

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

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Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

**Marc Leishman**

**Cameron Smith**

Press Conference



HALEY PETERSON: Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to get things started. We would like to welcome our defending champions here to the Zurich Classic of New Orleans, here with Cameron Smith and Marc Leishman.

Just want to get some opening comments what it's like to be back as the defending champs. We'll open up with you, Cameron.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it's nice to be back. I think Leish and I fell in love with this place a little bit last year, the way it played, especially firm and fast and a bit windy. Looks like more of the same this week. So looking forward to getting back out there tomorrow and trying to win this thing again.

HALEY PETERSON: Marc, anything to add?

MARC LEISHMAN: No, I mean, the course is looking great again. Greens perfect. It's just good to be back in a town where we've had some success.

It's a cool city. We're enjoying the food. And everything it has to offer. It's just an enjoyable place to come, and we're glad to be back.

HALEY PETERSON: What about this partnership works? What complements each other in your guys' game?

MARC LEISHMAN: I think being such good friends helps. We don't put pressure on each other to hit good shots. Obviously, we want to hit good shots, but I think the pressure thing is big. If we hit a bad shot, obviously we're still frustrated, but we get on with it and just concentrate on the next shot.

I think it's easier to do that when you're mates.

HALEY PETERSON: Big theme last year was your choice of walk-up song for The Mullet Song. Have you guys decided on a song for this year?

CAMERON SMITH: No, we actually haven't yet. We've got a few in mind, but yeah. I think we're going to have to sort that out sooner rather than later.

HALEY PETERSON: It will be a surprise?

MARC LEISHMAN: We'll leave it to Cam this year.

HALEY PETERSON: Do a Google search again?

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah.

**Q. Since we brought up the mullet, we'll keep going with that. I know last year it was great you wore the mullet. Cameron, since your time from last year winning the Zurich until now, do you notice kids and adults, they're wearing wigs on the TOUR? Is that something that's caught on since your rise to stardom?**

CAMERON SMITH: I think there's a few kids in Australia who have adapted the mullet a little bit. I'm not sure how their parents feel about it. I've just noticed, in talking to my dad and family back home, my coach and stuff like that, kids that he's coaching now are growing mullets. Yeah, it's pretty cool.

**Q. You talked about being back here, you were champions last year. What is it about this course that makes you feel at home when you're out on the Pro-Am today? What makes you so comfortable when you're out here on this course?**

MARC LEISHMAN: I think we're comfortable on this course when it's firm. It looks like it's going to be again this year. To be honest, it's not that comfortable of a course for me, especially when it's soft. So I was happy to see the forecast.

Just the grasses remind me a lot of home, and you have to be able to control your ball on the ground as well as in the air with it being firm, windy. Just I think everything about it reminds me of golf in Australia.



**Q. How do you top last year?**

MARC LEISHMAN: Win again, I guess.

(Laughter).

**Q. Just that you stayed together, the four of you. It was a huge thing, the first time you achieved something as a group. I remember you saying it was like maybe the most proud or content that you've felt in golf doing it with each other and with Pinner and Matty. Speak to, I guess, the total foursome.**

MARC LEISHMAN: I think it's going to be hard to top, to be honest. I think, yeah, obviously if we can get in contention again and have the crowd like it was last year. The crowds were unbelievable last year, just the energy of them.

And then the foursomes on Sunday, that pressure packed climax, I guess, is pretty cool. So if we can get in that situation again, obviously that's why we're here and that's what we want to do. Yeah, hoping we can do that again.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think it's going to be hard to top last year just because we were all staying together and we had such a good week off the course as well. But in saying that, we were here to win a golf tournament the whole time, and that kind of took a backseat on the weekend and really knuckled down and played some good golf. So hopefully we can do more of the same this year.

MARC LEISHMAN: Both of our dads are here as well this week. We've got friends here as well. I guess when you're defending, it's a bit more of a special week with the people coming in. My dad's never been here when I've won an event. So that would be pretty cool if we could do that. I mean, it's Wednesday. There's lots -- can't be thinking about that.

**Q. Can I just ask the two of you, you had your international team dinner last night. I know it's still a few months away, but last year you sort of proved a bit of a point by playing so well together. Now you look like a lock for the team at some point on the international side. What can you give away in those discussions and that bonding session last night?**

CAMERON SMITH: I think last night was just more about team building and getting to know -- just bringing everyone a little bit closer together. We didn't really talk about any tactics or pairings or anything like that. It was just a casual beer and casual dinner with a few mates.

Yeah, it was great. It was a really good night.

MARC LEISHMAN: I think the team bonding is the most important thing for us. Coming from all different backgrounds, obviously internationals, we've got South America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Asia -- I mean, there's everywhere. The cultures are so different.

I think getting to know one another is probably even more important than what the pairings will be. Yeah, like Cam said, that's what it was about.

**Q. Cam, obviously to win you've got to be on your game, of course. Looking back at the two times you've won here, what things worked well, as compared to the years when you didn't win, you can say that didn't work well or that needs to be avoided?**

CAMERON SMITH: I think maybe the couple years I didn't play so well here, I didn't really hit my driver that great. It's a golf course where it's a typical Pete Dye. If you get out of position, he's going to punish you. If you can hit the fairways, he gives you plenty of opportunities.

So, yeah, just more fairways. You have to be quite creative into these greens when it's blowing and when it starts to firm up. Yeah, I think I play my best golf when I'm just kind of being creative and feeling like I can just be a kid out there and play some shots.

**Q. Marc, if I remember correctly, you bought the wig last year; correct? Do you still have it?**

MARC LEISHMAN: I still have it. It's not here with me. I thought that would be a one-and-done thing. It's like telling a good joke. You don't want to tell it too many times.

**Q. And a little bit different the tree on 11, I guess it's down on the layup on the left-hand side. How much different does that make the hole play?**

MARC LEISHMAN: Very different.

CAMERON SMITH: It looks a lot different.

MARC LEISHMAN: Off the tee even, it's a very different looking tee shot. The tee shot doesn't play any different, but with that tree gone, it looks way more open. That second shot, we were on the fairway there, and you can hit whatever shape you want into the green. If the pin's on the right, that tree doesn't dictate what shot you have to hit anymore.

I don't know, it's probably an unfortunate thing that it came down because it was a pretty well-positioned tree, but I don't think it's going to affect the hole too much.

**Q. When you guys think about the final round and that playoff that you went into, did you learn anything specifically about your partner's game that kind of surprised you?**

MARC LEISHMAN: About the playoff?

**Q. Or just the final stretch?**

MARC LEISHMAN: Yeah, I mean, I think we both love playing under pressure. I think that brings the best out in Cam, and I'd like to think it brings the best out in me. That's why we do the practice, and I think it's important to enjoy that situation, not everyone does.

But just being pretty disciplined as well. Obviously after the boys hit it in the water on the playoff, Cam probably hit it straight where he was aiming, left of the fairway, and it was exactly where he had to hit it. So you have to be disciplined to aim off the fairway, and he did that. We did what we needed to do to win the playoff.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think I enjoy the pressure as well, but I think Leish really turned it on on the weekend. Probably wasn't playing his best golf maybe the Pro-Am day and the first day out here.

MARC LEISHMAN: Thanks, Cam (laughter).

CAMERON SMITH: But as soon as the pressure got on and we got to the top of that leaderboard, Leish flicked it on like a switch, and it was pretty impressive to see.

**Q. Cam, so would it be a good characterization to say last year Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, you all took in everything New Orleans has to offer, nightlife, and then Friday night, you were like we could win this thing. You pumped the brakes like Friday, we have a shot to win this, no more going out and hitting the nightlife?**

MARC LEISHMAN: We weren't going on benders or anything like that. We'd have a few beers with dinner every night, and we did Friday and Saturday night as well. I think early in the week you can do a little bit more just because you don't know what situation you're going to be in. It's not like we were getting drunk every night. We didn't do that.

CAMERON SMITH: We were just having a good time.

MARC LEISHMAN: We were having fun. Eating good food, have a couple of beers.

**Q. Cam, was it hard to turn the page from Augusta? Obviously things didn't turn out the way you wanted it to there. You had a week in between now and getting back to this defending champion. How has that been for you?**

CAMERON SMITH: It's been good, mate. I've done everything I could reflecting on it. I wouldn't have changed anything, just a bad swing at the wrong time. That's just how golf is sometimes. It can be pretty penal, especially coming down the stretch of a major championship.

Scottie just continued to play really good golf. Yeah, it was a tough pill to swallow, but I think I've learned from it, and I'm ready for the next one.

**Q. Does it help at all to remember you've had a great year, you've won two big tournaments on the PGA TOUR already. Obviously you've had a lot of great moments too.**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it's been -- my game still feels really solid. I feel like my game's in a spot where we can win this week and I can win again throughout the season. Yeah, don't need to change anything, mate. Just keep getting better every day and hopefully get another win.

HALEY PETERSON: Cameron and Marc, thanks for taking the time to join us, and we wish you the best of luck this week.

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