

LIV Golf Press Conference

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Katie O'Reilly

Talor Gooch

Chris Heck

Graeme McDowell

Media Conference



2026

community, as you all know obviously: Former host of LIV Golf 2023, have hosted major championships, have the NBA world champions down the road, and what we learned last night, also an incredibly supportive business community, and we're really honored to be a part of that.

With Talor's deep roots in Oklahoma, which he will talk about and you'll hear about, it's a no brainer for us to bring that team model and to represent the grit and the passion of this community through team golf.

Without further ado, I would formally like to announce as of today, this moment, Smash GC will be rebranding into OKGC, LIV Golf's Oklahoma team. Let's take a little peek at what that looks like.

(Video played.)

THE MODERATOR: We are going to invite our special guests up to the stage. While they get up there, I'll be happy to introduce each of them.

Sitting down right now is Chris Heck. Chris Heck is the President of LIV Golf.

Talor Gooch, an Oklahoma native, as you all know, the 2023 LIV Golf individual champion, and new team captain of OKGC.

Next to him is Graeme McDowell, one of the game's most accomplished players, major champion. He's the first European in 40 years to win the U.S. Open champion at Pebble Beach in 2010.

Then obviously Katie O'Reilly, who you just heard from.

Let's open it up with our captain, Talor. Can you just provide a few words what this means to you to be the captain here, your home market, and bring a team to your home state of Oklahoma.

TALOR GOOCH: It's amazing obviously. I grew up in Midwest City, not too far from here. I grew up going to a lot of movies at Harkins Theatre, which for those of you that are from around here know that was here way before the Thunder were here.

THE MODERATOR: We are so proud to be here in Oklahoma with today's announcement. We're really excited to be here. Great turnout. We'll be communicating with you guys about our new team here in Oklahoma.

To do that, we're inviting Katie O'Reilly, EVP and Head of Team Operations, here to talk about our news today. Katie, please come on up and share the good news.

KATIE O'REILLY: Thank you. Thanks, guys. Good morning, everyone. Thank you all for being here, first and foremost. Thank you, truly, for welcoming our LIV Golf family into Oklahoma. It's really been an incredible couple of days, and we're thrilled to be here.

Today marks a very special and important moment in the evolution of LIV Golf. We have always believed in the power of teams and that strong teams will build a strong league. We are team golf. We represent team golf around the world. We are the world's golf league. We have 13 teams hailing from all different corners of the globe who compete on an individual and a team level every season.

It is our goal to grow the game and bring the game of golf to corners of the world that it's never been before. We also firmly believe that our 13 teams will grow into \$13 billion franchises, and we are incredibly excited today to bring that to Oklahoma.

What we have learned through our process in our 4 1/2 years so far is that authenticity matters. So we've seen it in places like South Africa, like Australia, in the UK, and what we've seen is that when a team represents a real connection to a place, whether it's through our players or through the identity of the team, it really creates an incredible community for which our fans can rally around.

So we are incredibly excited to bring that team model of LIV Golf here to Oklahoma with captain Talor Gooch, who you'll hear from shortly. Oklahoma is an incredible sports



So, yeah, I grew up playing a bunch of sports, as most kids in Oklahoma do. I wrestled growing up. I had to cut weight one time, and I said I'm done wrestling. Yeah, so I grew up in the locker room. I grew up playing team sports. Whenever LIV came along, I was a believer from the beginning.

Obviously seeing the success of these teams on a global level, whenever you get -- like Katie was talking about, when you get a region, an area, a country involved, you just see the fan support. You see the passion. Just knowing the passion of the fans here in Oklahoma, the passion of the people here in Oklahoma, I would say it's a dream come true, but growing up you didn't dream of this because this wasn't possible.

It's amazing to be a part of something that is now possible, and it's exciting to be a part of what the future of it's going to be.

THE MODERATOR: Chris, I'll come to you. Six events in, some great momentum around the league obviously. What went behind the decision to bring a team to Oklahoma, and why is this market such an important market to focus on as a U.S. Team based in LIV Golf?

CHRIS HECK: What we found is the business model and the evolution has been that nationalism works, whether it's in South Africa, whether it's in Australia, in Spain, the UK, and so forth.

We think in the U.S. it is regionalism. If you cross over all of the markets of the major sports cities in the U.S., we think that we had that window of opportunity in Oklahoma.

I have a history of working in the NBA. I spoke about this last night. I had the good fortune of being with Clay Bennett on a day-to-day basis for about two months when we set up the first team that eventually was the path to getting the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Clay, what he taught me then resonated all the way to where we are now, and he was about community, and he was about civic pride, and he was about thinking big. We believe that this is a moment in time that 20 years later what Clay Bennett and his partners started is now passing the torch of the next iteration of sport in Oklahoma with Talor Gooch.

THE MODERATOR: I'll go to Graeme. Graeme, I know you're fairly new to Oklahoma. You spent some time here yesterday. Just initial thoughts on the new team rebrand, obviously playing on Talor's team. Initial thoughts on the new threads?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I thought there was a good chance we might be wearing some shade of orange.

To Katie's point earlier, I think the success of LIV Golf League is going to be a lot to do with the success of the franchises, the teams. For Talor to be leading the first U.S.-centric kind of geographically located team here in Oklahoma, I think it's extra special. He creates a culture. He creates an energy for our team. We're proud to be representing him and this state.

We had a great time yesterday. We went to the Memorial Museum in the morning, which I guess is a playbook from the Oklahoma Thunder. When guys come to the city here, they immerse themselves in the culture and everything that this city represents. We had an amazing day yesterday.

Like I say, proud, proud to be part of this team. I think leaning on Talor's connections and his roots in the community here. I think creating a fan base and being able to give back to the community philanthropically, just all the levels, all you need to be able to foundationally build a great team, I think we'll be leaning on this guy. Like I say, very proud to be part of it.

Q. You mentioned rebranding from Smash to OKGC. Can you explain what that is? What's Smash? I don't really know some of that. Sorry to come in a little ignorant.

KATIE O'REILLY: No, I can take that one. Again, we have 13 teams at LIV Golf. What you saw if you watched, happened to watch these guys in Mexico City, they were wearing, their kits said Smash.

So the team since our founding has been Smash Golf Club, and with Talor now taking over as the captain, we of course wanted to rebrand and reaffiliate with Oklahoma. Smash is just the former name of the team.

Q. So what led to the team going from Mexico to Oklahoma?

KATIE O'REILLY: The team was not based in Mexico. The team actually didn't have a specific affiliation. It was just Smash. But our tournament last week was in Mexico.

CHRIS HECK: I think it's important to understand how the league has evolved. What we have found, even though they weren't necessarily a name of a team from a city or a country or a region, we're actually finding that that's the path.

So we have a team that's in South Africa, and we

relaunched their brand, and we hosted an event there this year. We had 100-plus-thousand people. It was the biggest golf event ever in South Africa. We had the president of the country there. It was beyond civic pride. All of a sudden the crowd busted out the national anthem, like in the middle of the golf event.

None of us have ever seen anything like it, and that kind of led into this concept of can a team actually represent a market all over the world? This is where we think Oklahoma is the perfect fit to also not only represent themselves here in this team with OKGC, but also all around the planet.

Q. Just curious if you can confirm whether Saudi Arabia has pulled any funding? If so, where the funding is coming from now.

CHRIS HECK: No, we are funded, and we are business as usual moving forward.

Q. So no concerns then?

CHRIS HECK: We have concerns of selling tickets for the next event and of course launching great teams like OKGC.

Q. How confident are you in the future of LIV Golf?

CHRIS HECK: I wouldn't be here if I wasn't extremely confident, not only in our players, but our product. Global golf is kind of, it's a hard run, like we all travel a lot, but the impact that we're having around the world is something that I never thought I would experience.

I'm very fortunate, very grateful for being here, and I think that OKGC is going to represent this state extremely proud.

Q. Talor, will this -- what will this mean to the state and the community? Will you try to have more Charles or Anthony or Oklahoma guys with ties on your team in the future? Will it be an all-Oklahoma team? How does that work?

TALOR GOOCH: That's a great question. Let's just say within the LIV Golf world, there's been a lot of those questions, especially when you think about the great pipeline that University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State golf is, right?

There's a couple kids that are pretty good golfers right now at OU and OSU, and it's exciting to think about -- obviously I grew up here. I played the OJGT growing up, I went to Oklahoma State University, and now starting OKGC. Like the new dream is to have a kid that plays OJGT, plays at

Oklahoma or Oklahoma State, and then comes and plays for OKGC.

I'm extremely happy, obviously, with our team as it is right now. We are not making any changes in the foreseeable future. But one day, like I said -- one of the coolest stories I always tell people about LIV is the first year in Adelaide in Australia, it was 2023. I ended up winning. I had a great week. It was fantastic. It was really the first tournament that put LIV on the map. I don't know the numbers, but there was too many people to count.

There was easily -- I told a story last night. I was leading walking down the 18th fairway, had about 80 yards into the green, and it took me about five minutes to get from my second shot to the green because all of a sudden a sea of thousands of people flooded the fairway. Thankfully I had a security guard to help me navigate through that.

But early in the week at each LIV event next to a handful of tee boxes, there's a specific place for kids to go get autographs. It's the first time I experienced -- we're in Adelaide, Australia. The Australian team is the Rippers. Cam Smith, the captain of the team, Open champion in 2022 at St Andrews. I see a bunch of kids. We're about to tee off, and I just hear kids saying, I want to be a Ripper one day. I want to be on the Aces team one day. I want to be -- it just made me realize, oh, my gosh, this team thing is real.

The idea seems great, but once you see kids talking about, no, I want to play for that team. No, I want to do that. It just made me think about the kid in me growing up saying I want to be Jason White, like I want to be Troy Aikman. I want to play for the Dallas Cowboys. I want to go play for the Los Angeles Lakers.

That's what I'm most excited about is the idea that at one of our OJGT tournaments I go out to this year that I'm going to meet a kid who's 14, 15 years old who's going to say, I'm going to come play for OKGC one day. For me that's the new dream.

Q. How many players will you have on the teams, and where will you be playing? And will Oklahoma be hosting any of the tournaments?

TALOR GOOCH: There's four players on each team. As Chris was saying, we play all over the world. This year we've played in South Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore, all these different places. We of course play in the United States.

Last night I told the crowd one of my favorite stories, moments as a golfer so far was last year we played in



Indianapolis. We played about a month and a half after the Thunder had beaten Indianapolis in the NBA Finals.

Each LIV tournament there's one dedicated hole that they basically create a stadium environment. So there's a bunch of stands that kind of surround the hole, and it's a party. The fans go crazy. It's so loud. There's music going. It's unlike anything you've experienced as a golfer really.

So the first round, I go tee my ball in the ground, and I'm about to step up to it. Then I back off and I go to my bag, and I pull out an SGA jersey. I put the jersey on, and all of a sudden it went from the crowd being excited, singing the song Destiny's Child -- what was the song I had? We all have a walk-up song. I had a Destiny's Child song -- Say My Name. Everyone's singing Say My Name, and all of a sudden everyone is not saying my name, they're saying a lot of other words at me.

It's one of my favorite moments to stand in front of the crowd, put the Oklahoma City jersey on, and get absolutely berated by the people, right? It's great because when I see that -- obviously the Indianapolis market is kind of similar to the Oklahoma City market.

For me, we've had a LIV tournament in Tulsa back in 2023. At the time it was the highest attended domestic event in LIV history up to that moment. That moment in particular in Indianapolis just got me really excited about the prospect of bringing a tournament back to Oklahoma, which is absolutely the goal, absolutely the dream.

I play at Gaillardia. I play at Oak Tree National. I know Everett Dobson well, and obviously I've been a member at Gaillardia for a while. For years we've been having talks about how do we make this dream come true?

I'm hopeful that we continue to get the support here locally so that we can make that happen because for the new fans of OKGC, for my people, the Oklahomans, I want to be able to bring 56 other of the best golfers in the world to Oklahoma to experience the great hospitality, to experience the great fans. For them to understand who we are, how we are as fans, again, that's another dream. That's another goal. I just hope we can make it happen, and I think we will.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports