

Shriners Children's Open

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Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

TPC Summerlin

Tom Kim

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, we would like to welcome Tom Kim to the interview room here at the Shriners Children's Open. Defending champion, but not just the defending champion, two-time defending champion.

So I guess the first question would be looking to become a three-peat winner, first person to do that since 2011; what do you think your chances are and how would that sit with you being a part of history like that.

TOM KIM: Yeah, I think it's a very, very cool week just to be even having a chance of that. I think that's the coolest part.

Game is in a good spot. Obviously my last event was at the Presidents Cup so game is feeling really good. Obviously going to have some weather, so just trying to be really focused on my game plan for the next few days and try to just have a shot on Sunday would be amazing.

Q. You mentioned the weather. Just some heavy winds forecasted early on Friday morning I think it is. How do you change your strategy or deal with that?

TOM KIM: Yeah, it's really interesting. Like the golf course is obviously, as we know, very, very gettable. When you have a completely different wave you might be able to fall back, but you just got to be able to adjust with the cards you've been dealt.

You know, again, like I said, just being able to hopefully -- whatever I do Thursday, Friday, Saturday, if I can have a shot on that back nine that would be amazing.

Q. You're playing with Kevin Yu and Matt McCarty, the last two winners on tour. What do you look forward to about that and have you met Matt before?

TOM KIM: No, I haven't. Obviously I heard he had an unbelievable year. Backed it up with a win last week. Congratulations to him.

It's going to be good. I think those guys obviously came



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back-to-back weeks winning and I haven't won since here last year, so going to be able to see some good golf and maybe pick up a few things.

Q. We talked in Memphis and you were saying you were pretty tired and needed to rebuild a little bit. I think at one point you played nine straight weeks in the summer. Was the lesson from there year that maybe you over-scheduled a little bit, and have you had the chance to refuel and get rested and ready?

TOM KIM: I just didn't have a choice with the whole new schedule now. The difference between being 50 and 51st is a big difference. I was I think 96th, higher 90s before I started that nine-week stretch, so I had to.

I think it's such a good product now that good golf gets rewarded. Good golf you're able to take three, four months off and not worry about anything. Bad golf you got to pick your butt up once the Playoff starts and try to play well in the fall.

You know, I had a lot of things on the line this year. I think that's why maybe some consistent parts of my games were a little bit off. It wasn't just golf. There was a lot of outside stuff that played into it.

I think 2024 was a big learning step to my career. I was dealt some tough situations and I thought I handled it as good as I could have.

I played as much as I could have and prepared as much as I could have. I actually played really well and I felt like from -- I made nine, ten changes before I started that nine-week stretch.

So making changes and playing nine weeks in a row was really difficult. I felt like I put my head down and got to work. Definitely trended very well at the end the year.

It sucks to finish 51st, but from about I was before that, I couldn't do anything better.

Q. And then I know you mentioned that you had the Presidents Cup. Obviously we saw you out there



doing your thing. It's been a couple months almost since Memphis. Have you had any time to get some R&R, and what have you been able to do? Then how focused are you on that FedEx number? I think you're 55 at this point.

TOM KIM: Yeah, I think so, ever since Memphis. I don't know how many weeks that is. I played once in the last seven, eight weeks, right, if that's correct, since Memphis.

So I've had some nice time off. I'm kind of coming back to seeing again. I'm seeing life again outside of golf which is really cool. I got to go home to Korea for four days after the Playoff.

Presidents Cup I felt like was a really good week for me, because going off that stretch and taking four weeks off and then playing Presidents Cup at a high, intense level, to be able to perform pretty well in my eyes, was good to see.

Just showed my little off-season work coming through.

That FedEx number, you know, there is a lot ways to look at it. For me, the way I'm looking at it is if I can play good golf next year, like it's not going to make a difference.

Because I looked at my elevated event stats and other than Travelers I didn't play well in any of them. I made most of my points at Travelers and outside of Travelers, so that's made me realize, okay, playing good golf outside of the elevated events can get you to a certain point. If I can play well enough I'll get into elevated enough and good golf there will elevate me even more.

Q. Last year after you won for the second time in a row as a 21 year old I asked you how are you going to celebrate. You talked about the chocolate. Kind of went viral. Couple questions: How was the chocolate and did you see all the social media about your answer?

TOM KIM: Yeah, it was a very, very, just a very pure, honest reply from me. That's exactly what I did. Definitely tasted very, very sweet. I can still remember it. It was back-to-back and having that last piece, because I saved it on Saturday night, it was very sweet.

I don't have a piece of chocolate with me this week, but we'll find something else.

Q. Did you see all the social media that was made, Full Swing, that whole deal?

TOM KIM: Yeah, it got a lot of positive comments. Again, like I said, at that time I didn't really see why because it

was just a very pure, honest, real answer for me, but nice to see how people liked it.

Q. 1983 this was the first million dollar purse in PGA TOUR history. Don't know if you're aware of that. Flash forward 41 years the money is astronomical. How do you wrap your head around how much money you're playing with and stay focused with all the craziness around all the talk of money?

TOM KIM: I mean, as a player, it's something to be very grateful for because everyone works to provide for someone or for themselves, whoever it is.

As a professional golfer to be able to play not only try it achieve your goals but to have bonuses like a lot of prize money, it's definitely rewarding. I've been very grateful to be part of this generation where the money has now become overwhelming now.

But like I said, I'm very grateful and I'm just very fortunate to be where I am in my life.

Q. What does your schedule look like after this week for the rest of the fall?

TOM KIM: So I'm actually going to play in Korea next week. That's going to be really cool. I haven't been back home, played in front of my hometown crowd since basically before I got to the PGA TOUR. It's been two and a half to three years, and I'm going to play that next week.

Then I'll play an event in Hong Kong and finish the year at Tiger's event and at Grant Thornton.

Q. Just curious, knowing this was your first title defense, not being able to do at Wyndham last year, was there a different mindset you employed that made you feel made you more successful, being a different deal coming in as defending champion? Anything that stood out to you from your approach last year?

TOM KIM: No, not really. I took it really the same week I did. Dry heat definitely gets my a little off. Last two years I got sick every week because of the dry heat. I never grew up in dry heat. I was always in humidity. I've been doing good so far. It's only been two days, but see how the week goes.

I think the last two years, because of the way I was feeling I was so focused on just getting my job done instead of thinking about trying to win. This course is made for making a lot of birdies. I shot I think 19 or 20 last year and shot 24 the previous year, so a lot of the birdies out there.

I can remember for the whole week I never worried about trying to make more birdies. I was just thinking about plotting myself around the golf course and taking advantage of the holes you need to take advantage of.

Q. Getting back to the course a little bit, what's the first thing that comes to your mind about TPC Summerlin and why do you think you play it so well?

TOM KIM: I think it's taking advantage. You know, you have some holes where there is -- par-3s are pretty long, some tough par-4s. If you plot yourself pretty well the first 12 holes you get to 13, it's a very, very accessible par-5, really short par-3, drivable par-4, and another par-5 right away.

So there is a lot of birdies out there. You just have to pick and choose when you want to attack. Because you could play the most boring round of 6-under here. It's possible. Good ball striking gets rewarded. The greens are so perfect and stays on your line.

I think that's why I have been able to do well. Again, it's not the longest golf course. You have to plot your way around and you can't just hit it 180 ball speed and hit it everywhere. You have to hit it straight. That's been a strength of my game. And again, you have to stick to your game plan and be pretty smart.

Q. You've had a lot of good moments here at TPC Summerlin obviously. Is there one particular shot that stands out to you in the last couple years?

TOM KIM: That's a good question. I think 2022, that was probably the worst I felt in a while so I can't remember a lot of shots. I think last year on 15 I missed my drive right and I had that chip, awkward downhill chip.

I think was tied for the lead or I had a one-shot lead. But I couldn't made bogey easily. I hit a really good chip, made birdie, which kind of gave me some room with a bunch -- I think there was like seven guys bunched up, and kind of gave me a little breathing room to attack 16.

I three putted 16 and par'd my last three holes. That birdie allowed me to make one mistake coming in and eventually win by one.

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