

# AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Pebble Beach, California, USA

Pebble Beach Golf Links

## Tom Hoge

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome defending champion Tom Hoge here to the interview room here at the AT&T Pebble Beach pro-am. Just some opening comments to be back at a place that holds some great memories.

TOM HOGE: Yeah, it's a lot of fun. This is a spot that's really grown on me over the years. I think it's my ninth time playing in this tournament now. Really look forward to being back here this week.

Throw on top of it winning here last year was fun, and just excited to get back. It's been a full year since I've been back, so fun to be here.

THE MODERATOR: You're making your 10th start of the season, three top 10s. Just some thoughts on the season so far and what your game looks like entering this week.

TOM HOGE: Yeah, it's been pretty solid. I felt like I've hit the ball pretty well tee to green, so there's going to be a lot of opportunities each week, and kind of just waiting for that putter to click one of these weeks like it did last year.

**Q. When you look at the last year, what's been the best part about being a PGA TOUR winner?**

TOM HOGE: I guess for me, probably the Masters, all the majors. That was the first time I've played in all the majors. I get to do it again this year, as well, so really looking forward to that.

I think I really gained that sense of appreciation of how hard it is to get into the Masters and all the majors because it took me so long to get there. It was my eighth year on TOUR it took me to get there. That made it that much sweeter to do.

Really just everything. It's a pretty good life we get out here.

**Q. Last year after the win, they asked you how you were going to celebrate, because it had been a few**

**years since you celebrated. How did you celebrate that victory?**

TOM HOGE: Nothing special. We flew down to Phoenix that night. My mom lives there, so we brought the trophy in through the front door. My grandma was there, as well, and a little bit of late-night Taco Bell like all champions would do, and right out to the golf course on Monday the next day.

**Q. If it took you that long to get to the Masters and you get there by winning in February and now it's April and you play, how badly did you want to get back, and was there even, let's call it, more pressure or desire to get back after you've done it once with no guarantee?**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, for sure. I was pretty beat up after that week last year. That's a tough golf course with some tough conditions last year. It was a tough week.

I really enjoyed it. I would say my family enjoyed that week a lot more, just how special of a place that is.

You know, I was in a really good spot last year in the FedExCup after I won here and knew that I was in pretty good shape to make the TOUR Championship, and I think I did so by May. Kind of knew that I was ready to go back there.

I really haven't thought about it a lot as we've played the season, just because we have so many big events coming up each month it feels like.

As we've gotten closer here, starting to make some plans as far as housing and that stuff goes, getting excited again for it.

**Q. I don't know what your FedExCup rank -- I'm going to think it's around 13 or 14, and your World Ranking is somewhere around 28, 30. Do you know that stuff?**

TOM HOGE: You're in the right ballpark. I look periodically.

**Q. What do you think about that? I don't want to call it**



**a pinch-me moment, but is it a feeling like you've felt you would be here all along, or is it kind of cool to look at where you are in the World Ranking?**

TOM HOGE: There's a lot to that. I feel like I've had the potential to be here, but it's taken me so long to get there that I would say I've got a lot better appreciation for it, just like getting into these majors. You see how many good players there are.

I went through kind of some of these discussions with the LIV stuff last year, trying to make a decision there, and it's one of those realizations that when you look at the World Rankings, you've got -- I don't know where the cutoff would be, you've got 15, 20, 25 guys that are always going to be the top 25 guys I would say, and the rest of us are always kind of fighting for that next spot in line.

Not to say that I've peaked. I certainly hope that I can do more good things in this game. But I know that I've climbed that ladder pretty well, and now it's just trying to stay right there.

**Q. Why didn't you go to LIV?**

TOM HOGE: The biggest thing for me is that I had won for the first time. I was making the decision a few months afterwards, and there were so many tournaments I've wanted to play in nor the first time, tournaments I grew up, TOUR Championship, Maui, those sort of tournaments, and when I went to bed at night, I wasn't ready to give those up.

**Q. Was the money a motivator?**

TOM HOGE: For sure. The reality that we play is if I trip walking off this stage and hurt my wrist or something that I might never make a dollar again. You've got insurance for that, but it still isn't the same as making it on the golf course. You almost look at it more for your family and wife and future kids that you almost feel a bit obligated to look at that money and take it.

It was a hard decision to make, but I'm very happy with where I'm at.

**Q. Last thing on that note, because you won here last year, were you ever offered a chance, or was there an opportunity for you to go to the Saudi International this year?**

TOM HOGE: There was not. It's not something I pursued.

**Q. They didn't care about you even if you won?**

TOM HOGE: I don't know if they ever really cared about me, to be honest with you. I know my place in the game, and I know that I'm not really moving the needle, so to speak. So certainly not a big draw there.

It's an interesting time for golf. Some of those deals that guys have signed you question a little bit, just hearing the numbers that have been floated out there, but I guess it's raised the bar for all of us.

**Q. Questioned in what way?**

TOM HOGE: Some of the valuations they come up with. You just hear numbers floated for guys that I don't want to get too specific on but question the formulas they might have as far as who they're selecting and why and I guess where their Tour will be headed down the road.

**Q. You mean the number was too high or too low?**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, just not to compare numbers, but where I would stand, where they would stand, and I would say it wouldn't make sense using World Rankings or some of those metrics, but I guess they're more inclined to want to pull in a diverse pool of guys from all over the world.

**Q. Was there a number that if they would have gotten to, you would have gone?**

TOM HOGE: I don't know if I ever got to that point. For me, I think there were some serious questions on the back end of the contracts as far as how do you be replaced down the line and that sort of stuff that certainly would have had to go to attorneys at that point and figure out all the contracts. But like I said, it never really got to that point for me.

**Q. Coming down the stretch, you really played well while Jordan was kind of backing up. What was it that clicked for you with the chance to win for the first time?**

TOM HOGE: I've always hated all the cliches and everything that guys have used in press conferences, and as I'm looking back, I hate that one-shot-at-a-time thing, but that really is what it was coming down the stretch.

When I finished, when we were sitting here, somebody mentioned that the proximity to the hole and how close I had hit it on every single hole coming down the stretch, and I really hadn't realized that at all until you've done, and to me that's just how in the moment I was, kind of one shot at a time, and all the things that I hate hearing from different people that have tried to help you and different press conferences, but it really does play out.

**Q. Have you ever not gone one shot at a time? Have you ever had a chance --**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, for sure.

**Q. -- where you thought about winning --**

TOM HOGE: I think as I've been near the lead more on Sundays, one of the biggest things you learn is almost how long a round of golf feels like it takes. You get out and make a few birdies early and you feel like you're right there in the lead and it seems like it takes so long to play the rest of the day. You're certainly looking ahead at what's to come.

Not that it's a blessing for me, but I look at my start last year, I double bogeyed the 5th hole, bogeyed 8, and certainly felt like I had made too many mistakes at that point to win, so it almost was like the pressure was off a little bit.

I looked up at the leaderboard and I was still kind of right in the mix, so kind of reenergized me to get back into that.

But that helps in a way that now you're trying to manage it for the last nine, ten holes for two and a half, three hours instead of the whole day for five to six.

**Q. If you go back to Sony, which was one of your really good early chances in 2018, what was that like? When you look back at that, was that one shot at a time?**

TOM HOGE: That was a long time ago. I'm getting old.

That was even harder because I felt like I was near the lead all week long, had the lead going into Sunday, had the lead the whole day until the 16th hole. I made a double bogey.

**Q. Wasn't a terrible one, either.**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, just a bad break.

But I would say looking back at that, I kept thinking, you know, if I could make two birdies in the last four holes or whatever, get to a certain number, you're going to win this thing. So yeah, I would say I was certainly looking ahead at that point.

**Q. I'm changing it up a little bit here, but being from TCU and going to the journey of the national championship and seeing what they were able to accomplish this past season, was that at all inspiring**

**to you?**

TOM HOGE: A little bit. I mean, I feel like my career has kind of paralleled TCU a little bit, kind of being the underdog from North Dakota, and TCU is such a small school that we all embrace that little bit of a chip on our shoulder that we have something to prove. To see them do well more than anything was just something fun to keep an eye on and watch as the season progressed.

**Q. Did anybody from TCU after you won here and had the season you had, did anybody reach out to you and say your game is inspiring them?**

TOM HOGE: Nothing specifically that I can think of. I think one of the coolest things throughout the year was all the pictures I got from friends and people all over the country that would travel here and see the shadow box that's outside the Tap Room and stuff like that, so to keep reliving that throughout the year has been cool.

**Q. The time you won, was it in Minnesota? Everyone talks about it; I forgot what it's called.**

TOM HOGE: Pine to Palm, amateur tournament? Yep.

**Q. What's the big deal about that?**

TOM HOGE: Well, how much time do we have?

**Q. As much as you want.**

TOM HOGE: It's a very unique golf tournament, so the format is the same as the U.S. Amateur. You play 36 holes of stroke play, 64 go into match play, but it's on a 6200-yard golf course, and I want to say they get 500 to 600 players every year because they have flights, senior division, mid-amateur, all the way down. Kind of to cram that many people into one golf course throughout the whole week and have a tournament, and you're staying kind of on the lakes in Minnesota, it's just a fun week that everybody loves up there.

**Q. Was that your last one?**

TOM HOGE: No, I had won a few mini-Tour events. I had won one on the Canadian Tour, but that was a long time ago.

**Q. You said you played the four majors for the first time last year. What was the anticipation going in, and did they live up to what you thought they'd be like?**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, I mean, I had experiences with the U.S. Open and the PGA Championship in prior years, so

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

knew a little bit what that would be like, but what a great year to play the Masters and then play the Open Championship at St Andrews was pretty cool.

Yeah, I would just say to be on that stage is where you've always dreamt of being. To get to play in all four for the first time was really cool. I'd like to play a little bit better in all four of them this year; that's kind of a goal. Certainly excited to get back to them.

**Q. Had you been to St Andrews before?**

TOM HOGE: I had never been to Europe at all before, so I played the JP McManus Pro-Am in Ireland and then Scottish Open and British Open for the first time. I need a lot of work on lag putting still.

**Q. Can you just talk about, obviously you've seen the first tee at the Old Course but never obviously played it. Could you talk about what that was like?**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, so I missed the cut at Scottish Open, so I got up there Sunday, so a little bit early, and right as we were kind of checking in, getting into our Old Course hotel room was when Tiger and I think he was with JT went out and played on Sunday afternoon, and just to see the mob of the people coming out of the city with their dogs and everything running around, following them around, was just pretty cool, and just the history of all that, shut the golf course down and making it a park on Sunday I think was a good sort of perspective to get leading into the week that I'm glad I got to see.

I would say that my trips over there have certainly changed how I look at golf a little bit over here, through more of a golf architecture lens, and understand why designers do what they do and some of the questions they ask us a lot more. Things make a little bit more sense after seeing that.

**Q. Do you feel, too, after playing those courses you get a little bit more rounded kind of game?**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, for sure. So much of what we do is just hit it high and far and go chase it and do the same thing again, and you really do have to have a lot of shots over there.

You know, I didn't feel like my game was real sharp going into those few weeks, and I don't know if it was travel or what it might have been, but it certainly exposed my weaknesses those weeks a little bit more than I think our typical TOUR setups would.

**Q. Did Kelly go with you to the pro-am?**

TOM HOGE: She did.

**Q. Did she have a good time?**

TOM HOGE: Unbelievable.

**Q. Why?**

TOM HOGE: I mean, incredible spot. Adare Manor is as good as it gets I would say.

**Q. Is there a lot of pressure for you to go back?**

TOM HOGE: Yeah, I hope I get the chance. I'm not sure I ever will get the chance to go back to that. They took care of the wives very well, too, with some gifts and all the events throughout the week. Just a cool spot to be there.

**Q. As a kid in North Dakota, did you grow up calling it the British Open or the Open Championship?**

TOM HOGE: The British Open.

**Q. Obviously you said you're not one of the top 25 in your head necessarily. You're the next group down or something like that. Can you talk about the money in regards to how much does that mean to you? Obviously you turned down potentially generational wealth by not going to LIV. How much does the money mean to you on a week-to-week basis out here?**

TOM HOGE: It's something that I would say I looked at a lot more early in my career. Doug and I had a conversation a few weeks ago that as I've been out here on TOUR, I've always tried to get that next year of status and just keep playing as long as I can. My goal from the start has been to save enough money that whatever the next chapter is that that decision can kind of make a little more flexibility and freedom because money is put aside.

My ninth year on TOUR now, I feel like I've -- I don't want to say I'm comfortable, but I'm happy where things were and happy if I had to walk away tomorrow that money wouldn't be a driving force in any decisions that I have to make.

With that said, I guess my biggest takeaway from all the LIV discussions, stay with the TOUR, whatever, whether you're playing those two tours, the Korn Ferry TOUR, whatever, if you show up and play well, you're going to be compensated well, even if that's on the Korn Ferry or a tour across the world. Show up ready to play and things will take care of themselves.

**Q. How long did it take you to figure that out?**

TOM HOGE: I mean, it was a couple-week discussion that was certainly distracting middle of last year --

**Q. I meant how long did it take you to figure out the fact that if you actually play well it'll take care of itself?**

TOM HOGE: We've known that for a while. That's always the answer to every question out here on Tour I feel like is play better. Certainly tried to take that to heart a little bit more and be a little more conscious of the decisions I would make and how they affect play on the golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate the time, Tom. Good luck this week.

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