

# Sony Open in Hawaii

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

## Chan Kim

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, we'd like to welcome Chan Kim into the interview room, making his second career start at the Sony Open in Hawai'i, first since 2022. Welcome back.

If we can get some thoughts on being here at the Sony Open season open.

CHAN KIM: Yeah, special event that I grew up watching as a kid. I remember coming every year and watching these guys just hit it over bunkers where when I was growing up, I wasn't hitting it very far.

Yeah, it was a special experience, and obviously two years ago I played and was lucky enough to get an exemption in.

Did not play as well as I wanted to, but it was still special experience. Now to be a PGA TOUR member and come back here, to start it off -- kick everything off here pretty much in my hometown, yeah, it's a treat.

**Q. Outstanding year last year on the Korn Ferry Tour with two wins. Take us back to the year on the Korn Ferry last year and then also your goals for the season.**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, so I played pretty well for most of the season. Had a little hiccup there just before I had the two wins. Missed three cuts in a row, started to get a little frustrated since we didn't have too many events left to try and secure a TOUR card.

So I knew I had to touchdown get something going. Went over to the Butch Harmon School in Henderson right after Salt Lake City. Drove down there, two days of lessons, and figured out it was something very simple, as most times it is. We tend to overthink stuff.

Yeah, just something super simple. Went the next week to Omaha. Made the cut. That in itself was an accomplishment. And even in Jersey didn't really start off as well as I would've loved to, but that final round, the back nine, I think I may have gone 5-under on the back nine to

shoot 8-under for the day and finish 20-under, win that week.

Go to the next week, hitting it the same, confidence levels are high, and, yeah, made 28 birdies, no bogeys. That was a very special win to me. Yeah, so I'm just fortunate to be here. I think a good goal definitely is just start off with a good tournament here, try and finish top 10.

I mean, at the end of the day, of everything I would love to be inside the top 50 and get into a signature events and majors next year.

**Q. 28 birdies and no bogeys. That usually works out pretty well.**

CHAN KIM: Yeah.

**Q. What was your route to the Korn Ferry Tour?**

CHAN KIM: So I played over in Japan for eight years. I believe the category changed this year, but when I was still there, I believe it was a Top 5 and the money rankings get to final stage of Korn Ferry Tour Q-School.

So it was about the right time because the Korn Ferry Tour was getting more world ranking points and the Japan Tour was going to reduce it by about 60% or so and there was 30 cards on the line. To me it was a no-brainer. Have a five-year exemption in Japan. If there is any time to do it, it's probably now.

**Q. Has it been an interesting road wanting to be here but you're still making a nice living?**

CHAN KIM: Right, yeah. You know, the money out in Japan was good. You know, a year of sacrifice playing on the 'Korn Ferry Tour, which their purses went up as well. It's been amazing. An incredible experience.

But, yeah, when you have 30 cards on the line it's a no-brainer.

**Q. First big paycheck in Japan were you very good at converting yen at that point?**



CHAN KIM: I was not. When I first saw it online after the tournament had concluded I'm looking and I'm like, it's saying something like 20 million yen. I don't know what that equates to in United States dollars. Looks good, so...

I was running around telling people I'm a millionaire in Japanese yen.

**Q. Just out of curiosity, given the places you've played and the path you've taken being Keita Nakajima who had a choice of Korn Ferry Tour or DP World Tour, ten cards in Europe, what is it...**

CHAN KIM: 30 cards, yep.

**Q. What advice would you give 'em? Which is the better path?**

CHAN KIM: Honestly for me, and I've played some golf with Keita, obviously a really, really talented player. I know when I played here two years ago he played really well here.

I think that with his game and how far he hits it, the Korn Ferry Tour would've been great. I think that he would've done really, really well.

But he's one of those players I feel like he could go anywhere and play really well. Preferably I would've told him to come to the Korn Ferry Tour, 30 cards versus ten. It's just odds, right?

But yeah, I mean, if he feels like he can do it on the DP World Tour, by all means I would support him either way.

**Q. I want to correct you on something. I remember back in 2006 when you were state champ in high school, you did hit the ball pretty far.**

CHAN KIM: (Laughter.)

**Q. How old are you now?**

CHAN KIM: 33.

**Q. You've been around the world, played in majors. What's it like to be a 33 year old rookie?**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, well, would've loved to be a rookie at 23. Sometimes that doesn't work out.

You know, just to be here, to have this experience, know that this is -- it's been a lifelong goal. Since I started golf I knew I wanted to play on the PGA TOUR and kind of

create a legacy I guess on this TOUR.

33, body is probably feeling 43, so arguably I would say I'm a rookie at 43. Yeah, just to be here, have this opportunity, you know, I can't even put it into words. I'm excited.

**Q. All those things you went through for those ten years, those things will help you now, right?**

CHAN KIM: I think that playing all over the world in different conditions, all different types of grass -- you know, so we've played tree lined in Japan and got some other wide open courses on the Korn Ferry Tour.

I think the most valuable one is definitely learning how to win. I've won eight times in Japan, twice on the Korn Ferry Tour last year. I think the experiences from Japan, winning in Japan carries to the Korn Ferry Tour. I knew how to handle myself in the final or third round.

And hopefully -- I'm hoping all of those experiences will now help me if I'm going down the stretch leading a golf tournament or close to the lead, I'll know exactly what to do, what kind of mentality I need to have, and hopefully I can end up with a win.

**Q. Did you come to this event as a kid? Some favorite memories?**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, I don't know if I should really say this one on camera, but I remember coming out. Probably been out about three, four years in a row. Came out to play. Just remember we're standing on the first tee, watching -- Aaron Baddeley was probably one of my most favorite players at the time.

I'm sitting there as a 13, 14 year old, and he's getting ready to tee off and they're talking about how good he looks and whatnot. I'm there to watch the golf. I'm 12, 13 at the time. I don't know what they're really talking about.

Now that I think back on it, it's just kind of funny. Obviously a very attractive guy. Probably very popular. So, yeah, like I said, I used to come out here, watch these guys. I would kind of see and learn from certain situations, are they hitting it higher, lower. Those are some things that I was looking for.

And obviously how are they hit the ball, like I said. It was truly amazing.

**Q. How much support do you have this week?**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, I've still got quite a lot of family, friends out here. My first golf coach, second and third, they're all



here, so I know they'll come out and watch the tournament and watch me play, which is very special.

I know two years ago I think -- I hate to bring up this stat, but I believe I was third in proximity to the hole and I missed the cut. Hoping to change my luck on the greens this year and see what I can do in front of the hometown crowd.

**Q. What is the course you grew up on?**

CHAN KIM: Ala Wai Golf Course. It's probably the nations most busy muni golf course you'll find. I've been there at 4:30 in the morning to sign up, there is a waitlist. You know, we would finish up or I would end up teeing off at 10:00.

I think we had a junior pass. It was \$20 for 29 hole rounds, so a dollar per nine holes. Just can't get that anywhere else.

So, yeah, I think that's part of the reason I was able to get so much practice in and improve in a really short time.

**Q. Three questions: What is Smead? How long has this been on your hat?**

CHAN KIM: Actually just started this year. I know that we had negotiated with Ping and I'm very fortunate that they were willing to give up the front of the hat. Met with Cole Smead who runs Smead Capital Investments, and they were looking for a player. Came down to me and one other player. I don't know who it is.

But my manager, Ben Harrison, has done a really good job for me. So, yeah, I'm just very fortunate to have them, have their support. Hopefully I can have something to show for it.

**Q. Second question. None of these are related to the others by the way. Who do you consider to be Hawai'i's greatest golfer ever?**

CHAN KIM: Wow, that's a tough one.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, because obviously Dean Wilson has won on TOUR. Parker has played on TOUR, and obviously another excellent player.

Then you've got Davis Ishii I had lessons from. He's won this event. Won multiple times in Japan. Won the order of merit.

Then obviously you have Tadd, who was probably one of the coolest stories that you could have ever thought of; 16, and he's hitting drives 300 yards. Like I just saw a video of when he made that eagle putt on 18. Still gives my chills.

So there is so many good players to choose from. I don't want to get in trouble for saying the wrong one.

**Q. When you were at the Sony, were you autograph seeker at all?**

CHAN KIM: Oh, yeah.

**Q. Anyone turn you down?**

CHAN KIM: Yes. Yes, and I was a bit upset at the time if I didn't get it. Now that I'm kind of in that situation, I understand. Guys have work to do. We're going to get it done before we do anything else.

After the round, I've gone and signed my scorecard, come back out, absolutely, I can stand there all day. I have no problem with that. There are times where if you're crossing from let's say 13 to 14 and there are kids there, like you really want to.

I know a lot of these guys really want to. It's just that we're in the middle of a tournament, in the middle of a round, so it's just kind of tough to like sign all these things and then try and get back into tournament mode.

So I try to do it as much as I can. I think that's a great player/fan relationship. You can gain support of other fans that don't know you yet or whatnot.

**Q. We're not getting a name, are we?**

CHAN KIM: No, absolutely not. That was a good try though. I'll give you that.

**Q. Starting in your position, not in the signature events yet, do you feel you're at a disadvantage?**

CHAN KIM: That's a very interesting question, because we brought that up. Somebody brought that up during orientation, new member orientation and said that these guys are getting 750 FedExCup points versus 500 or something like that.

But, look, these guys, the guys playing the signature events are the best of the best. They deserve every bit to be playing these events. But a win on any given week could change that for anybody. Couple Top 10s and a win and next year you're going to be in their position anyway.

So I've heard this all year last year. David Bray, who was the Ping rep for the Korn Ferry Tour, he just said, you know, all you got to do is play better. That's the goal. Just play better and everything will take care of itself.

**Q. You're aware the whole Sony/Palm Springs/Torrey stretch to try and get into...**

CHAN KIM: Yes, yep. I was hoping to get into Waste Management as well because I currently live in Gilbert, Arizona and I have friends that have lived there or are still living there. Some guys are like, if you get in we're flying over. That's a very tough event to get into regardless if it's a signature event or not.

You know, be nice to get in. If I definitely don't I think I'm going to get in I will do the Monday to give myself a chance. But like I said, if I play well here, next week and the week after, everything will take care of itself.

**Q. When you went to Kaimuki you were not a district exception, right?**

CHAN KIM: Right.

**Q. So you live pretty close to here. Can you tell me like how many blocks or miles or whatever?**

CHAN KIM: No, so my parents, sister and I, we all moved to Arizona. We were the only ones in Hawai'i. When I was first growing up I lived on the cross of Kapiolani Boulevard and Date Street, so literally from our balcony I could see the high school, see the marching bands practice and football games and whatnot just from the balcony. So I thought it would be pretty cool to go there as a kid.

Went to Ala Wai Elementary which was ten-minute scooter ride away. Little RAZR scooter. That was the in-thing then. Then we moved just to like literally right on the intersection of Kapiolani and Date Street at an apartment there.

From there, I would go to -- skateboard then because that was the next cool thing to do. So I would skateboard to Washington Middle and then I believe where we lived last was on Eno (phonetic) road which is just across the bridge from the convention center heading into Waikiki. I would skateboard from there to Kaimuki, so definitely couldn't afford to play here. You know, I know the membership here is pretty strict.

I think it's a good thing. I believe the members have to vote you in here as well. So it's a tight circle here. Yeah, like I said, I had fun playing all way growing up. If I went back and played I would still have a blast there.

Also grew up playing at Pearl Country Club since David Ishii was out there. Yeah, been fortunate enough to play a lot of great golf courses. Used to have junior tournaments at Turtle Bay. States was at Turtle Bay. Hawai'i Prince, the all of those golf courses.

**Q. Was David instrumental in getting you to play in Japan?**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, so he told me -- we're sitting in the pro shop at Pearl Country Club one day and he said, look, I understand that you want to get to the PGA TOUR. You're very talented. But he was like, you have to look at other options in case it doesn't work out.

I played in Japan for however many years. It's a great place to start. I'm sure the money was better when I played than when he played, but, yeah, I took that advice. Started off in Canada. Played in Canada for two years. Played the Asian Tour and European Challenge Tour and Japan for eight years and Korn Ferry Tour and then here. Played just about everywhere you can think of.

I think everybody has a different path. I don't regret the choices that I made or which tours I decided to play on. The end goal was to get here. Now I'm here, so, yeah.

**Q. What's the first time you played this course?**

CHAN KIM: It was actually the year that Tadd qualified I believe, so that would've been 2005, '06.

**Q. Yeah.**

CHAN KIM: Somewhere in there, 2006. We had something called the Governor's Cup qualifying. It was 12 amateurs for one spot and 12 pro for one spot. I am pretty sure I was playing with Tadd if I remember correctly.

We were big rivals growing up, so I was like, man, I think all I got to do is beat Tadd. He whooped me pretty good. He deserved every bit of playing this event.

Obviously he showed it when he made the cut and played really well.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

CHAN KIM: Yeah, yeah. That was a big one. Inside story. So we had our -- so there is the Hawai'i State Championships and then there is like the Oahu, just for people Oahu, and we played at Ala Wai. We ended up tying after two days so they went to a scorecard playoff and I won the scorecard playoff.

Obviously that's not how they should have handled it, so I believe the Mauna Lua coach called in and said, look, that's not fair. They named us co-champions the next day. You know what? Yeah, we should have done a playoff, so I don't mind it.

So leading up to states it was a very big deal. Me and him, whoever wins is it's basically taken all the cake.

So gosh, I remember I played with him the second rounds at states. He's starting to make birdies and I'm like hanging in there making pars. I think he went for the green in two on 18 and he had put it in the water.

I had hit it left, safe, just keep it on dry land, chip it up, two-putt, get out of there. Hit an iron out to the left. I hit this chip and I remember I pretty much bladed it I believe and it caught the edge of rough and trickled by the hole like, I don't know, five feet or something, five, six feet.

I think I ended up making that putt. So, yeah, that was a big deal. That state championship was a very big deal.

**Q. Ever do any U.S. Open qualifiers here?**

CHAN KIM: I think I tried once. Must have been when I was 16. Didn't go very well. There was a lot of good players at that time.

**Q. Who are you working with?**

CHAN KIM: Andy Patnou. I'm bouncing around to be honest. Then I worked with Nick Helwig who was at the Butch Harmon Schools. I keep in contact with him. And I will have Dana Dahlquist kind of check my swing every once in a while if I'm trying to do some speed work especially.

At Superstition Mountain where I practice, Milo is there and they're all pretty much similar in all their swing philosophies, so they'll connect and say, okay, this is what I'm seeing, okay, that's what I'm seeing. They'll try and figure something out to work everything out.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports