

THE PLAYERS Championship

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Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Max Homa

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Max Homa to the interview room here at the 2024 PLAYERS Championship. Max, welcome. You're making your fourth start here at THE PLAYERS Championship, and last year you had a top-10 finish, T6, I believe. Can you just open with some thoughts about being back.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, this is obviously our golf tournament. It's an amazing golf course. The energy of the event is always really cool. Really happy to get good weather. We've had some tough ones. Two years ago it was crazy, so it was cool to look at the forecast and see there's sun because the golf course deserves it.

It's a massive challenge. I think pretty much anybody's golf game fits around here. You're going to have to prove a lot of great things, so I always love coming to this event.

THE MODERATOR: You're coming off a top 10 at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by MasterCard. Can you share some thoughts about where you feel your game is at.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, it's good. I left the West Coast pretty frustrated. The game felt quite bad. But I learned a lot. I did a lot in the two weeks off to take what I learned and prove improve both physically and mentally.

So it was fun to come out to Orlando last week, play a very difficult golf course, feel like I had a lot of -- I was hitting, seeing a lot of good signs and did a great job mentally just playing the golf course and being patient. So I think that's something that obviously it's going to take going forward, but especially a week like this.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. I don't know what your relationship is with Gary Woodland at all, but could you just talk about how you felt when you first heard the news, how jarring it was and how uplifting it is to see him out here and getting back to as close to normal as you could expect for what he went through?



MAX HOMA: Yeah, it was terrifying. Can't imagine his family, what they were going through. Gary has always been one of the kindest people to me out here.

The week after I played my first TOUR event he was one of the people I hung out with on a Tuesday at the Shriners, and he was incredibly kind, and I've always been a huge fan of his.

So to hear the news, to happen to anybody but somebody I felt like I was fairly close to and someone I've looked up to was scary not only just for his health but for his golf, as well.

You always want to watch Gary play, and he's accomplished such amazing things, but it's been really cool to see the outpouring of support for him. It's very due.

He clearly was going through a lot and kept so much in. It's not like any of us, or at least I didn't know he was going through anything.

It's just great to see him out here. He's always somebody that will give you a laugh or you'll enjoy, even if it's just brief, a quick chat with. So, very happy that things are progressing better for him.

I know that there's probably still quite a ways to go, but I think everybody was holding their breath the day they knew he had to go in there and get that surgery. So happy to see him back out here and in good spirits.

Q. Last week after Scheffler won, I think Shane Lowry said there's only a couple guys that can compete with Scottie when he's playing like that, and he wasn't sure if he was one of them. Does Scottie feel like the dominating force in the sport right now?

MAX HOMA: Yes, Scottie's just so consistent with 90 percent of his golf game and, I mean, like the most consistent I've ever really seen. He had the week at Memorial last year where he lost by one, and I think he was like 18 strokes gained putting behind the leader. That's terrifying.

But golf is hard, and obviously there's -- the putting, he



putted so well last week, and as a friend of his, I hope he can take a lot from that and continue to putt well. As someone who is playing against him, I hope that the opposite at times.

But, yeah, he's just amazing player. I've never seen anybody hit the ball quite like that every day. Usually you see people go in ebbs and flows of, oh, he's striking the ball well, and then you'll kind of look at the leaderboard later and say, oh, what must have happened from Wednesday to Thursday. That doesn't seem to happen to him. He puts it together for months and then years at a time, which is wild.

His short game's amazing. But I've been really impressed with his mind. Every interview he comes in and gives after a win just seems like he's really got it figured out. So I imagine he'll keep doing that and keep progressing with the putting and do more of what he did last week.

Q. We've been hearing some guys say that the course is a bit softer than they're used to. What have you seen out there? How do you expect it to play come tomorrow?

MAX HOMA: So I never played in May PLAYERS, so they all said that it's a lot firmer then. This is kind of what I'm used to.

It's still demanding. You need to hit the fairways to have looks at birdie. The rough's pretty mean. But, yeah, it is -- if you hit the fairways, I think it will be a good separator. If you're hitting the ball well out here, I think you're going to have a lot of good looks. The greens are great, they're very fast, but if you're out of position it doesn't matter how soft it is. It's going to be really difficult because of the pace of the greens. Even if you can get one to land softly, it's going to roll for awhile.

So it's still, this is one of those courses I guess it's a testament to this place that even when it is soft that it would still play pretty challenging, but yeah, I wouldn't know too much about when this place gets firm. It sounds like it would be really, really brutal.

Q. Going back to Scottie, there's something about him that he doesn't really, as No. 1 in the world doesn't have this kind of star power aura around him that maybe a Rory or Rahm does. Not taking anything away from him, just kind of his vibe. Can you describe what you think it is about that? He can walk down a busy street in New York City and probably nobody would recognize him, which is not normal for a guy that's at the top of the game as long as he's been?

MAX HOMA: One, I would put it on some of you guys and maybe the public, because I don't know what more you could ask from a super mega star. Part of it I think he's just an incredibly grounded person. He's not going to intentionally put himself in the limelight because his values are great. He's an amazing husband, future father. He's just a great guy.

So is Rory and so are pretty much all the other guys that I can think of, but that would be my best guess. So I couldn't put -- I saw somebody on the internet say he's boring, and I would imagine that's what you would dream of, to become the best player in the world and someone who is going to set records and win a bunch of majors, you want to play as boring of golf as you can, you want it be as even keeled as you can. You would think that's what you would build in a lab.

So, I don't know. I would recognize him walking down the street. If I was a fan of golf, I would gawk at how impressive he has been and how great of a person he is, so I'm not sure why it doesn't seem to stand out as much as others, but maybe you just got to give it time.

I mean, he is really young, and it's only been remarkably a few years that he's been, I guess, this on the scene, and maybe it just takes some getting used to, but I think the more people who listen to him talk, the more they will become a massive fan of him.

Q. Can you tell us what you did between the West Coast and getting to Florida to work on your game?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, did four weeks in a row on the West Coast. My coach, Mark, as he kind of referenced when I called him Monday after L.A., you can't give me too much information when we're at tournaments, it just, I got to play.

I did well two of the events of just managing it, so I think with more information I might have got better for months down the road but not for those few weeks.

So changed some stuff in my grip, got my left hand stronger. I worked a bit more on my downswing and my backswing and then did a bunch of just kind of discovery, self-discovery work mentally. I learned a lot on the Sunday of L.A. and just tried to -- it was a really good momentum, good bit of momentum going into an off-season or a little break and then into this time of year.

I was actually quite pleased the more I thought about it. I've always played really well on the West Coast, and it felt like I was really holding on as we come to THE PLAYERS and the majors. This is a big part of the season, and this actually was quite cool that I felt like I almost found something coming into this time of year.

Usually I feel like I'm just trying to stranglehold it and hope it doesn't leave me. So, yeah, it was a bunch of stuff, but nothing crazy. I would say the grip felt like the biggest change.

Q. Rory was saying earlier that he has a swing thought that he loves right now with his driver, but it doesn't translate into his irons. I thought that was interesting. Is that something that is familiar for you and how do you manage stuff like that when it requires one thing from longer clubs maybe and another totally different feel with shorter clubs?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I've gone ebbs and flows. Right now I would be in the same ballpark. I have a cut feel with -- my driver always cuts, so I have a cut feel with that, and that is slightly different with the irons, especially if I'm trying to draw it, so I have a draw feel.

But I think with the two weeks at home and doing a little bit of extra work last week, I kind of found, hey, if I have this shot I'm going to go to this feel. I have this shot I'm going to go to that feel and work on that on the range so I feel comfy, but I think a lot of it, too, is when you get on the golf course in a tournament you do your best to pick the feel that you think will -- you just pick the feel that's comfiest at that time because neither of them would be too limiting. It's just you want to make sure you're putting yourself in the best scenario to succeed.

But, yeah, I would say I have pretty much the same thing going on at the moment.

Q. I know it's just a small grip tweak but how long does it take for a change like that to fully just bed in and feel super comfy?

MAX HOMA: Oddly enough, it was pretty immediate at home. It fixed a ton of things just in that, which was awesome. A week and a half I would say of hitting balls and I was like, oh, I got this and I just got to get better at the other kind of moves I was working on.

As the week went on at Bay Hill, it felt better and better, all the other moves, and then I got out there Thursday, front nine, and my grip felt weird, and so that's just tournament golf for you. It brought out the only thing I thought that I had kind of gotten used to. It felt really odd, and it was a bit tough to trust.

I thought I did a good job of trusting it and learning where it's going to bring my hands in the golf club. So, yeah, it can be tricky. I've had times where I felt like I needed to hit a thousand golf balls before it even felt normal. This one's

a little different. It felt okay right away, just didn't translate to Thursday morning as nicely as I wanted it to.

Q. JT was in here before, and he was asked what would make golf a little more watchable maybe for the average viewer. Couldn't come up with anything off the top of his head. I know you watch a fair amount of golf yourself. Are there any ideas off the top of your head that would make the sport a little more watchable?

MAX HOMA: I heard less commercials is a good start. Yeah, I don't know. I do feel like we're stuck in this age where we're nitpicking absolutely everything. I'm not going to say I haven't done that as well in my free time, but I'm kind of getting over it. It's golf. It's slower. It's not football, it's not basketball.

But there's a lot of beauty in it. I think if I had to pick one thing I would like, Fridays out here are awesome when we do have a cut. I think something just to lean into, Friday's not determining the golf tournament, let's follow some guys sweating the cut line. Little things like that.

But yeah we have a -- it's niche sport. I would love for it to grow a bit. I think through COVID a lot of people have found a love for playing the game, and I'm hoping that translates to them watching more, but if not, then that's all right.

I think this is just kind of what we've been. If Tiger plays more, I think that would help, as well.

But I think the nitpicking of it is getting kind of tired, and we could just do a better job of just shutting up and playing some golf and doing our best to entertain.

Q. Four times here. Is there anything you've learned about the course that you feel you picked up on after playing it a couple of times and thought, man, I wasn't doing that right, I need to change my approach? Is there any nuance that you found helps you with a little bit of experience?

MAX HOMA: Harder than it looks. I think because it's so clear what shots you need to hit and I don't find the shots -- if you just put them, isolate them, they're not crazy difficult, but over 18 of them they -- it's a bit exhausting, I guess.

They're all a little uncomfortable. But I think you feel like you should eat this place up. Like I said, it's been soft every year I've been here and it feels like you should be able to do whatever you want, but you're going to run into some bogeys. If you hit a bad tee shot out here, you will be in a very bad spot. But everyone's going to. So I think

I've learned that I can hit a few squirrely ones and it's not going to -- as long as I don't attach myself to that, I'm going to hit some good ones as well.

Q. Had you played here before playing in the tournament ever and did you have any perceptions that changed once you got here?

MAX HOMA: No, I hadn't. I had played the Dye Course. I looked out the back window of the clubhouse and the only perception I had was that 18th tee shot is significantly harder than it even looked on TV, and it already looked pretty hard.

Q. You're one of only four guys in the field that have finished in the top 25 the last two years. What is it about this place that brings out the best in your game?

MAX HOMA: I think my misses are quite small in relation to everyone out here, I guess. I enjoy working the ball. I think you have to do that quite a bit out here. I think I can be quite patient when the scores are a bit higher. I feel like I putt well here. But, yeah, I just think -- I've done a good job of getting comfortable off the tee, even though, like I said, they're awkward tee shots, but I feel like I found some shots that works on certain holes and I've trusted that. Yeah, I think I've just taken some of the bad and just dealt with it well when I've been here.

Q. Mind you, Scottie's not on that list of four.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I know. I saw it yesterday. I got to get my little wins.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll let you go. Thank you for your time.

MAX HOMA: Thank y'all very much. Take care.

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