

PGA Championship

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Quail Hollow Club

Max Homa

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Max Homa is with us now at the 107th PGA Championship. Max, a great day for you. How would you summarize your second round?

MAX HOMA: It was good. I played quite similarly to yesterday. It was a lot easier. There's like no wind.

Just scored better, made a couple long putts. Hit a drive randomly to a foot and chipped it.

Yesterday I played awesome. I felt like I had really good control. I just couldn't really get the ball close to the hole, didn't pull the right club a lot, and had a poor finish.

It was kind of in a way nice to be able to play in the morning and just get to go immediately because I knew the game was good. Didn't know I was going to shoot 7-under, but I will take it.

Q. Max, you've said kind of throughout the struggles that, when you're back home, you're swinging it well, the swing feels good. But just competitively how does the swing feel compared to, say, where it was at THE PLAYERS compared to now?

MAX HOMA: Much better. There's been weeks on the road and at home where it's felt poor. I've hit a lot of golf balls in the last seven months, like an absurd amount of golf balls. So you get these stretches that you might just groove it well.

I've kind of realized that, as bad as it's been, I'm quite good at golf to play decent from some of the positions I've been in in my golf swing, but it felt like 2 1/2, 3 weeks ago, John Scott came out for a few days, and we really dove into what -- like I got more honest with him about what I thought we should do and he -- it's going to hopefully be one of those things I remember. I said, I think I should swing it like this. And he said, okay, show me. And I showed him. And he said, okay, let's mold off of that, let's make that the model.

It felt more like my old golf swing back in '22, '23-ish.

Yeah, '22-'23, and I kind of knew the misses better, my hands just worked through the shot better. So, yeah, about 2 1/2 weeks ago I was like, okay, I see the misses. It's been hard. I feel like I was playing with a foreign swing at times.

Yeah, like I said, I have weeks at home where it's not bad, but I definitely think that's because you can kind of time it. Everyone out here is so good and we've played so long that you can make things work if they're not perfect.

But last week was the first week I played where I was like, okay, this feels -- I hate to say the old me because I don't like thinking like that, but it just felt like I was plotting my way around the golf course different and I was hitting enough good shots to play well.

Q. What did it take for you to say, hey, I want to be proactive with this is what I do as opposed to just listening?

MAX HOMA: It's been difficult because I felt like I was so broken, and whatever the swing change was going to be was going to be some grand thing, like something I've never done before. We were just like not finding anything on this range session. Everything he says makes sense and it's very right, but it didn't feel like me. It was close to like the positions and everything were on what I wanted to do, but I was like, I just said I want to try to do it this way and just let me know if that looks okay.

Like I said, it was immediately like, we're going to do that, and let's just work off of that as like the template. So it was hard for me because I didn't -- I don't want to like -- I've been very lucky, like working with John and working with Mark, they're brilliant people, and you listen to brilliant people, but at some point you have to maybe get in there and just say, hey, this technically might be right, but it doesn't feel like I'm going to be able to do this. He was really great at that and kind of ebbing off of that a little bit.

Like I said, it feels more like me. It looks more like when I swung at my best, I think.

Q. Max, your club head speed and ball speed were five

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miles per hour faster today than your average last season. What's going on?

MAX HOMA: They were yesterday too. I was touching like 85. I work with Jason Glass now, and he's been amazing. The problem is I haven't been in a good position to like -- I've been feeling inhibited as I get into impact the first four months of the season, but at home it's fast when I have no -- there's no trees and water and all that.

It's been fast, but there's been something stuck in the golf swing, or I've been stuck in the golf swing. So I haven't been able to let it go. It was unintentional.

Last week -- it's pretty apparent when I'm swinging the club well because the numbers jump up in speed. It just means that I'm able to keep turning. When I swing bad, I stall out and jump. So you get a little confidence to start swinging harder.

That's really what it is. I've been working a lot with Ben Schomin at Cobra on this driver. I wouldn't advise switching your clubs and your coach at the same time, or your golf swing, but I did that. We had a driver a little while that was kind of almost playing into the miss better. Last week in Philly I was swinging it really well, and then we decided to build a driver that fit my swing better now that we knew this was going to kind of be what we were going to do going forward.

All of a sudden, a lot of things clicked. I didn't feel like I was fighting anything. So I think that's where the speed kind of jumped.

Q. New caddie the last few weeks. Can you talk to me about that? Do you think maybe a fresh perspective has helped?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, Bill has been awesome. It's really hard to change caddies. I was talking to my wife about that last night. You're in like a full relationship day one. You're out there with him, first day is probably eight hours. It's not exactly a normal first date.

So it can be tricky. Joe and I worked for so long and so well together that it's never going to be exactly like that. We've been trying to kind of find our own groove. Bill is really amazing at the psychology of golf and talking to me and keeping me positive when I start to go a little dark. Especially at Augusta this year, he was amazing. I had two rounds where it was because of him what we did.

Now that I'm playing a bit better the last two weeks, it's trying to find our rhythm on like clubs and this and that. Yeah, it's a learning curve, but I've really enjoyed being

around him. He's a Bay Area sports fan, which is hard, but that's probably his worst quality.

Q. You talked earlier about the conditions today with the wind, but as far as on the ground, and in particular with the fairways and with mud balls, how did that kind of differ playing this morning compared to maybe yesterday afternoon? And what you were seeing as far as ball flights and what you were seeing in the fairway?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I think we got really lucky with our wave, I would assume. We had a lot more mud in the afternoon when it was drier. I imagine those guys had it a lot worse in the morning than we did this morning. On 2 I got one decent, not nearly as bad as yesterday. Yesterday I had a couple that weren't great.

I particularly like playing the ball down. I think it just causes chaos for the fans. It's supposed to be entertaining, so seeing people who can look like robots for a while look completely silly isn't the worst except when it's you.

Yeah, it wasn't too bad. I mean, it's pretty remarkable what they've done to this golf course. My hat is tipped to everyone here because we were walking in puddles all the way up till Wednesday. Still pretty great. There's certain spots, the fairway on 8 is the lowest spot, I feel like, on the golf course, and that gets a bit muddy. When you're hitting a wedge, it's a little scary. I can imagine by Saturday, Sunday this place is going to be pretty much pristine.

The ball is not bouncing a ton on the fairway, but it's got a little bit more life.

Q. Does it change your approach knowing you're going to have different conditions on the fairway compared to what you're seeing on the greens and how those have been?

MAX HOMA: No, it's tricky. It's kind of like playing at Riv where with the Kikuyu, the greens are rock solid, but if you land it one inch short of the green, the ball isn't bouncing up. So you have to be really precise and thoughtful about what you're going to do, what shot you're going to hit. The greens are incredible, for how much rain as they've gotten especially. I don't think it's changed much. It just requires a little more precision.

Q. You've spoken a little bit about the work you've within been doing with the driver. Looking at the strokes gained stats just for today, it's kind of off the charts. You're plus 3 or something. It's crazy. I know on 14 it accounts a lot for those. On a day like today,

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do the stats reflect how you feel? Did you feel super confident and red hot with the driver? Does it jive with how it felt out there?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, the last six rounds I've driven it really well, going back to Philly. I don't know what I finished last week, but it was quite good. But like I said, we built a driver that wants to go left, and my golf swing makes me want to feel free to cut it. So it's just matching up nicely. I feel like I've picked up on the misses. Getting to hit a hole like 18 and hit driver twice and bomb it down there is something I haven't really done before. It's just I feel comfy for sure.

Q. Looking at a different part of the game, approach is probably where you've struggled the most statistically this year, but today was really good. With the irons, what's different the last couple weeks?

MAX HOMA: It's in a good spot directionally. I've been struggling getting the right distances and picking the right shot. Yesterday with how tricky the wind was, I thought I struck the irons really well. I just didn't get anything really close to the hole. Sometimes stats can be a little -- misleading is the wrong word because the number is right and I needed to do better, but it's not like I left there and went and hit balls on the range and tried to figure it out. It's just got to be a little bit more committed to your numbers. Trust what you're doing, pick the right spots to be aggressive type thing.

Not much has changed. I've always been a good iron player. Like I said, some weeks when you see the numbers are bad, I try to make sure I go back and not try to reinvent the wheel. Make sure, hey, I didn't hit a couple wedges close. I hit that one -- yesterday I had a 5-iron that looked like it was going to go in the hole and goes over the back of the green, so just things to be aware of. Yesterday I felt was a lot trickier with the wind, so today felt a lot more like target practice a little bit for a major.

Q. It's been a little bit of a trying year, but how do you explain, first of all, what you've done in the majors, how well you've played? Is there a different mindset or any explanation why you think you played better there? Secondly, I guess we'd be remiss if we didn't ask you about 14 and where that ranks in terms of the best shots you've ever hit?

MAX HOMA: 14 was great. It was not the best shot I ever hit. I was aiming one yard inside the right bunker, so I toed it like the perfect amount. I looked up slightly scared of it going left, but obviously it was still a good drive. I mean, you don't hit it there intentionally unless you're Scottie or something.

Yeah, as far as the year goes, I mean, I was told for a long time I couldn't play a major. So now all of a sudden I'm being asked about why I play well only in majors. I don't really have an answer for that one. It's just golf, I guess.

Q. And that 14 when it -- did you see how good it was from the tee? What did you think walking up?

MAX HOMA: No, the claps from the green were helpful to know I was probably putting. But that was one of the rare occasions in golf where as the further you walk up to the green, the closer it got. Very thankful to only have a little 1 1/2-footer for eagle.

Yeah, like I said, yesterday I didn't get a ton out of some good shots, and to get a lot more out of shots today, it felt like a big win.

Q. I have two unrelated. One, what went into Bill and choosing Bill after you left Joe?

MAX HOMA: I didn't really know who to go to because I never thought about it. Obviously caught me by surprise a little bit. So I never thought about -- I always thought I'd end my career when I'm 60 and Joe's 65, somehow still looping. Hopefully he was going to go the Fluff route and caddie forever. So I never thought about it.

I had two weeks off and was kind of scrambling the first few days. I ended up calling Bones, who's a good friend of mine, and asked him what he thought, and that was the first name he brought up. He thought he was a very underrated caddie and thought we would gel very well. Obviously I put a lot of faith and trust in Bones. He's as knowledgeable as they get. Gave Bill a call. Fortunately he was free. Yeah, we got to start working in San Antonio.

Q. Just unrelated, it's always been your way to be very transparent and let people in, which is rare for a lot of athletes, professionals. Do you find that that helps you? Is it almost therapeutic to some degree to let people in rather than -- you know, with your feelings and stuff like that -- rather than shutting everything out and keeping it inside?

MAX HOMA: No, it probably doesn't help me at all if I'm being honest. I don't know, I grew up a fan of sports, as so many are, and I always found it really -- like interviews and things to be so thought provoking as a fan to get a little insight. Like I said, we are entertainers, and without the fans, we would be just playing golf with the buddies, with some buddies.

Yeah, I just try to be myself. Yeah, sometimes I wish I



would probably keep some things in, but at the end of the day, we owe a lot to them. It's not so hard to be transparent. It doesn't hurt me in any way.

Q. I've often considered you one of the better explainers of things in this sport, and I'm curious if, as the scores aren't matching the feels or the feels with your coach are not matching what he's seeing, has any of this been particularly hard to explain to people?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, a lot of it has been. Especially with my wife, she'll ask me on days at home, like how was today? I'll say great, and we'll leave the next day and shoot a zillion. She doesn't get it.

It's hard to explain because I don't -- I can give you the technical version of all of it, but at the end of the day, it is odd. I'll play some really good practice rounds. Waste Management in particular was probably the best I've ever driven the ball in my life, and even in the first round on Thursday, I think I shot 6- or 7-over. It's just a hard game.

I heard Matt Fitzpatrick was doing an interview, and he explained it. The week he's driven the ball well, it seemed like he's putted awful or he hit his irons awful. And the weeks he's ironed it great or putted great, he's driven it awful. It is hard to explain.

The technical is that it just gets faster when you play. The positions I've been in and the club being behind me, I can figure it out here and there and get into grooves, and if a feel gets going, I can repeat it a lot. But you start getting nervous, trees on the left, trees on the right, water, whatever, certain winds, it just -- it messes with all -- you don't want a lot of timing in your golf swing. People wonder why Scottie is so amazing. He doesn't have a lot of timing. He's incredibly athletic and aware of where the golf club is, and I have not been. So when you get under stress and things, it just doesn't become as easy as -- I call it field practice when you're on a range where you hit a bough and rake another one over and just try to time it little better.

It has been hard to explain, but at the end of the day, there's also been bad days at home. So it's not like it's completely foreign when I show up to a golf tournament. Didn't feel mental. It just was a little bit of mental with a lack of confidence mixed with a golf swing that wasn't super repeatable.

Q. Two separate things. You mentioned calling Bones. Did you ask him if he was interested by chance?

MAX HOMA: No. Bones, if he wanted to, would have offered, I feel like. No, Bones has been one of the best

buddies I could have. We go to Thanksgiving at his house. His family has been amazing to us.

He doesn't -- I think he likes where his life's at right now. I don't think he -- I would never ask him to be a part of like this massive grind and rebuild. It would be a little different if I was -- you know, when he came back and worked with Justin, who's one of the best players on the planet. Yeah, it could have been fun, but at the end of the day, Bones and I are buddies, and I was just calling to lean on him and ask him for some advice.

Q. It sounds like you -- you've made a couple of breakthroughs since the Masters, but was the Masters a confidence boost in any way having not done much? Then obviously 12th after everything at a place like that.

MAX HOMA: Not really. It felt a bit like smoke and mirrors. That golf course is rare for us in a season. You can drive it quite poorly if you leave it on the right sides. If you can mentally stay in it and short game it well, iron it well, and putt it well, you can actually kind of make up for a lot of things.

Whereas when you play a PGA Championship or a U.S. Open or something and you're off the fairway, it's grind the whole way through. So Augusta I kind of leaned into what I've been doing well, which is the other aspects of the game. But it was really nice just because -- I mean, especially then it felt like the last major -- the last time I might ever play the Masters. So our house knew the 12th number real well.

It wasn't -- I wouldn't say a confidence booster, but it was just fun, and golf hasn't been that fun. So it was cool to have a very fun week, see your name on the leaderboard at Augusta when things have been miserable was awesome.

Q. Max, obviously playing well and having your swing and confidence in that is the most important thing, but having that coming here to a place that you're comfortable with, how big is this combination for you this week?

MAX HOMA: I think that's kind of the difference of last week and this week. If I had to guess, it's just I know the leaves really well -- or I know the leaves, I guess. I know -- I feel comfortable on the greens. Just comfort helps when you're going through this a little bit.

Like I said, last week I swung it great and did everything really awesome, I just didn't score. I felt like I was coming to a golf course I knew how to score on. Things like 18, I



knew where to leave it. I didn't love the number we had. Didn't really panic, left it where I wanted to. Obviously you get a bit lucky to chip in, but those kinds of things, it helps blend the -- I guess like lack of comfort at times. You come someplace where you know kind of what you're going to do all day on pretty much every pin.

I think that helps a lot, especially as -- as I started to feel really good, I knew I was going to come in here and swing it nicely. I just needed to find some comfort. So this place does that for me.

Q. When you won here in '19, you talked about the importance of some really hard conversations with Les, and then in recent years you've talked about the importance of really hard conversations with Mark, and now John Scott, really hard conversations. What's kind of your player-coach philosophy and taking coaching like any other professional athlete? How do you view that component of your journey?

MAX HOMA: I've been just really lucky because all three names you mentioned have just been incredibly hard workers. They care so much about me, both as a golfer and a person. So I just lean on them as much as I can.

There are times, like I said prior, where it's difficult to almost bring up an idea and be very like bullish on it because I believe so much of what they say. I don't think what any of them have ever said was wrong, but it just may not match what's going on in my head or what it feels like.

So it is difficult. I don't know if I have a philosophy on it. I doubt I'm the right person to ask. I guess I just feel like I've been lucky that there's always just an open line of conversation. Especially when I'm going through it, I call a lot of days on my drives home from practice and go over some ideas. I'm hopeful to stop having to call John so much for his own sake.

Yeah, it's just -- I'm an overthinker, so when it comes to golf, I can overthink a swing fix or a problem probably too much, and then they have to kind of deal with that because I would say I'm the common denominator in all those difficult conversations. Like I said, I'm very lucky they've all been so passionate and open to just kind of anything. It's worked with all of them at some point, and I think I'm just going to try to learn, especially from the last -- you know, my stint with Mark to refine and not have any freak-out weeks when it's bad because I feel like I did that a couple years ago and it kind of put him behind the eight ball.

I think now that we kind of know what we're getting at, I'm going to back off the phone calls a little bit.