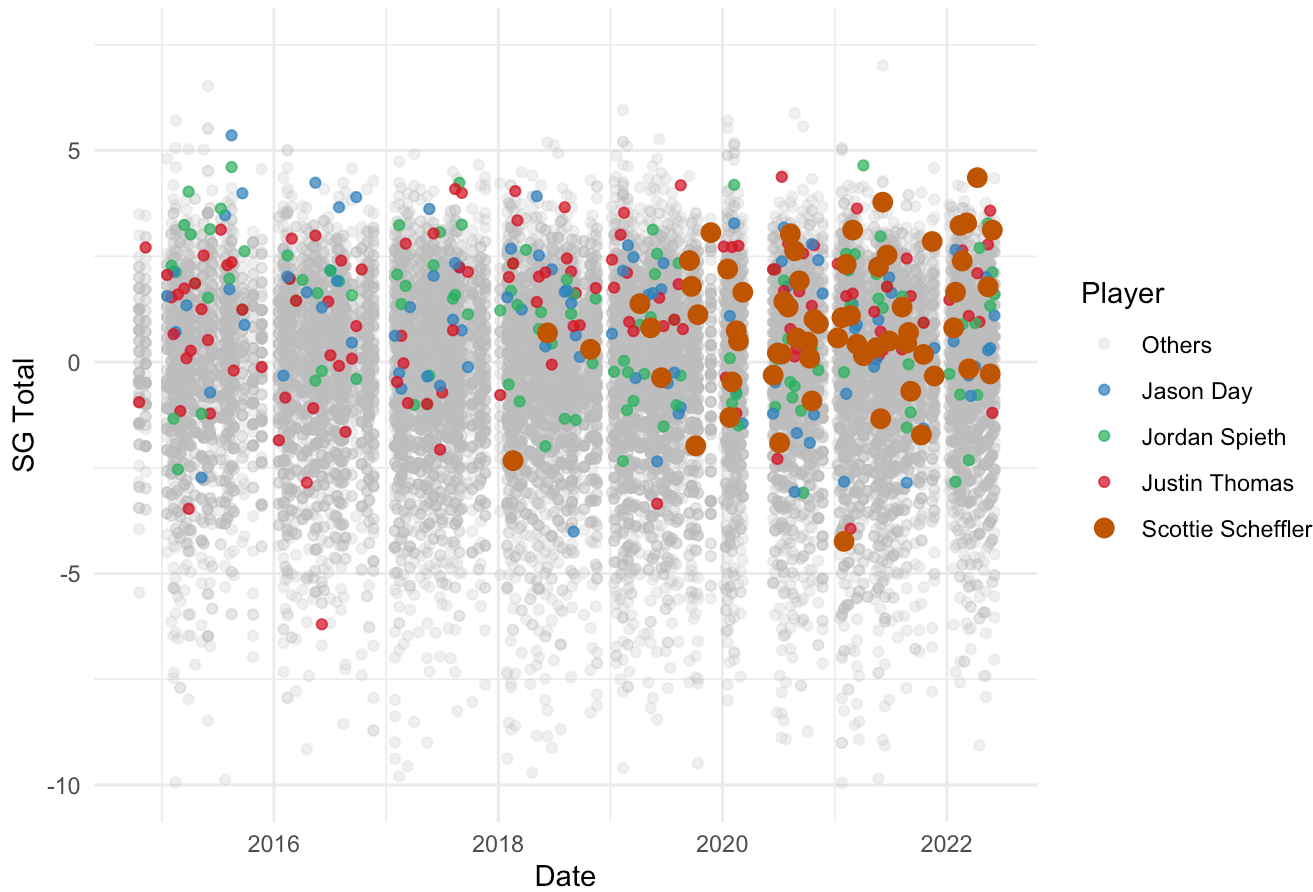


Scheffler vs the Field

Lucas Kirk

2024-12-10

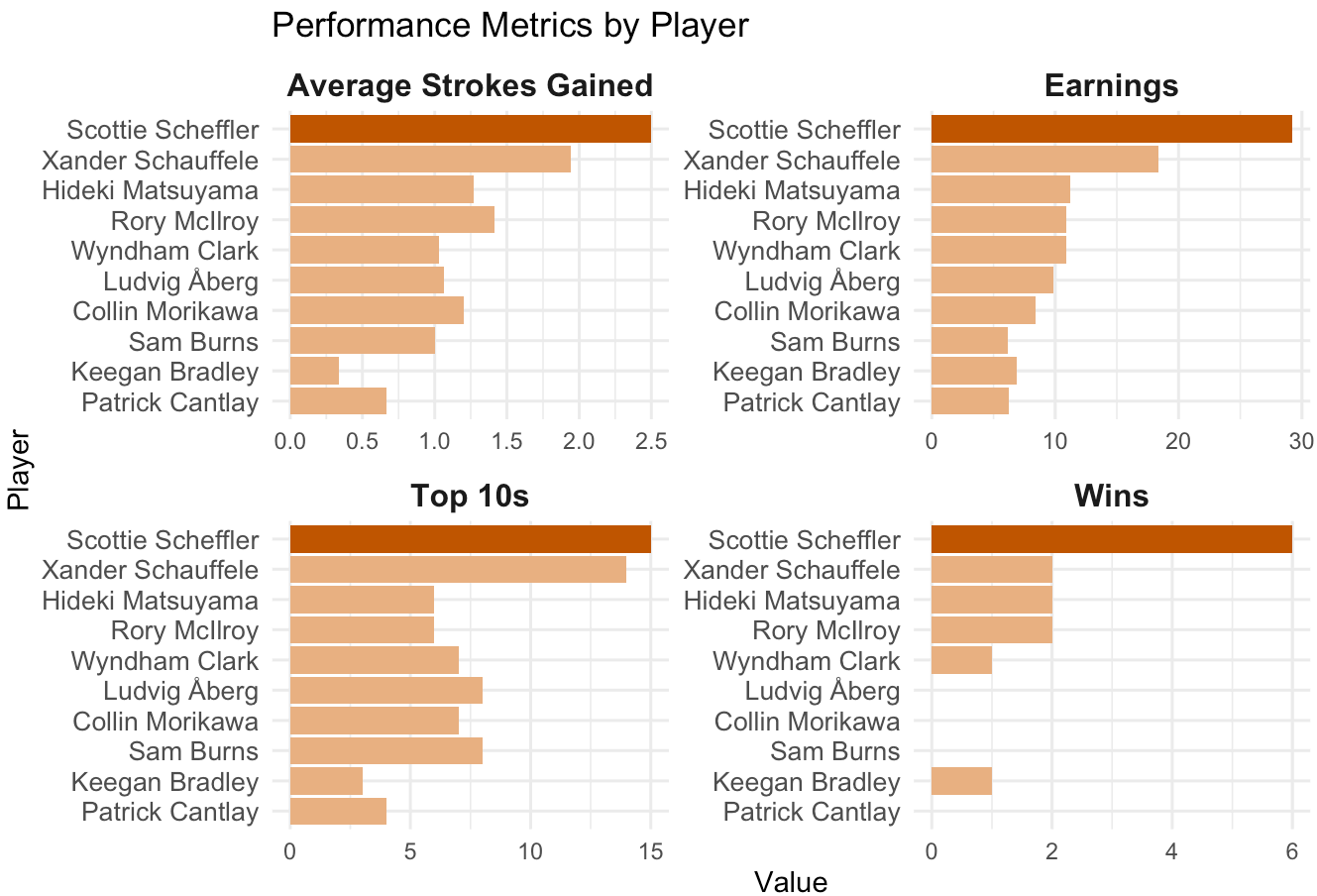
SG Total Over Time by Player



Intro

This analysis highlights Scottie Scheffler’s dominance in golf and explores his potential performance trajectory for the upcoming year by examining patterns exhibited by past dominant players. To achieve this, we first identify the key factors that contribute to sustained excellence in the sport and introduce a custom metric, which we call the “Dominance Index.” This index provides a season-by-season evaluation of a player’s supremacy, allowing us to quantify Scheffler’s current standing and compare it with historical benchmarks. Through this approach, we aim to not only showcase Scheffler’s current dominance but also predict his future impact on the game.

2024 Dominance



Data: 2024 YTD to 11/9

Analysis of Scottie Scheffler’s 2024 Dominance

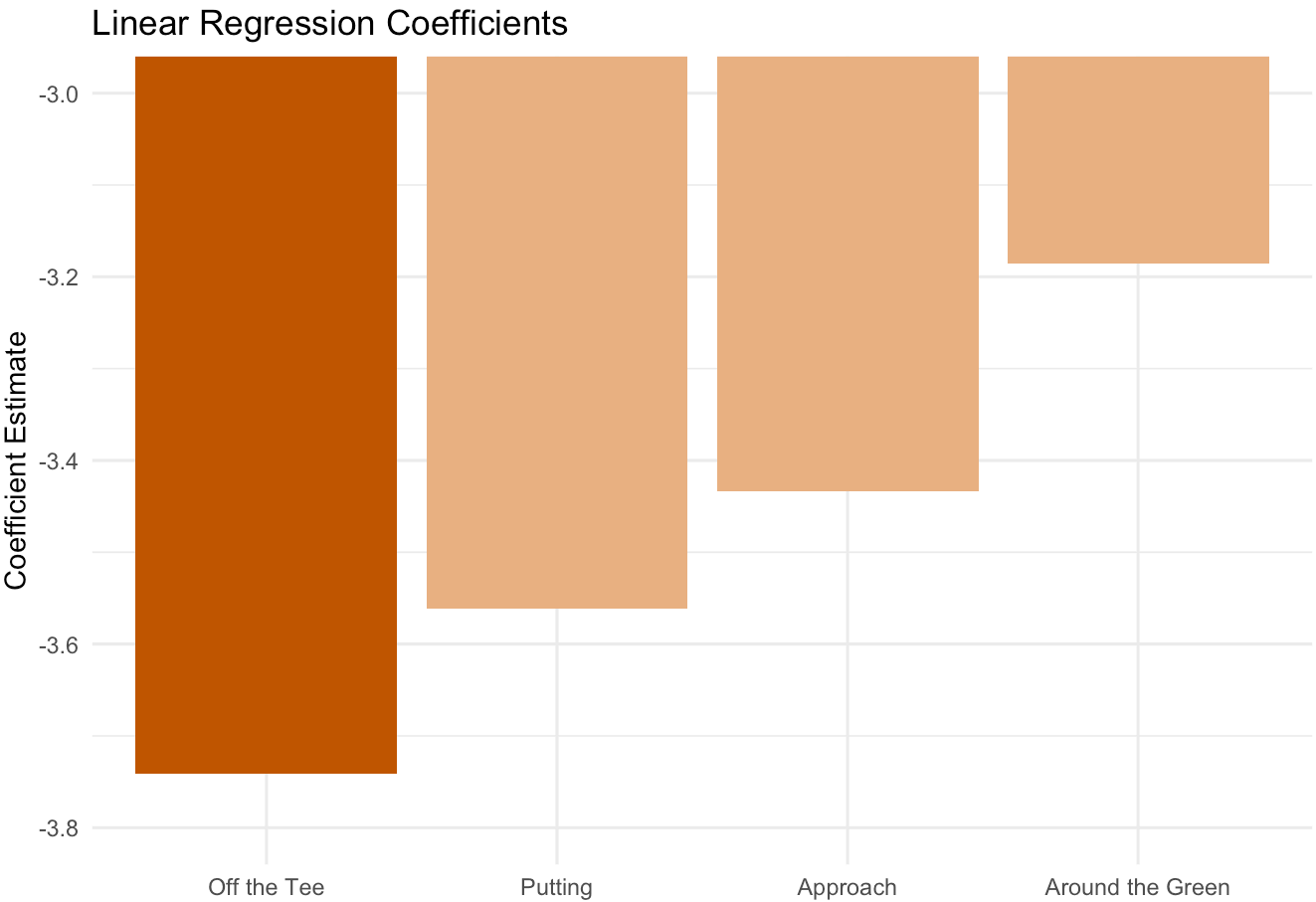
Scottie Scheffler stands out as the dominant player across all key metrics. He leads in **Average Strokes Gained** with an impressive 2.5, showcasing exceptional consistency and performance. His ability to convert that dominance into results is evident with 6 **Wins**, the highest in the field, and an unmatched **Earnings** total of nearly \$30 million. Additionally, his 15 **Top 10 finishes** further emphasize his reliability and presence at the top of leader boards. While Schauffele played great golf in terms of gaining strokes on the field, his lack of wins, despite almost as many Top 10s as Scheffler, indicates that his game was solid but not dominant.

Scheffler’s performance across these metrics highlights him as the clear leader, combining consistency, tournament success, and financial dominance, setting him apart as the standout golfer of the season.

Measuring Dominance

What aspect of golf contributes most to lowering your scores? Anyone who has spent time around the game has likely heard the age-old saying, “Drive for show, putt for dough.” This phrase suggests that it doesn’t matter how far you can drive the ball if you can’t make the crucial 4-foot putt to finish the hole. While driving is undeniably important, the most impactful shots for golfers of all skill levels—particularly those looking to improve their scores—are their shots on and around the greens. Amateur and casual golfers can gain a significant edge over their peers by mastering the short game. But how does this principle apply to professional golfers? What is the biggest contributing factor to lowering their scores at the highest level?

To explore this, I conducted a linear regression analysis using tournament data from 2014 to 2022. The dependent variable was total strokes, while the independent variables were the different categories of strokes gained: Off the Tee, Approach, Around the Green, and Putting. To ensure consistency, I filtered the data to include only players who competed in all four rounds of the tournament, excluding those who were cut.

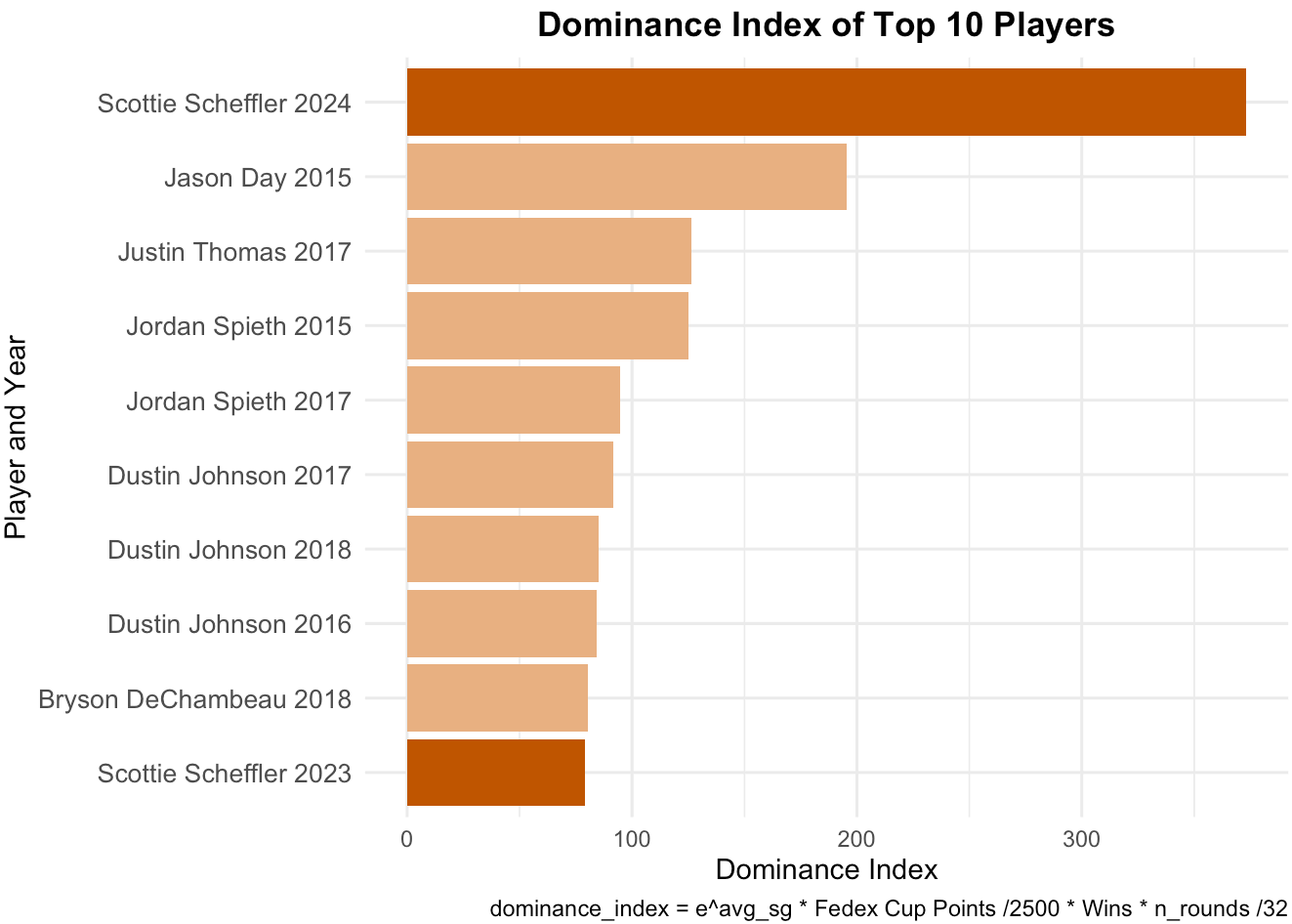


Note: Linear regression coefficients for only players who made the cut in tournaments 2014-2022

As we can see from the graph, the most important category for lowering strokes is **Strokes Gained Off the Tee**, followed by **Putting**. Tiger Woods once emphasized this point in a quote where he explained that, while he was a good putter, putting alone wouldn’t matter if he couldn’t hit the fairway: *“And you have a hot driving week, and you’re gonna be in contention each and every time. Doesn’t matter how well you putt... You can putt well and still not be in contention.”* For Woods—and similarly for Scottie Scheffler—consistent, high-level driving opens up opportunities to showcase their dominance with their iron play and capitalize on scoring chances.

The exceptional driving ability of players like Woods and Scheffler has a compounding effect on strokes gained. While the average golfer might gain a fraction of a stroke from a drive down the middle on a long par four, elite players like Scheffler and Woods can better take advantage of these opportunities with superior approaches, maximizing their ability to gain additional strokes. This combination of powerful, accurate driving and the ability to execute precise iron shots is what sets them apart and allows them to dominate the competition.

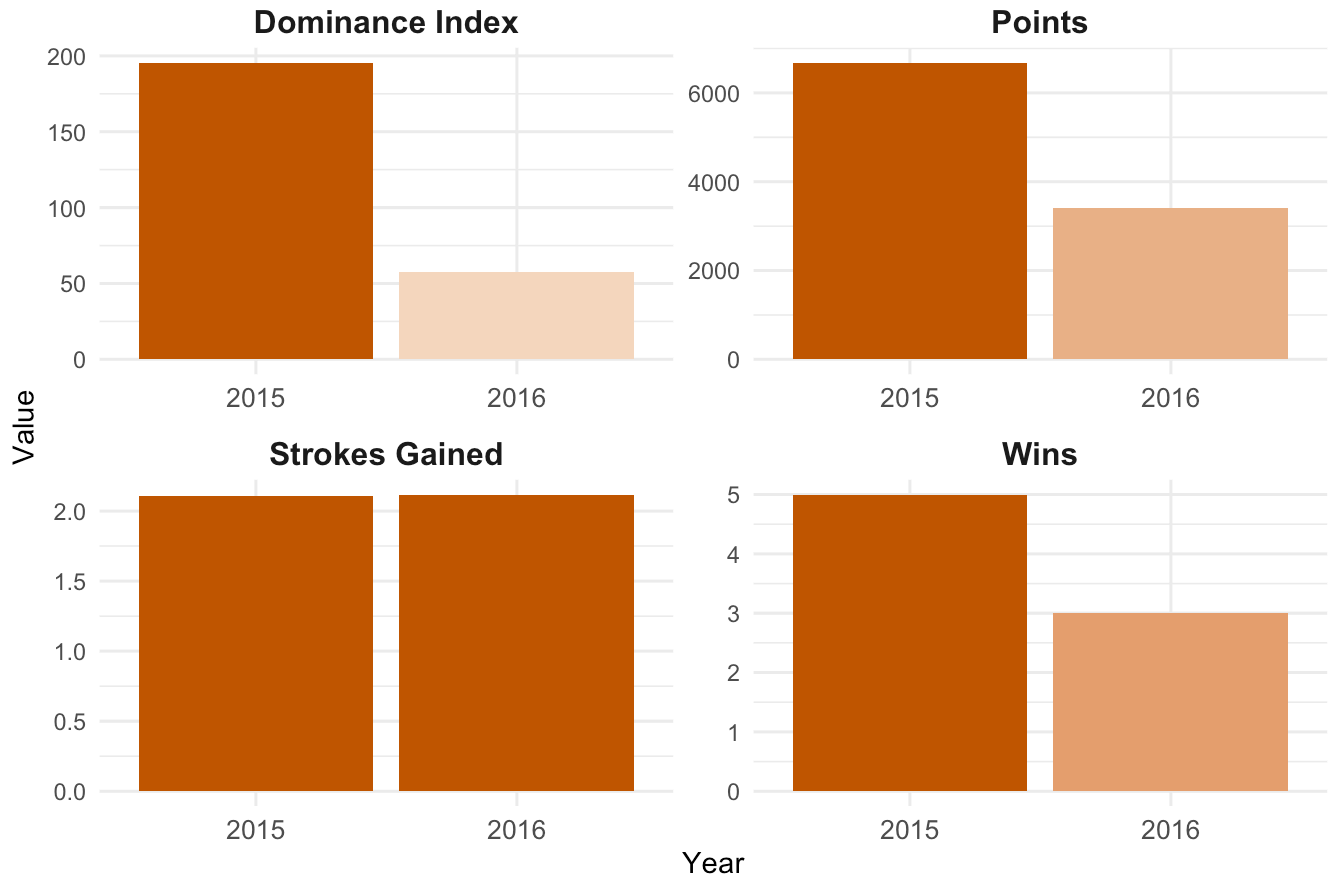
How Dominant?



In 2024, Scottie Scheffler has achieved dominance levels not seen since Tiger Woods’ prime. To forecast Scheffler’s 2025 performance, we can analyze the other leaders in the Dominance Index and examine how they performed in the year following their most dominant season.

Jason Day 2015 - 2016 Analysis

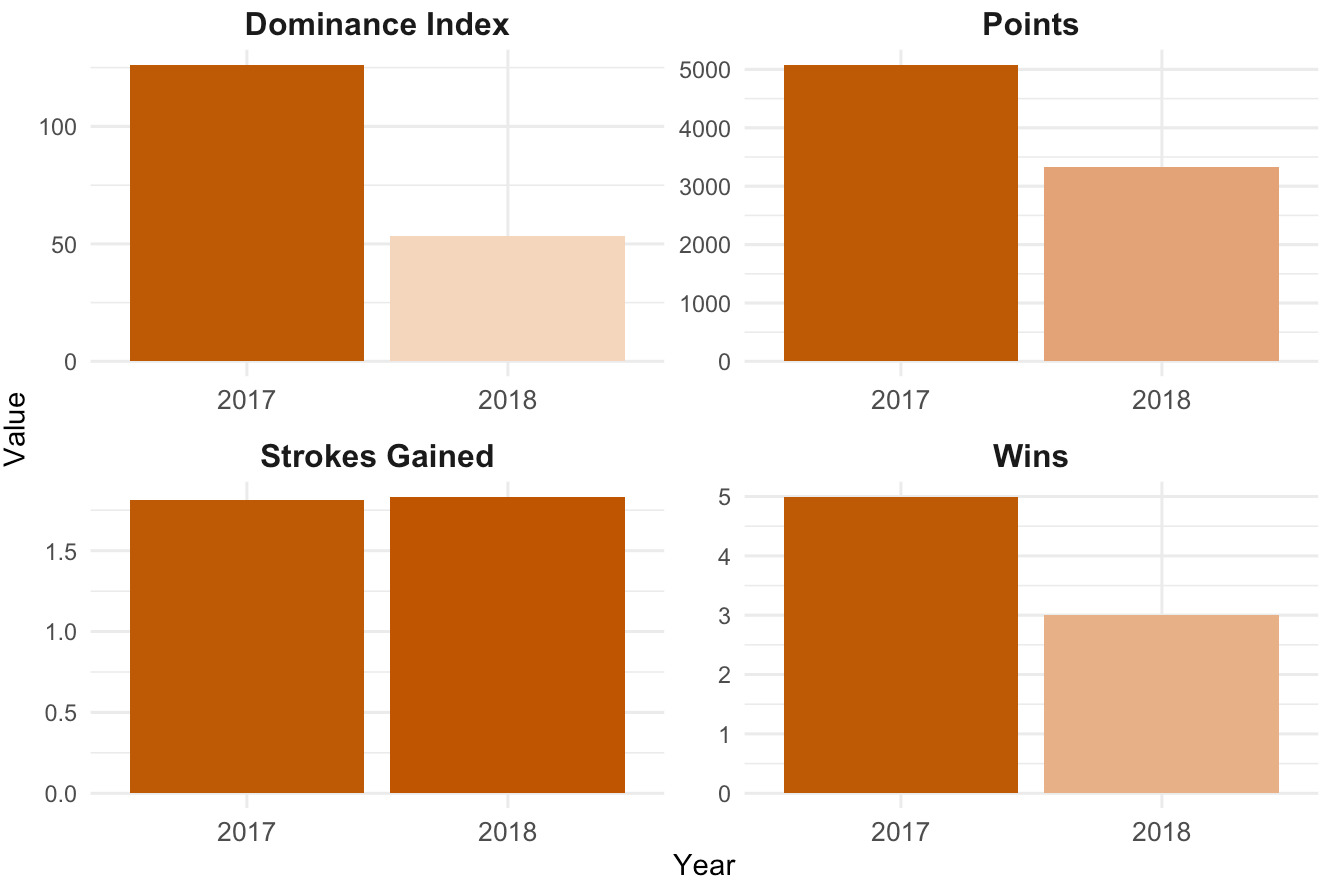
Jason Day: Comparison of 2015 and 2016 Performance



We can see that Jason maintained his superior play, even averaging slightly more strokes gained. However, despite this consistency, he was unable to translate it into the same level of success as in 2015. His inability to close out tournaments resulted in fewer wins, FedEx Cup points, and earnings, ultimately leading to a significantly lower Dominance Index.

Justin Thomas 2017 - 2018 Analysis

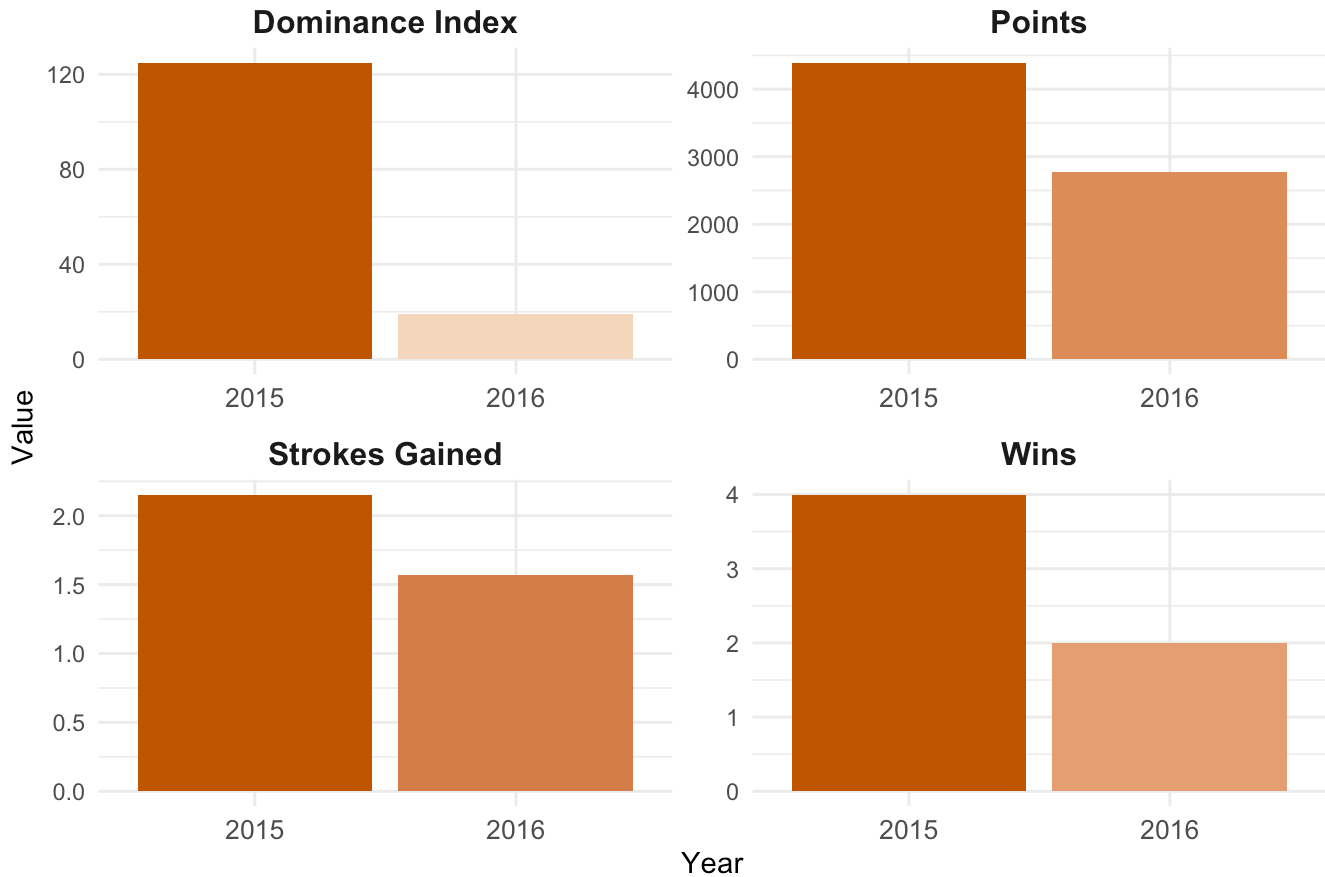
Justin Thomas: Comparison of 2017 and 2018 Performance



Justin Thomas shares a similar story—despite securing 3 PGA Tour wins (tied for most in 2018) and 9 Top 10 finishes in 2018, his performance marked a regression compared to the previous year, which is reflected in a noticeable drop in his Dominance Index.

Jordan Spieth 2015 - 2016 Analysis

Jordan Spieth: Comparison of 2015 and 2016 Performance



Jordan Spieth, unlike Jason Day and Justin Thomas, experienced a significant decline in the strokes gained category—the most crucial factor for calculating the Dominance Index—following his dominant year. With half as many wins and nearly half the points, his Dominance Index dropped sharply.

What Does This Mean for Scheffler?

The data shows that two players were able to maintain, and even slightly improve, their strokes gained compared to the previous year. However, despite their consistent ball striking, their number of wins—and, by extension, their **dominance index**—declined significantly. Even so, all players remained within the top 7 for FedEx Cup points, indicating strong overall performance.

Scottie Scheffler continues to demonstrate exceptional ball striking, and the data strongly suggests that this trend will likely persist in the near future. However, golf is an unpredictable game, often influenced by factors such as a fortunate bounce or a clutch 25-foot putt dropping at the right moment and determine the difference between a win and a loss. While Scheffler's ability to consistently gain strokes is impressive, staying at the top of the game is never guaranteed. While I expect him to continue to gain strokes at a high rate, his dominance in the win column may become less consistent.

Scottie Scheffler has had one of the most dominate years in recent golf history. In my analysis I want to analyze how dominate making a score of SG compared to top 5 and fedexcup points. Tiger Score. (Fedexcup hard to use). Now let's look at other people who had high dominance scores and what happened to them in the next year. Guesimate. Then the forecasting model.

Forecasting

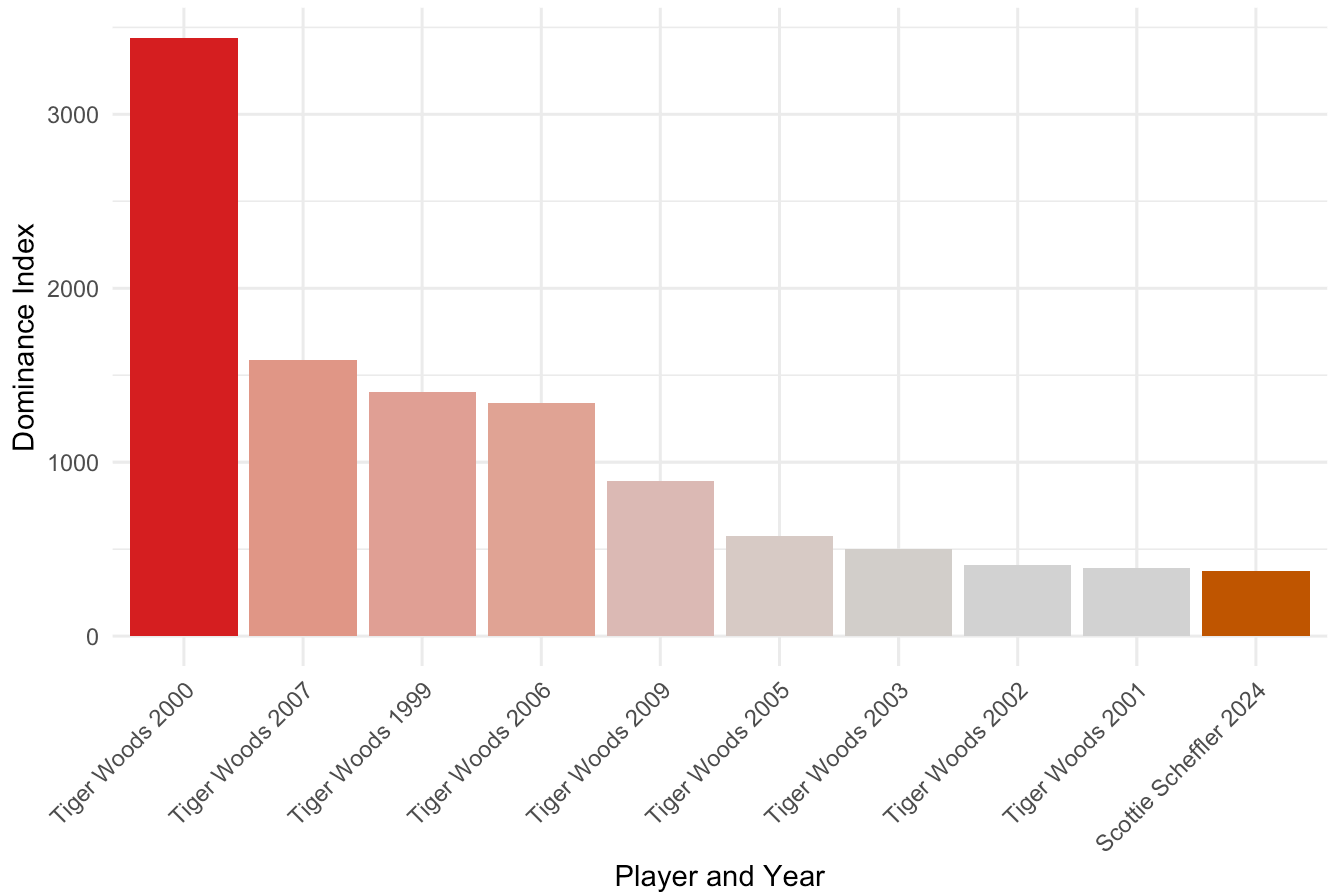
Exponential smoothing is a forecasting technique that combines past data with a smoothing parameter, alpha (α), to predict future values. The method assigns a weight of α to the overall period average and $(1 - \alpha)$ to the most recent year's data, enabling a balance between historical trends and recent performance. To optimize the model, the value of α is chosen to minimize the sum of squared errors across all years, ensuring the most accurate predictions. Using this approach, we forecast Scottie Scheffler's FedEx Cup points for the 2025 season..

Rank	Player	Points
<dbl>	<chr>	<dbl>
1	Scottie Scheffler	6615
2	Xander Schauffele	5422
3	Hideki Matsuyama	3899
3 rows		

With an optimized alpha value of 0.68, slightly favoring the overall average, Scottie Scheffler's projected 2025 FedEx Cup points total is 3,948. This forecast suggests that Scheffler will likely remain among the top 3 golfers in 2025, consistent with his current ranking, even if he scores 2,000 fewer points than the previous year. The method used for this projection offers a reliable way to account for performance fluctuations while providing a grounded prediction. Scheffler's consistency in recent years further strengthens this forecast, reaffirming his elite status in professional golf.

While historical data on players following their dominant years and this forecast indicate that Scheffler may experience a dip in dominance, it's difficult to imagine him regressing in the moment. Still, only time will tell how his performance evolves.

Dominance Rating Woods v. Scheffler



Scottie Scheffler’s 2024 **Dominance Index** doesn’t even compare with Tiger Woods’ peak years. While Scheffler’s performance is remarkable and hasn’t been seen in the last decade, it is still overshadowed by Tiger Woods’ dominance, particularly in 2000, 2001, and 2007. Woods’ consistent excellence throughout these years set an unmatched standard in the sport, with his 2000 performance still standing as the gold standard in golf. Scheffler’s dominance in 2024, though impressive, doesn’t yet rival the sustained greatness of Woods over a longer period. While Scheffler has the potential to join the ranks of golf’s elite, Woods’ legacy remains a tough benchmark. Ultimately, while the future looks bright for Scheffler, Tiger Woods continues to define the term **GOAT** in golf.

So, what’s my take?

As I was putting this analysis together, the 2024 Hero World Challenge concluded with Scheffler shooting a 9-under on Sunday to secure a 6-stroke victory over Tom Kim, and finishing 25 strokes ahead of T19 finisher Day. While the forecast and historical performance of past dominant players suggest that staying at the top is challenging, I would still confidently invest in Scheffler’s future.