

LIV Golf Hong Kong

Friday, 8 March, 2024

Fanling, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Golf Club

Cleeks GC

Martin Kaymer

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome Martin Kaymer, captain of Cleeks GC. 6-under 64. Can you talk us through your round and any highlights from your day.

MARTIN KAYMER: I had a very good start. I think I started on fairly tricky holes, No. 8 and No. 9. Those are the holes, they're one of the tricky ones on the golf course, and I hit it both to two feet, so it was fairly easy birdies to start with, and it's nice to start the round and the tournament like that.

Then I hit two or three fairly long putts there made, and it really kept the round going. That was an opportunity to shoot a fairly low score. 6-under is a great score on the golf course.

Q. The support from the Hong Kong crowds was great out there. Can you talk about the atmosphere and the fan reception out on the golf course?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, every time we come to Hong Kong, it's not only the golf course that is fantastic. Also the people are very friendly. They're very supportive. They're great golf fans.

Last time I was here was probably 14, 15 years ago, and the golf course hasn't changed. It doesn't need to be changed. So the hospitality of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong people, the government has been fantastic. Yesterday we went to the museum, had a look around there.

It was nice to experience also a bit of the culture and a little bit of Hong Kong.

Q. Can you talk about the course itself. Especially amongst the leaders there weren't a lot of bogeys made, obviously a ton of birdies among everybody. Are you surprised at maybe how low the scores were or did you kind of expect that?

MARTIN KAYMER: I'm a little bit surprised how many played super well today. I think you are maybe just in the



HONG KONG 2024

top 20 if you're 4-under par, so there are a lot of 5-under scores, which obviously is never easy. It doesn't matter how easy the golf course is.

If you do hit the fairways, you do have some possibilities, but the greens are very tricky, very slopey. Sometimes you have grain and break of opposites.

I don't think it's that easy to make the putts. I'm just surprised about the amount of people who played really well today.

Q. At one point there were 12 guys tied for the lead. Do you expect that to carry through for the rest of the week where it's really going to be bunched at the top?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, I think it's one of those golf courses that no one really runs away because if the score is low or if let's say five, six, seven guys are on top, they're probably all around the same number. It's not like one or two guys that sometimes happens at tournaments, where they run away because they really suit the golf course or something like that. The golf course that we play here, I think it can suit every kind of player.

You don't need to hit it really long. If you hit it long, you can just pull back a little bit, and if you hit it shorter, then it's still a golf course where you have opportunities. There's not really any advantage on the golf course of long hitters. I think that is very rare these days that we play these kind of courses, and it's fun that anybody in the field has a chance.

Q. You went through a tough phase last year with the wrist and other things; how are you really feeling, and how did you prepare for this season, and are you happy with the state of your game?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, I think this winter was the first winter for I would say the last four years that I was pain-free. It was a winter I could really work on my game again. I could really practice in Spain.

It was nice knowing you come to the first event and you are prepared enough to play well. It doesn't mean that you will play well, but at least you put everything that you had the last three months you put into your practice, and I was able



to do that.

Fortunately I don't need to take any painkillers anymore. I think it's more just like a mental thing that I feel like I protect it a little more. Obviously when I had surgery in November '22, '23 was always one of those seasons where I just needed to pull through.

It's very disappointing that you play against some of the best players in the world, and just being okay is not enough. I finished quite often on the bottom of the leaderboard, and that was mentally quite difficult to go through that, that you can't put in the hours of practice that I needed to play well. This winter I finally could.

Now it's just getting used to it again, to shooting lower scores, and once in a while being up there and feeling that pressure and that -- yeah, it's just a different feeling when you're in the top 5, top 10 and playing to win a golf tournament.

Q. As good as it was for you personally and for Richard Bland, you must be a little disappointed that after that great start, Kalle could not really take you to the top of the leaderboard in the team standings, as well?

MARTIN KAYMER: I think Kalle is probably the most disappointed person after that round, but I think we need to focus on the positives here. We all started really well. Kalle had a great start, I had a great start. I don't know what happened the last three or four holes for him, but it is a golf course, as I said earlier, you don't need to be that far off and you can make a couple bogeys here and there. But there are also plenty of opportunities to make birdie.

I think you need to focus on the positive, the way he started, and try to accept what happened. It's always difficult when you finish that way. You take it a little bit while you have dinner; you still think about it. But once you go to bed, it should be gone, and focus on the next day.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.