



# Justin Hastings Hiroshi Tai

## Press Conference Monday, April 7, 2025

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Please join me in welcoming two first-time competitors at the Masters, Justin Hastings and Hiroshi Tai. Justin earned his invitation with a victory at the Latin America Amateur Championship in January, while Hiroshi's invitation is a courtesy of his win at the NCAA championship last May.

I'll begin with Justin. Weather forced a 36-hole final day at the Latin American Amateur. How did you maintain your composure, and when did it sink in to you that you would be here at the Masters Tournament.

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I would attribute a lot of my success that last day to college golf. Being able to play 36 holes in that last day and kind of not let everything sink in, especially having a four-shot lead I think was super good for me mentally, not to have to sleep on it and you have a good third round and you roll right into that fourth round.

I knew I was equipped for the challenge physically and mentally because of how often we play 36 holes in college. I really think that worked out the best it could have.

I don't know that it's totally hit me that I'm playing in the Masters, but it's obviously super exciting and I'm super grateful to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Hiroshi, you made history as the very first player representing Singapore to compete in the Masters Tournament. What does that historical significance mean to you as you prepare for your first Masters Tournament?

HIROSHI TAI: Yeah, I think it means a lot to me because I'm obviously proud of where I'm from and have a lot of friends and family that live there. My parents still live there. It's been a really cool experience so far, and I've really enjoyed everything about it. I'm really honored to be here, as well.

**Q. What has been your biggest impression since arriving at Augusta National this week?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: I mean, there's so many things. The thing that jumps immediately to my mind is just how grand the property is and just how big and perfect and the attention to detail is just -- there's never anything out of place. There's never anything missed. I think that just goes into what makes this place so historic and so amazing to be here.

HIROSHI TAI: Yeah, it's really awesome to be here. Got to come last year to watch some of the tournament and had a teammate play last year, so had a little bit of an idea of what the whole week is about. It's always amazing to be here. It's probably one of the coolest places on earth. Really fun.

**Q. Justin, obviously where you grew up is not a golf mecca. The climate is great, but there's not a lot of golf. Can you just describe how you got good playing golf maybe where there's only one golf course and maybe not a lot of competition?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I don't know how good of an answer I can give you there. There's one and a half golf courses, an 18-hole public course and a nine-hole private course. I started when I was seven or eight years old. My dad brought me out. He was a casual golfer himself.

I think I really just flew with it from there. In a month I was getting dropped off every day after school, and it was just -- I don't know, it wasn't ever practice to me, it was just fun. Super competitive guy, I come from a competitive family. I was competing in tournaments very early, and I think that's what drove me especially is just getting better and seeing myself compete and eventually win.

I think from the competitive aspect, that contributed to the hook, as well.

But no, I always had fun with the game as a kid, so I think the lack of resources just never had too big of a detrimental effect on me.

**Q. Did you come to Augusta before this week at all to play here, and how many times, and what was that like?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I took two trips in the last month, two weeks apart. I played 18 holes both times. I kind of -- the first trip was really just to let everything sink in and see the property and hit the occasional cool shot in history that I've seen and grew up watching, and then the next couple rounds were a little bit more work.

I think we've got a good game plan with my team here, and yeah, I think we're ready to go for Thursday.

**Q. Hiroshi, first player from Singapore. There have been so many good players from your country, Mardan Mamat, Lam Chih Bing. The Asian Tour headquarters is over there, and I know there's a lot of excitement from just the messages that I'm getting about you playing over here. What is the kind of feeling that you are getting from your little island country?**

HIROSHI TAI: It's really cool. I still have a lot of friends that I play golf with when I go home, and I get messages from them and they're really excited to watch. It'll be a little different with the time difference, but I'm sure they'll be watching on the Masters app and stuff like that.

It's been really cool to get a lot of supportive messages, and it's an honor to be the first one from Singapore playing the Masters.

**Q. If I can just follow up with another question for Hiroshi, you are from Singapore, but you also spent time in Shanghai as well as in Florida. The Masters and the R&A, they put in a lot of effort in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship to get someone like you to come over here and play the tournament. I know you didn't come through that route, but can you just tell me about your experiences with the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, and how much do you appreciate an organization like Augusta National doing all this to get players from our part of the world?**

HIROSHI TAI: I think it's amazing that there is the Latin America Amateur Championship, the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship to give people from other parts of the world a path to play. Obviously the British Amateur champion is also invited. It's been really fun to play in tournaments like that in the past.

I remember I think the first one I played was in 2019, one of the tournament gifts was a golf shirt with a little Masters logo on it, and I was really excited about that because everyone wants to play in the Masters and everyone wants to play at Augusta National. It's really cool to see such a big tournament like this giving a pathway to amateurs throughout the world.

**Q. For both of you, who's caddying for you this week? And also, did you do any work when you came here before with a local caddie in terms of getting to know some of the ins and outs of the course?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I've got Derrick Redd, a local guy, on my bag this week. He's been amazing. He wasn't my original plan to be on the bag, but I got him my first trip here, my practice trip. And I just thought I'd be -- I'd be making a mistake if I let him slide.

We got in contact. I asked to have him for my second trip, and then I asked him if he'd like to be on the bag, and he was excited to do so. I'm excited about the team we have, and I think we're going to work well together.

HIROSHI TAI: I've got Devin Stanton caddying for me this week. He caddied for Christo last year at the Masters and caddied for Andy Ogletree a couple years ago.

In my practice trips, yesterday I had Jay, who I remember -- he said he's been here since 1999, so way before I was born. And then a couple weeks ago I had Rusty, as well. They were both really helpful, showing me little things about the golf course. They tell funny stories, and we had an awesome time out there.

**Q. Justin, it sounds like from what I've read you've tried to turn Masters Thursday into a national holiday as a kid. Can you explain your early fascination with this tournament and how you managed to negotiate with your parents to watch a little TV?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, yeah, I was always a big Masters nut as a kid. I guess I shouldn't say I don't know what drew me to it, but I was drawn to it very early. I don't know exactly when it started. I would assume sometime in middle school, the Thursday of the Masters I would come to my parents with a sickness, and it took them about two years to catch on before they started to be like, this is getting a little bit -- it's a little bit of a coincidence.

I'd push pretty hard, and eventually that just became a thing in my household, that the Thursday of the Masters Justin was going to be staying home to watch the coverage.

**Q. Does that make it a little more surreal that you're here actually playing in it and on Thursday you'll be teeing it up?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, of course. I don't know if everything has even hit me yet. It's totally surreal, and I don't think I'll be able to put it into words now, and I don't know if I ever will be.

**Q. This is for both of you. The landscape of college golf has changed quite a bit. Maybe a few years ago you'd see a college player play a Tour event and maybe high expectations would be to have a good showing or make the cut. Now it seems like they're making cuts, top 10s, Nick Dunlap won as an amateur. Does the recent success in college golf maybe change your expectations for this week or for future events that you'll play in with high magnitude?**

HIROSHI TAI: I think it's awesome to see other college players have a lot of success out there. A lot of them are people you play with a lot in college events and some of their friends. I think -- I'm not sure if it changes expectations this week, but I think for college players as a whole, I think it makes more of us realize that we might not be as far off as we think.

Obviously with PGA TOUR U, there's a pathway to get our tour cards and things like that. I think there's been given more opportunities to college players because of people's recent success.

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I think Hiroshi hit the nail on the head there. It's not so much changing your expectations but letting you know -- it provides this real belief in you that your peers, the guys you compete with week in, week out are able to do these things.

I think when we really started to see it happen a few years ago, it was like, wow, I may have beat this guy two weeks ago and he went and did this. It just really allows you to have that self-belief that you can go out there and do the cool things you always dreamed about.

**Q. I can't imagine two other people on property that are more frustrated with a rain delay on a Monday, but what have you two been doing for the last three, four hours?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, we've just been hanging around. I was hoping to get nine holes in after this. I think there was just a message that the course and practice tee would be shut down. Obviously unfortunate, but just a little extra fun tomorrow.

HIROSHI TAI: Yeah, just hang out in the caddie house, got some food. The food here is great, so can't complain. It's not a bad spot to hang out, spend some time with Coach Heppler. It's been a good day. Wish I could have gone and played a few holes, but it's been really nice.

**Q. Hiroshi, when we spoke to you on campus a few weeks ago, you mentioned your trips here as part of the Yellow Jackets. I'm wondering how the drive down Magnolia Lane hit differently as a participant?**

HIROSHI TAI: It's definitely a little different. Obviously being at Georgia Tech and there's a lot of history involved with the Masters with Bobby Jones being a founder and obviously he played at Georgia Tech, graduated from there. So there's a lot of history at Georgia Tech and connected with the Masters. It's been a really cool experience.

And driving down Magnolia Lane, not even today, just any other day, would be amazing. Definitely enjoying it a lot.

**Q. Two other amateurs who had qualified to play this year had decided to pass up on that opportunity. They had the opportunity to play and turn professional and they went ahead and did that. How difficult a decision do you think that might have been if you were faced with something similar to that and had to make a decision about whether to get a chance to stay amateur or to turn pro?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I mean, I don't want to speak on behalf of anybody else's decisions, but personally this is just too amazing of an opportunity to pass on for me. It's been a dream ever since I was a kid, and I don't think there's anything in this world that could stop me from being here if I was given the chance.

HIROSHI TAI: I would agree with Justin. I don't know what I would have done if I were there, so I'm glad I didn't have to make that decision. But I definitely enjoyed being here as an amateur, and it's something I'll remember for the rest of my life.

**Q. Justin, I followed you for a few holes in Argentina the last day. What did you learn from yourself as a person and as a player? Because that was a long day, like third and fourth round played on Saturday. The second question is your expectations this week, thinking about Alvaro Ortiz did, making the cut in 2019 as the only Latin American Amateur Championship to do so, and Aaron Jarvis making the cut at The Open when he won the Latin America Amateur Championship, would that be your goal, or what would a successful week look like?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, just to answer that one first, you try not to put too many score-based expectations in your head. I think that's something I'm going to focus on keeping to the side this week. I have a lot of goals, process-based goals that me and my team have come up with and little things I want to do well, and I believe if I can do those things, then the score will take care of itself.

As for what I learned about myself at the Latin American, I would say I learned a lot in 2024 in Panama when I was in contention, and I remember holing a bunker shot on the 14th hole in the final round to get -- I think it got me within three shots of the leader at the time, but that shot really made me believe that I had a chance to win, and I got so fired up, big fist pump. You hole a bunker shot, you're excited and everything, but then I went to -- I three-putted the next hole and made bogey on the next.

I think I really took that experience into 2025 and I kind of tried to change my mindset a little bit and tried to be super even-keeled and keep the heart rate low whenever possible, and I think that really helped me coming down the stretch. I was able to be a lot more calm, and I just didn't get myself fired up when I didn't need to be, and I really think that was the difference maker in the end.

**Q. Justin, what kind of schedule do you have after this? I take it you will play the U.S. Open and the Open. Are there plans to turn pro after that?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, that's a decision that's still up in the air. I haven't totally -- as of right now, I plan to play the majors. You never know what happens in the future. But obviously the college season is finishing up. We've got one more regular season event at Pasa Tiempo, another Alister MacKenzie golf course, that starts on Monday, so we'll see how the week goes. Could be playing in that. And then conference regionals, so the playoffs start after that.

Definitely going to be a heavy focus on the college season after this tournament, then we'll kind of deal with the majors and the turning pro as everything comes to me.

**Q. You're kind of living every amateur's dream right now. What's been the coolest experience so far, and as far as playing the golf course, what are some of the things or something in particular that surprised you or was a little different than what you expected?**

HIROSHI TAI: I think the first question is the coolest experience, I think it's pretty cool doing a press conference. You don't really do that in college golf very often. The amateur dinner tonight I think will be something that all of us are looking forward to. Obviously there's five of us here, and I think we're all staying in the Crow's Nest, as well. It'll be a really fun Monday night. Definitely a little bit better than being in class today.

I think the whole experience so far has been amazing and everyone here has been so welcoming.

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, just to add to that, just being in the presence of the best players in the world, the guys you grow up watching on TV and idolizing is -- I think that's super cool. You turn a corner and you see the No. 1 player in the world in your face, it's like, wow. That's kind of when little things like that hit you.

No, I think I speak for both of us when I say we're super grateful to be living every amateur's dream, like you said.

**Q. Is there something about the course that surprised you or might be a little different than what you expected?**

JUSTIN HASTINGS: Yeah, I remember the first time I played, I was very -- I remember it shocked me a little just about how long the golf course was. I kind of just remember thinking, wow, I didn't expect to have this many long irons into holes.

As we've gotten closer to the tournament and it's firmed up a little bit, I've noticed that a little bit less, but it's just such a championship golf course. It tests every aspect of your game, as we all know. But I think when you play it, you really realize how demanding it is in every aspect.

I would just say the overall difficulty of everything was my biggest thing that I realized.

HIROSHI TAI: I would agree with that, as well. I think especially approaching the greens, you have to think about where you want to hit it from and where you want to leave yourself a lot more here than other places. I think that has been -- it's been fun to learn and experience something like that. Really cool.

**Q. Hiroshi, I wonder if you could speak about the win and Omni La Costa. I know that the NCAA champion, that's the newest pathway to get to the Masters for amateurs, but a lot of substantial names on that leaderboard out in California. What were the last couple hours of that day for you like, to capture that win, and ultimately know that you're going to be here at the Masters?**

HIROSHI TAI: Yeah, I didn't really realize at the time you'd get an invite here. I think one of my teammates told me when I was warming up on the range in case I had to go play a playoff. But the last couple holes weren't very fun. I made a triple on hole 8, which was my 17th, and then had to get up-and-down on 9 to win by one.

Then I think we made it in match play as a team by one shot, so the last few hours of that day were not very fun. There was a lot of refreshing your screen on your phone and then going to the range to stay warm if you needed to play a playoff.

It's really cool that they've started doing that. I think playing college golf, especially at the Division I level, you're playing with some of the best amateurs in the world. As you said earlier, a lot of them have had success on PGA Tour events as amateurs and as college players, so I think you're really playing against some of the best players you can find at that level, and it's really helped me grow as a person and as a player in the last couple of years.

