

LIV Golf Singapore

Thursday, 2 May, 2024

Republic of Singapore

Sentosa Golf Club

Smash GC

Brooks Koepka

Graeme McDowell

Jason Kokrak

Talor Gooch

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome Smash GC to LIV Golf Singapore. We are joined by Graham McDowell, our captain Brooks Koepka, Jason Kokrak and defending champion Talor Gooch. You guys are the only team on LIV with all players in the top 25. Last year here at Sentosa, Talor, you won, Brooks, you came in third, and Jason, you came in sixth. Seems like you guys are really set up for success this week. Brooks, I'll start with you.

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, to be quite fair, I don't think last year -- you could play good one week and then you could be playing bad this week. I don't think it really has any results on this week.

But we played a practice round yesterday. Everybody seems to be in a good mood, playing well. I like where my game is trending. I watched Talor, the way he struck the ball yesterday was beautiful. J is rounding into round and G-Mac is doing what he's done all year. Hopefully that carries over into this week.

Q. Talor, take us back to last year. You had just won Adelaide, won in Singapore, went on this really hot run. What do you remember from that moment last year and what can you pull from that to bring into this year?

TALOR GOOCH: I was just playing great golf last year. I had ultimate ball control, and it's one of those times in golf where it feels like you're never going to play bad because it's so easy.

I've said to my caddie now the last couple tournaments, I can't wait for golf to get easy again because it hasn't been easy this year.



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But you fall back on those moments knowing, like hey, I've been here, I've done it, I can do it again. Obviously I like this golf course, and I like Singapore. It's hard not to -- hard for the vibes to not be good this week.

Q. G-Mac, you've been playing really well this year. How much is that attributed to being part of Smash?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I think being around these guys, the competitive energy that's on this team, anytime you're around a guy like Brooks, you know he's going to lead from the front, Talor with his performance last year and Jason is a great player week in week out, as well. It's been very big for me so far this season.

I've enjoyed being around these guys. I've enjoyed that extra little bit of motivation that being on a team like this brings. You know you're always going to be there or thereabouts regardless of how you're playing individually yourself, and there's always something to play for.

This week is no different. Get the head down and try and get out of the blocks a little faster, which I haven't really been doing well this season. That's kind of one of the big goals for me this week.

Q. Jason, you finished T6 last year and you're one of the most consistent players out here. What do you think of your game heading into this week, and what do you make of the Sentosa Golf Course?

JASON KOKRAK: I got off to a good start this year. I think the last couple tournaments I've been a little bit off with the irons. Made a small tweak with my swing coach Drew, and I struck the ball very nicely yesterday. I think this golf course suits me pretty well tee to green.

We hole a few putts, I think our team is going to be pretty dangerous this week.

As Brooks said, week in and week out everybody plays a little bit differently. Just trying to get better. It's the same of golf. You never know what's going to happen.

Q. Brooks, this is your last tournament before you head in to defend your title for the PGA Championship. How do you feel like your game is trending for



defending that title?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Clearly not very good, with Augusta the way that it went. I kind of felt like I wasted all the time from December until then. Just keep grinding away, keep doing the work, and hopefully something will turn around.

Q. I know you guys are launching the Smash For Success scholarship and mentorship program this year. I think the applications close on that for next week. Tell us how much it's going to mean to you to give that scholarship and to honor a mentor.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think it's always been something that's very important to me, giving back, especially to kids. You see Talor is very passionate and involved in his foundation on his own. It's something that we actually, I think, as a team truly care about. It'll be nice to see, and obviously it's wrapping up here I guess in almost two weeks.

We're excited, and we're excited to give it away, and hopefully somebody can use this for good in the future.

Q. Jason and G-Mac, I know you visited an aboriginal school last week. Can you tell us about that experience, what that was like for you both?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, it was a pretty unique experience. Anytime you're learning about the history of a country like Australia, I think Jason and I were pretty blown away just kind of by the history of it all.

Obviously meeting some indigenous people, some kids, getting them to kind of swing some golf clubs.

I think every team out here on LIV takes that responsibility very seriously. I think speaking from Smash GC's point of view, we're very conscious of our engagement kind of level, what we want to achieve as a team, the difference that we can make in people's lives, and I think it's something that's evolving.

I think LIV do a great job of helping the players activate and do things in the communities that we're involved in and playing in, and I think we're just scratching the surface of what's possible.

Q. Brooks, have you settled on using a mallet putter or are you still working things out there?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It's been in the bag two weeks before Augusta. I haven't even putted with that other putter, the one I've putted with for -- the button back that I've putted with for probably 12, 14 years, I haven't putted with it since

then.

I can't find the hole at all, to be honest with you. Something we've just been putting some work into, so trying to find some answers.

Q. What's the main thing? Has it been frustrating on the greens at all?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Ball doesn't go in the hole, that's usually one of them. I don't know how else to simply put it. I feel like I'm hitting good putts, they just keep burning lips. Eventually it starts to wear on you after a while. All you can do is hit a good putt and see where it goes from there. Hopefully they start falling soon.

Q. We've got some U.S. Open qualifying coming up in the next few weeks. Are you guys going through those?

JASON KOKRAK: I personally am. Doing the U.S. Open in Columbus and then the Open in Manchester. I plan on playing both of them.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I'm the same. I've entered for both qualifiers. I think I'm in Florida Monday of Houston and then just south of London the Tuesday of the International Series Morocco, which I'll go and play right after the Open qualifying series. Obviously I'll be pulling hard for this guy in a couple weeks' time but obviously trying to get into a couple majors myself.

TALOR GOOCH: I'm not.

Q. Brooks, everyone says that this golf course is a ball striker's golf course, and you have done particularly well with your special abilities on a golf course like this. Can you say why is that, and which are the holes where you really need to be very conscious of how you are hitting your ball?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I think it's pretty obvious. I don't think it's just me. I think if you look at the leaderboard last year, Talor won, great ball striker, really can work the ball both ways, flight it very well, probably -- last year was probably one of the best I've seen somebody with control of the golf ball both ways in flight. Sergio is a good ball striker, lost in a playoff. I was there. I forget who else was beneath us, but I know it was us. Sergio was second, lost in a playoff, but I forget who else was around.

Right there, I would say those are probably three phenomenal ball strikers, maybe the best out here. It's a pure golf course. You look at that whole front side, it's all about positioning and being in the right spot, making sure



you either hit the fairway or you're positioned correctly. That's what I think a good golf course tests you.

Q. Do any of the holes stand out for you on this golf course as being -- which really demands excellent ball-striking?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think they all do in a certain way. I think 6 kind of stands out. Maybe on the back -- what's down the water, the left -- 15, you've got to be a good ball striker there, really commit to your shot and the shape because if you hit it just a little left, it very easily could go in the water. 12, as well, just positioning.

But it's funny, the way it is, too, the way the green sets up, it's all downgrain on the right side and into the grain on the left, especially on the front with a few of the holes on the water on the right, it can get very tricky. It runs off, and especially if you get it in the downgrain, it can go versus landing into the green, and it can be a 15-, 20-yard difference.

Q. Brooks, you became the first LIV Golfer to win a major last year. Do you feel like that changed the perception to what LIV Golf is, and what would it take for another LIV Golfer to win a major again?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't think it really -- yes, it helped LIV Golf, but you've got everybody that tees it up at a major championship ready to go, ready to go win the thing. If not, then they shouldn't be there.

Look, it's going to happen over time. There's too many good players. You look at it consistently, you've got Jon, Bryson, Dustin, Cam. Those are guys that are going to win quite a few majors. As long as we're in them, I think there's a good chance that people over the next four or five years will have a few.

There's too many good players in the game and too many good players.

Q. Obviously there's been talks of a merger and extending from 54 to 72 holes. What do you think is the future of LIV Golf in five to ten years?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, the merger is also between PIF and the PGA TOUR. I think that's the difference. It's not LIV Golf, it's the PIF and the PGA TOUR. I think that's something that needs to be well-known.

Look, we have no idea. The PGA TOUR has no idea. Our job is to go play golf, and that's it. That's what we're here to do. But I think it's important that that merger is that way.

GRAEME McDOWELL: And I think we all believe that the product we're playing in right now is strong and we don't think it's going to go away anytime soon. I think there's a lot of positives for the fan with the team element. We saw the first team playoff last week in Australia. There's just so many good things that we're doing out here. I really feel like the trajectory is moving us in the right direction, and I don't think this product is going anywhere anytime soon regardless of any mergers.

We're very, very happy with what we're doing and with the product that we're playing in.

Q. Graham, you've just said your game is coming back this season. This year is also the Olympics year. I'm wondering do you have any aspirations to get back to playing the Olympics at all, and if not this one, next one maybe?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Listen, I'd love to play in the Olympics, no doubt. I had an opportunity in Rio the first time the Olympics golf came back on the roster for the Olympics. I didn't go. I kind of regret it. But with my current World Ranking I would say that's fairly unlikely this season, unfortunately. I think I'm about 800th in the world. Unless I get residency of another country that might want me - I'll take offers - I think I'm probably not going to be representing Ireland this year, unfortunately.

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