

Adam Scott with Steve Williams.
Photo by: Mark Wilson



What's next for **Adam Scott**?

Adam Scott, now a ground-breaking Australian, will still be basking a little if not pinching himself, in the aftermath of his fairy tale playoff win to become Australia's first Masters champion.

With his feet up at his home in the Bahamas, Scott will have savoured the satisfaction of having earned the right to drive down Magnolia Lane for the rest of his playing days and of the joy he brought to millions of people in the process. Scott will also host the first Champions Dinner by an Australian on Tuesday night of next year's Masters, which is unlikely to have consumed a great deal of his thoughts to date but will be an enjoyable aside as the year progresses.

Past champions with any sense of Australian culture may be nervous at his potential menu options, as it's not all 'shrimp on the barbie' after all. Scott's reserved sense of humour might be tickled by the prospect of introducing some Indigenous culture - "bush tucker" - to proceedings.

Oh, to be a fly on the wall to see Jack Nicklaus chomping down on a Kangaroo fillet or worse yet, Arnold Palmer sizing up a live witchetty grub, with Fuzzy Zoeller egging him on from 'away' in the background. Sandy Lyle serving haggis in 1989 doesn't sound so bad after all in hindsight.

All jokes aside, while Scott has a green jacket, a lifetime exemption and has earned the right for commentators to proclaim 'There's the experience of a Masters champion' every time he hits it 50 feet left of

the flag on the 13th hole at Amen Corner, the level of scrutiny and expectation will also rise - just as he feels he's finally thrown off the shackles.

Following the Masters, Greg Norman said that Scott could now go on to win more majors than any other Australian but, the same was said of Norman who spent 331 weeks as the world No. 1 but could only win two.

Consider history, from the perspective of the Australian major champions Scott has now joined.

Scott won this April at age 32, often considered the prime of a golfer's career. Norman won his first major at age 31 and the age spread of their fellow Australians at the time of their first major is remarkably similar. David Graham, Wayne Grady, Ian-Baker-Finch and Steve Elkington all won between the ages of 30 and 33.

Australian-born Jim Ferrier was also 32 when he won the PGA Championship for his only major in 1947, although he had taken out American citizenship three years prior and technically, doesn't count for this purpose.

Only Geoff Ogilvy (29) and legend Peter Thomson (25) have won majors at younger ages amongst the nine Australian major winners. Thomson had actually won four of his five Open Championships before turning 30 and won his fifth in 1965 at age 36.

Kel Nagle at age 39 is still Australia's oldest winner of a major, conquering Arnold Palmer and the Old Course at St Andrews to claim the claret jug in 1960.

The challenge for Australians in the past has been to back the first win up with more; staying on top of the mountain they had fought

so hard to climb in the first place. Since his Open triumph in 2006, Ogilvy has gone on to win four big events on the PGA Tour but on the major front, it's been a task proven difficult with only Thomson, Graham and Norman winning multiple majors and only Thomson claiming more than two.

Grady and Baker-Finch, despite receiving 10-year exemptions on the PGA Tour for their victories, never won again on the regular tour and Graham won only once more after winning his 2nd major at the 1981 U.S. Open. (Grady told me a few years back that the party following his 1990 PGA Championship win "continues to this day!")

Comparing the eras of Australia's major champions would indicate however that the odds are most likely on Scott's side to go on with the job, where others couldn't, and win multiple major championships.

In the years up until the 'Tiger Woods era', winning a major was the ticket to setting yourself up for life - but you had to earn it. Graham said after his major successes that you had to 'make hay while the sun shines' and he travelled the globe doing just that, cashing in on his notoriety as a U.S. Open champion. He was not the first or last to find that the increased demands on his time and the extra travel took a toll on his golf game when at the heights of his powers.

Scott's task should he choose to accept it will be completely different in this age of stratospheric prize money, even larger off course earnings and private air travel. It's a safe

assumption that Scott has probably stashed away more money than he will ever know what to do with, so his motivations are likely to be inspired by the history books and the chance to create a legacy for generations to come.

He has already shown in this scheduling over the past few years that easing back on his workload and finding the balance that suits him has paid off in droves and his results over this time speak for themselves. Scott could already have two majors to his name after the 2011 Masters and 2012 Open Championship failed to fall his way at the very end.

All eyes will be on Scott at his first tournament back following Augusta, at the Players Championship in May, as he prepares for the second leg of the 'Grand Slam' at the U.S Open at Merion in June. The temptation to rush home to Australia after Augusta to publically show off the Green Jacket must have been strong but at this stage, it's unlikely Scott will bow to that until later in the year. Instead, he has wisely chosen to re-charge the batteries with an eye on the bigger picture.

To use Graham's words from thirty years ago, Scott will need to 'make hay while the sun shines' but in this case, his next 5-8 years will be his most important, rather than the next 5 months. Time slips quickly through the fingers as the past champions will attest so for Scott, the time to strike is now.

Paul Prendergast
www.golfplusmedia.com.au

