

US MASTERS
CHAMPION

IT TAKES TWO

NEARLY TWO YEARS AFTER STEVE WILLIAMS JOINED FORCES WITH ADAM SCOTT IT IS CLEAR HIS INCLUSION ON 'TEAM SCOTT' HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE AUSTRALIAN'S ELEVATION OF STATUS IN WORLD GOLF

As nailbiting finishes go, this year's Masters had it all. Amazing putts under pressure forced a playoff between Adam Scott, still searching for his first major title, and two-time major champion, Argentina's Angel Cabrera, who'd won the Masters in 2009.

Would Scott's game disintegrate as it had during the final few holes at last year's Open Championship when he blew a four-shot lead and a seemingly certain victory?

The golf world held its breath while Scott lined up his putt of 15ft on the second playoff hole. Was he taking too long? Should he have involved caddy Steve Williams in his decision making? It certainly seemed as though Williams had plenty to say about how Scott should play the putt.

We know now Scott had the line and length perfect and he holed the putt to claim his first major. His stunning victory swept him into a share of third in the game's world rankings.

When Williams first caddied for Scott at the 2011 US Open at Congressional, the Queenslander was ranked No 21 in the world. Now he trails only Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy.

The consistency of performance by Scott over those two years tells the story of a player/caddy relationship extracting the best out of each individual.

In 40 starts in major championships before Williams became his regular loop, Scott had finished inside the top 10 on only five occasions. In the eight majors since, he has produced four top-10s, one of which was the breakthrough on Masters Sunday.

Given the predictions and expectations placed on him since turning professional in 2000, Australian golf fans, and no doubt Scott himself, had become frustrated at his lack of consistency and success in major championships.

Interestingly, in what was a candid third round interview at this year's Masters, Scott spoke openly about that frustration.





According to Sir Nick Faldo, Adam Scott currently possesses the most enviable swing in world golf.

"I think I just didn't know how to play the majors," he said, referring to the period between playing his first major (the Open Championship in 2000) and 2011.

"I didn't play them well enough or smart enough. My confidence was too easily affected by a poor shot or a poor hole and I was a bit too fragile. The way in which you prepare, and I am doing that so much better now, protects you from being fragile. It now feels a little easier than it was in those earlier times."

It was at that 2000 Open Championship, where Scott missed the cut, that Williams was assisting Woods to his fourth major championship (and Williams' third as a caddy).

Nearly 13 years later Scott would chalk up his first major championship and Williams his 14th.

At the post Masters press conference, Scott received an emotional introduction from New Zealander Craig Heatley, the chairman of the media committee. It brought a magnanimous response.

"I am just so proud of myself and everyone who helped me," he said. "The list is just so long I can't do thank yous. I am a proud Australian and I hope this sits really well back home and even in New Zealand. With Steve, we are a trans Tasman combo."

Scott's earlier reference to the way he now prepares is based on four ingredients he added to his game in late 2010 and early 2011.

First, his brother-in-law Brad Malone, an English professional golfer, became Scott's fulltime coach and began travelling with him. His presence provided Scott with a regular and immediate sounding board after years of working with Las Vegas based Butch Harmon, a relationship established when Scott attended the University of Nevada in the late 1990s.

At the same time, Scott decided to change his scheduling to allow him to focus more on preparing for

major championships. These days the Masters is typically his fifth or sixth tournament of the season and he creates his schedule so his game is peaking for the majors.

"That scheduling means I have fewer chances to win tournaments but more opportunities to win majors and I think that is paying off," he said.

With World Golf Championships now an important part of the international scene, and key events such as the Players Championship and other top-class events on great layouts, he is able to fine-tune his game without wasting energy on lesser events.

Then Scott made the switch to the long putter in early 2011 at the suggestion of Malone. While he had long been considered one of the great ball strikers in the game, possessing a swing most others would kill for, at times his putting displays were woeful.

Poor putting ate into his confidence, impacting on other aspects of his game. That he was still able to win as many significant events as he did says much about his incredible talent.

But if he wanted to become a serious contender for major titles all areas of Scott's game needed to be on song. He could not just rely on his tee to green game to get him through. There was, therefore, not a lot to lose when he adopted the long putter.

Scott was one of the PGA Tour's statistically worst putters when he began using the controversial long handle at the Accenture Matchplay Championship in 2011.

He and his new club got off to an inauspicious start. He was beaten in the first round in the Accenture and missed the cut after a second round 82 a week later at the Honda Classic.

But before long the tide turned. A sixth place at the WGC-Cadillac was followed soon after by his best performance in a major to that point – runner-up at the

Masters. To a large extent, that silenced those who had questioned Scott's decision to change to the long putter.

The Masters had always seemed Scott's most likely major breakthrough given his impressive ninth-place finish on debut there in 2002. That it took a late birdie blitz by Charl Schwartzel to defeat him in 2011 gave an indication that the things he was putting in place to improve his performances at major championships were beginning to take effect.

Only one ingredient was still missing and it would drop into place fortuitously, albeit controversially, at the US Open at Congressional two months later.

Woods had been laid low by injury following his withdrawal from the Players Championship. On the understanding he would play the US Open, Williams had flown to the US but upon his arrival he was advised that Woods was a non-starter. So Williams asked his then boss if he could caddy for Scott at the US Open, and permission was granted.

Scott missed the cut after dumping his ball in the water at the final hole on day two. Two weeks later, with Woods still out of action, Williams again caddied for the Australian, the pair finishing third in what is effectively Tiger's event, the AT&T National.

It was the straw that appeared to break the back of the longstanding Woods/Williams partnership. Woods dumped Williams thus bringing to a close the most successful player/caddy relationship in the history of the game.

But despite that door being slammed shut in his face, the other remained open. Williams immediately took up with Scott on a fulltime basis and when a month later Scott won the WGC-Bridgestone event at Firestone Country Club, the bond was truly cemented.

With Williams on his bag, Scott had the extra piece of the puzzle he had been searching for. Just the fact the Kiwi agreed to work for Scott after his amazing run with Woods was a vote of confidence for the Australian.

Williams didn't need to continue caddying; in fact, he had been contemplating retirement 12 years earlier, around the time he received the call from Woods.

In 38 starts worldwide since Williams began working for him, Scott has finished inside the top 10 on 18 occasions. This statistic alone identifies a relationship that shows Scott and Williams are getting the best out of each other.

There are many factors that make Williams the perfect fit for Scott but the one that stands out is the New Zealander's decisiveness. Whether on the golf course or in general conversation, you will never die wondering with Williams. He says it as he sees it, on the course and off.

That forthrightness can be Williams' best trait but also, on occasions, his worst. His infamous insensitive remark, made at a lunch in New Zealand, about Phil Mickelson no doubt made conversation between the two of them tense and left their relationship awkward, although it eventually blew over.

Williams' celebration of Scott's success at the WGC-Bridgestone in 2011 – just weeks after Woods had fired him – and Williams' response to a question by commentator David Feherty, saying it was his "best win ever", earned him swift rebukes from the golfing world.

Asked whether Williams' outburst had overshadowed his victory, Scott appeared to be untruffled, saying, "We sorted that out the next week. Obviously that wasn't his intention at all, but it seemed like he got a bit mobbed there, and what happened, happened."



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Scott added the long-handled putter to his bag in 2011. More success with the putter plus having Steve Williams on his team has seen a significant improvement in his performances.

Scott also copped some of the backwash when Williams made a blokey but questionable remark about Woods at a semi-private function in Shanghai. When many were calling for Williams' head, Scott was there to defend and support his man. "I have discussed this matter directly with Steve and he understands and supports my view on this subject. I also accept Steve's apology, knowing that he meant no racial slur with his comments."

So while the relationship has had its share of controversy there are many reasons why it works well and why both men are benefiting from each other's skills and experience. It is apparent that Williams' experience and input is allowing Scott to develop a far more mistake-free game than was the case previously.

A couple of great examples were obvious in the closing stages of the Masters – the vital club decision on the first extra playoff hole and Williams' insistence that Scott allow for more break on the putt that would finally seal the victory at the second extra hole.



The most significant example, however, might be a suggestion he made in 2012 following Scott's performance at the US Open in San Francisco. Scott had once again been forced to work hard to recover from a slow start, eventually finishing in 15th place. Williams told him he needed to be more focused from the beginning of events.

Scott promptly applied that greater attention at the Open Championship at Royal Lytham & St Annes. He shot 64 in the opening round and led until the 71st hole.

Unfortunately, while he had taken on board his caddy's advice to play the opening holes of a major as if they were the last few holes, he ran into problems towards the finish, dropping four shots in four holes and gifting the Open to Ernie Els.

It was a gut-wrenching loss. Three weeks later at the WGC event in Ohio he discussed how he and Williams had interacted over the closing stages.

"We left it a few days for each of us to think about it, then we had a chat in the middle of the week. We were disappointed in both of our performances because we didn't get the job done.

"I think it's the part of our relationship that is growing and getting better. It was the first time we'd been in that position.

"Steve had been in that position a bunch with other players, but never with me. I think we're going to hopefully put ourselves in that position a lot more, and we'll know how to handle each other maybe that little bit better."

The lessons were absorbed quickly. Just two majors later the breakthrough victory came.

There is little doubt Scott, now aged 32, is thriving in the fledgling relationship. He perhaps best summed it up prior to the final round at this year's Masters when he talked of the importance of Williams, saying, "It is great for me to know you have a rock on the bag next to you. He's solid. We are not treading on each other's toes too much out there and more and more we are on the same wavelength. That is what you are looking for in this type of relationship."

Twenty-four hours later there was absolutely no doubt they were on the same wavelength. Scott's historic victory is one that golf fans on both sides of the Tasman are cheering, his partnership with Williams worthy of a place among golf's legendary tales of players and caddies. **GC**

THE BODY
language sums up the fortunes of three key players at the 2013 Masters – an ecstatic Adam Scott, a disbelieving Angel Cabrera and a woebegone Tiger Woods.



YOU NEED A LITTLE LUCK

This wonderfully infuriating game of golf we all so adore abounds in good breaks and bad breaks. Our most vivid memories tend to be of those breaks that go against us.

This year's thrilling Masters at Augusta certainly contained its share of lucky and unlucky breaks.

Was Adam Scott lucky to win? The answer is, of course, that he fully deserved the long-awaited major victory and to describe his victory as lucky would be grossly unfair.

But when his pitch shot screwed back at the dangerous par-5 in the final round and appeared headed for the creek, how fortunate was he that the ball stopped on the steep slope, resulting in a birdie when a bogey, or worse, could easily have eventuated.

It proved a vital piece of good fortune, of the type that influences the outcome of many important tournaments.

Spare a thought for the big man from Argentina, Angel Cabrera, who will look back with pride on his performance but with obvious frustration.

How his birdie putt on the penultimate hole failed to drop, goodness only knows. Then, at the second playoff hole, another beautiful putt appeared headed for the cup only to sit tantalisingly over the high side of the hole.

He must have felt that the Gods were not on his side.

Tiger Woods was the victim of a terrible piece of misfortune, with his near perfect approach to a par-5 striking the flag stick on the full and deflecting into the creek.

A likely birdie became a triple bogey and, given subsequent developments, could have had him disqualified from the tournament. – *Bob Glading*

TC'S QUICK-FIRE 15...

Adam Scott was born in Adelaide, Australia on July 16 1980

His middle name is
Derek

Both his parents, Phil and Pam, are good golfers

His father was a member of the Australian PGA but never played professionally. He was his son's first coach

Scott first played golf as a
four year old

He attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas before turning pro in 2000

Scott has homes in Australia, Bermuda and Switzerland

His first professional win was the 2001 European Tour's Alfred Dunhill Championship, played in Johannesburg, South Africa

Since turning pro, Scott has won

21 times

He has played in five Presidents Cup (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011) and one World Cup (2002)

He became the **youngest winner** of the Qatar Masters in 2002 and The Players Championship in 2004

Scott played 47 consecutive majors before winning the 2013 Masters

His career earnings are in excess of
\$37 million

Scott is single but 'taken'. His girlfriend, Swedish interior decorator and architect Marie Kojzar, once worked as a nanny for golfer Thomas Bjorn

Scott is a keen surfer



SCOTT'S BAG THAT WON THE MASTERS

DRIVER: Titleist 913D3 9.5 degrees
3-WOOD: Titleist 910Fd, 15 degrees
UTILITY IRON: Titleist 712U, 18 degrees
IRONS: Titleist MB
(PW): Titleist Vokey SM4
WEDGES: Titleist Vokey Spin Milled C-C (54 degrees); Titleist Vokey SM4 TVD (60 degrees)
PUTTER: Scotty Cameron by Titleist Futura X
BALL: Titleist Pro V1


3 STEPS TO PERFECT PLANE

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM ADAM SCOTT'S SWING

At the 2013 Masters, Adam Scott showed the world that his technique can stand up to the most intense pressure. His ability to keep the club moving on a perfect plane throughout his swing was a huge key to his success at Augusta. If you can keep your swing on plane, there is no need to manipulate the face into a square position at impact – and that means not just consistency, but solid performance under pressure.

So what do we mean by staying on plane? If you look closely at this sequence, you'll notice that in every shot, either the clubhead or the butt of the club points at the target line.

This exemplary technique starts with great posture and weight distribution at address – weight under the arches of both feet and spread evenly between toes and heels – and it stays there until the final stages of the followthrough.

Because Adam swings in perfect balance, the club is never thrown about. Contrast this with a player who starts with too much of their weight on their toes. The first thing that happens in the backswing is a shifting of the weight to the heels. This rocking motion kills good plane. Feeling pressure under the arches of your feet through the swing is your first step to swinging like Scott, but there is plenty more you can learn from golf's newest Master. 



STEP 1

Tilt from the hips for perfect posture

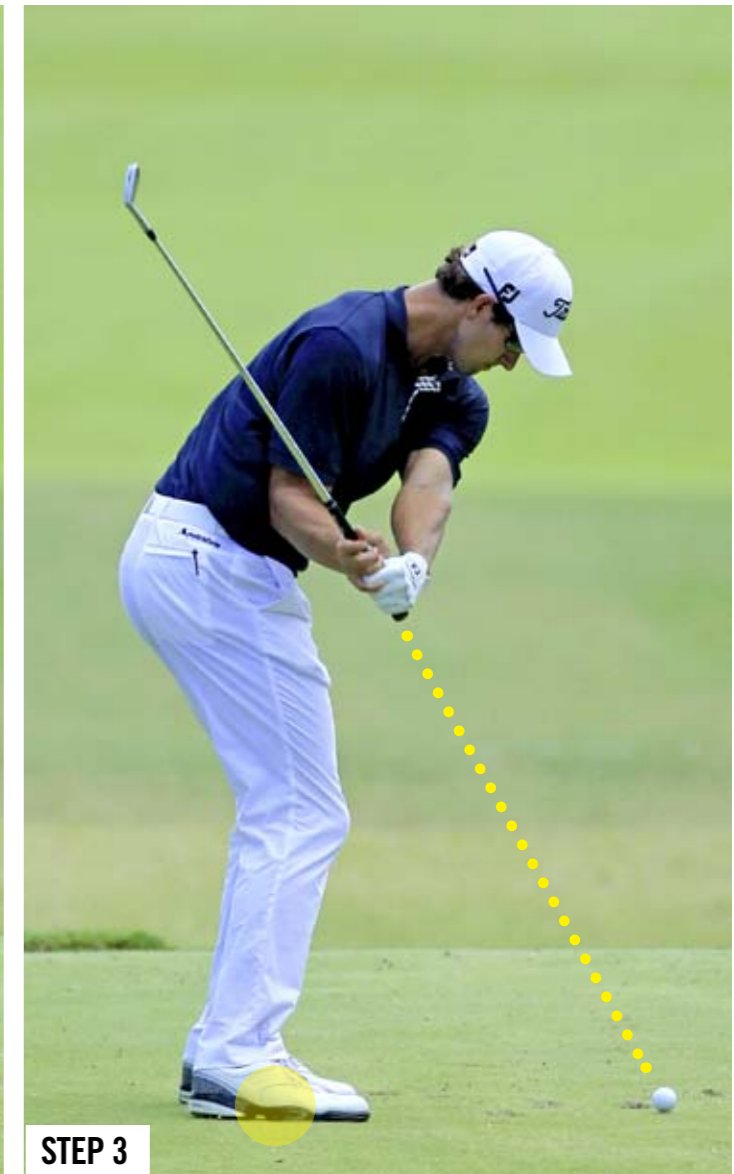
See here how the rear of Adam's belt is tipped upwards so that the buckle points at the ground. This gives his upper body the correct amount of forward flex with his chest facing down to the ball. When he adds a touch of knee flex – never knee bend – to the mix, he creates that correct 50/50 heel-toe balance through his feet.



STEP 2

Left arm moves across the chest

Adam's left arm is across his chest when parallel to the ground. This allows him to keep the connection between his arms and body, and to keep the club on plane. See how the butt of the club points to the ball-target line. Don't fall for the misconception that the left arm should aim down the target line at this stage.



STEP 3

Weight moves laterally

Scott's right heel remains grounded as he approaches impact. His back foot merely rolls across towards the left – a move that keeps his weight under the arches of both feet and allows him to transfer weight laterally. If the right heel rises, the weight shifts to the toes and the shaft angle steepens – leading to a much weaker impact.

