

Sports

The Great Aussie Hope

It's not been a year to remember for Scott, but the champ's hunting a three-peat

GOLF
2007 Barclays Singapore Open

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ADAM Scott is one of golf's fastest emerging stars.

Since turning professional in 2000, Scott has won 12 times, including five each on the US PGA and European Tours, and at just 27, he is now ranked world No 6, after reaching a career high No 3 in January.

Hailed by many as the natural successor to Australia's former world No 1 Greg Norman, all that's left now for Scott is to win a Major.

The pressure may be slowly cranking up, but try telling Scott, the two-time defending champion of the Barclays Singapore Open.

"I'm not feeling the pressure at all," he told TODAY after the pro-am yesterday at Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course.

"Some great players did not win a Major until much later in their career. Greg Norman was 31 when he won his first Major (1986 British Open), Phil Mickelson was 34 when he won his first (2004 US Masters).

"So I feel like I've got a lot of time left and my best golf is still ahead of me.

"The plan is to win one before I'm 30,



TWO GREAT SCOTTS: Scott (centre) being presented with a painting of himself commissioned by Singapore artist Namiko Chan Takahashi (left, in red), with organising committee chairman for the tournament, Bob Tan (right), looking on.

and maybe win a few more before my career is over."

Scott, who is based in Switzerland, admits that 2007 hasn't been the best year for him. In 19 outings on the US PGA Tour, he posted six top-10 finishes, winning only the Shell Houston Open.

His best showing in the Majors was joint-12th at the PGA Championship at Southern Hills, Oklahoma.

"Winning the Houston Open was probably the highlight, but I had high expectations and didn't achieve them," said Scott.

His immediate priority is to defend

the US\$4 million (\$5.79 million) Singapore Open crown.

Scott will tee off in today's opening round alongside Phil Mickelson and Thailand's Chapchai Nirat on a tough Serapong Course where he has held his own over the last couple of years.

While thoughts of a three-peat are not far from his mind, Scott has taken things easy over the last month at home.

The Serapong Course has added more bunkers to its layout, especially the par-5, 520-metre dogleg fourth, where the green — already protected by a big body of water

— has been reinforced with more bunkers.

"No matter what you do, it's not a great option at that hole," said Scott.

"I think it looks like a 2-iron and you just have to hit it straight if you're going for the green in two. Anything else, you have to deal with the palm trees on your next shot.

"I could question a few of the bunkers that are in the middle of the fairways, but generally, I think the course is a lot better.

"It will be nice to win three in a row which would be a great achievement and pretty cool to do it here."

CHOI ON A MAJOR QUEST, BUT FIRST FOR THE SERAPONG CHALLENGE

EVERYWHERE he goes these days, K J Choi (picture) cannot escape the question: When will he make Asia proud by becoming the first from the continent to win a Major?

Since his debut on the US PGA Tour in 2000, Choi has been one of the most consistent performers.

He was the first South Korean to win on the tour when he bagged the Compaq Classic of New Orleans in 2002.

The last of his six titles on the US tour came in June and July — the Jack Nicklaus Memorial Tournament and the AT&T National hosted by Tiger Woods — which propelled him into the top 10 in the world rankings for the first time in August.

But the South Korean, now the world No 9, says he still has a long way to go before he wins any of the four big ones.

"Honestly, I still have a lot to improve," said the 37-year-old, speaking through an interpreter yesterday at Sentosa Golf Club, ahead of today's first-round action at the



DON WONG

US\$4 million (\$5.79 million) Barclays Singapore Open.

"To me, winning a Major is not all just about confidence. It is also about having the right technique. I have to improve on my short game, especially on how to stop the ball on the green when hitting it out of the rough."

Choi, who began his career in Asia in 1994, said adapting to the playing condi-

tions of the US PGA Tour was his biggest challenge.

"A lot of people assume language is a difficulty," said Choi, the 1997 Order of Merit winner in Korea.

"It is, but the biggest challenge was getting used to the courses in the United States.

"In Korea, we're used to having two greens and everything looks very wide. But in the US, the fairways are narrow, there is only one green and the rough is really deep."

Today, Choi tees off alongside 2005 US Open champion Michael Campbell of New Zealand and Singapore's Mardan Mamat.

The Major may be a ways off, but he believes he is ready to challenge the likes of Phil Mickelson, Vijay Singh and defending champion Adam Scott for the US\$634,000 winner's cheque.

"I played a few times in Singapore many years ago and I remember suffering from heat exhaustion," he said.

"But, it's different now. Houston, where I've been based for the last seven years, has similar conditions to Singapore.

"I'm better adjusted this time."

— TAN YO-HINN

BARCLAYS SINGAPORE OPEN 2007

When: Nov 1-4

Where: Sentosa Golf Club, Serapong Course

Total prize money: US\$4 million (\$5.79 million)

TV Times ("live" on Channel 5 and ESPN Star Sports): Nov 1 & 2 – 1.30pm-5.30pm; Nov 3 & 4 – 12pm-5pm.

Ticketing: \$20 per day (Nov 1 & 2), \$50 per day (Nov 3 & 4), \$100 (four-day pass); Tickets can be purchased at Sentosa station at Vivocity (level 3). All tickets will also be sold at the event entrance during the tournament. Prices inclusive of island admission and transportation via Sentosa Express or Sentosa Bus. Free entry for visitors under 18 years of age.

Public transport: A shuttle bus service will run at regular intervals between the tournament entrance and HarbourFront Interchange between 7am-7pm.

Visit www.barclaysingaporeopen.com for further details