fair to the average guy who's grinding away at a job and trying to make -- and trying to get by doing whatever he can. Like I said, it's been a blessing.

**Q. There's not 20 people gathered around your cubical --**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Right, right, is he going to forget the semicolon there. Yeah, you've got to just have to get used to that. You're under the microscope out here in your job, but that's just part of it. It goes with the territory.

**Q. The only other thing I was going to ask you is playing a tournament here in Georgia, obviously you went to the University of Georgia, you have ties to the state, is there anything extra special to play in the state or are all the tournaments kind of the same?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** No, for sure, I would love -- I mean, I would say beyond a major or the TOUR Championship, this would be the No. 1 tournament I would like to win, for sure, because I have more people here from home and friends and family that will be out here than I do normally.

Normally I'll have maybe a handful of people here and there, people that I've met along the way in other places, but I have a lot more folks here interested in watching me. You obviously want to do well in front of your friends and family. Maybe a little added pressure, but I usually do OK here, I don't usually let that get to me too much.



But yeah, I would definitely -- like I said, beyond our majors out here, this would probably be the tournament I would pick to win.

**Q. Obviously with the unique year you had, do you have another athlete maybe in another sport that's kind of taken the same career path as you or something you kind of look at for inspiration?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** That's a good question. I'm a huge sports guy, so you would think I would.

The only thing I could relate to would be like the story of the guys, and unfortunately I don't even remember the gentleman's name, but when they made the movie, about him, The Rookie?

**Q. Kurt Warner?**

**SCOTT PAREL:** Well, Kurt Warner's another one as well.

**MODERATOR:** Baseball with Dennis Quaid.

**SCOTT PAREL:** Dennis Quaid, where he kind of was coaching high school whatever, you know, and then ended up -- can you believe a movie or not, but then ended up going back and pitching in the major leagues for a couple years I think and having decent success at it.

No, I've never really -- because, you know, and the reason is that's what makes golf so unique, right? You've got guys competing in their 60s at a high level and getting paid to do it, right? There's not 60-year old baseball players and football players. That's what's so unique about our game is you can do this as long as you're physically able. The ball doesn't know how old you are. That's what I know Bernhard always used to say to me, the ball doesn't know how old you are, it doesn't matter.

So it's unique in that sense. I mean, and the other one I would say would be the guy for the Eagles, what was the one?

**MODERATOR:** Mark Wahlberg, Vince --

**SCOTT PAREL:** What was his name?

**MODERATOR:** Started with a P.

**SCOTT PAREL:** Yeah, that would be another, and I love both those movies, very relatable to me. Yeah, it's hard for me to pick anybody else out just because it's so unique to our game.

