

# LIV Golf Riyadh

Wednesday, 5 February, 2025

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Riyadh Golf Club, Saudi Arabia

## Cam Smith

Ripper GC

## Joaquín Niemann

Torque GC

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome to our very first event of the season, LIV Golf Riyadh 2025. We are here for the season opener. We are joined today by Cam Smith, the captain of Ripper GC, and Joaquín Niemann, the captain of Torque GC.

Cam, the last time I saw you up here was LIV Golf Dallas after Ripper had just won the Team Championship. Tell us what you guys did in the off-season and if you are ready to do it all again in 2025.

CAM SMITH: Yeah, that's the idea. For me, the off-season was actually quite busy. I played a few tournaments down in Australia. I spent a couple of months down there and then really got back to work over Christmas and then heading into these couple of weeks to start.

I think Adelaide being the second event this year has really kind of prepped us because we want to defend there, and it's our home country. We have a lot of loyal fans that want us to do well.

We've all been working hard, and hopefully we can get off to the right start here this week.

**Q. Heading into the season, you guys have probably seen each other hit a few balls on the range. What are you thinking about the team competition this year and who's the team to beat?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: I think obviously Ripper winning last year is the team to beat, obviously, and yeah, there's a few other teams that are pretty strong. I think now with Legion XIII it's a really strong team, same as Crushers last year. Our team is pretty strong, too.

I feel like for us, for my team, I feel like we have a lot to prove. I feel like last year we had some good finish, not



good enough. I feel like it would have been nice winning at least one to get that rhythm, and I feel like there is a lot to do now.

We've got a nice week here playing night golf and then obviously going to Australia is really special. I think it's one of my favourite events, as well, on the calendar, and yeah, try our best to take their thrown.

**Q. Cam, outside of yourselves, who are you guys looking at as the team to beat this year?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think you've got to look at the depth of teams this year given that four scores count every single day now, as well. It brings a different challenge in itself. Not that we've been really afraid of a challenge yet.

I think all of the teams could have their week, but there's probably three or four at the top of the list there where guys week in, week out are consistently doing well, and these guys are one, Legion obviously was mentioned, Crushers have been great.

I would say there's probably another couple on the list, but I think everyone is going to try and prove themselves.

**Q. I just did an interview with Ian Poulter this morning and he said he was watching you hit balls on the range and he said he was blown away by the shape of your game right now. Anything you want to tell us? Are you doing anything different this season? Any work done in the off-season? Any new equipment or anything?**

CAM SMITH: Maybe Poults is trying a little bit of reverse psychology or something.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Probably.

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think the trip down to Australia was really nice for me. I played four tournaments down there, played the International here, so really haven't had a lot of time to kind of sit down and do nothing. It was kind of, I guess, a bit of a mission of mind to clean up some stuff, particularly in the longer game, and it feels really nice.



I feel like the last couple of weeks it's kind of all shaped up really nice, been pretty competitive at home. We had a team camp in Miami a couple of weeks ago, and yeah, just kind of sharpened the edges a little bit. It is feeling nice, but thanks to Poults.

**Q. Joaquín, you've had a great off-season. The last time you guys were together was here in Riyadh at this golf club. You guys were in a three-man playoff together. Joaquín, you took home the trophy, won in Jeddah earlier in the year. Tell us about your game and if Saudi Arabia is where you play your best golf?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, Saudi has been great to me lately. Last time we were here, it was a great week for me. It was a three-man playoff and it was a lot of fun playing that, a lot of birdies there. I felt like down the stretch I didn't play my best, and sometimes those things happen, not being able to finish those last holes as good as I wanted, and being able to come back in the playoff and play well, it was good to me.

Yeah, it was great. Saudi has been great, so I can't complain. Hopefully it keeps doing the same.

**Q. This week is obviously a little bit different; the routing for the course is completely different than what it was in December and you guys are playing at night, which I believe is the first round of men's professional golf that is played fully at night under the lights. You guys have been out there at night practising. I want to hear from you both on your thoughts on night golf, what the practice schedule has been like this week going out there at 9:00 p.m. to hit balls, and what you guys are expecting for the first round of tournament play tomorrow?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, it's hard to know what to expect, but like he said, doing everything at nighttime is a little bit weird. It's really cool out there. I think it's very different. The course is going to play a little bit different to when we were here. It's probably going to play a little bit longer being a bit colder.

It's been a challenge, but like I said before, we've never really been scared of a challenge. A new challenge is always exciting. I think everyone is really excited to get the year started. It's definitely been a little bit more of a hype, I think, this week than previous years.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, I'm really excited, too. I feel like it's something really new, and like Cam was saying, everybody here likes challenges, and we've all been pretty competitive. I know playing in the same conditions makes it really special, too, because it's not what we normally do

and try to adjust to all those conditions, sometimes you get some different lies where the light is a little bit different and get that feeling of the distance, which is sometimes a little bit weird and it's a little colder.

Yeah, it's going to be different. It's going to be obviously the same for everybody, and I feel like it's going to be really awesome for the viewers all over the world. They're going to be watching during live time here, so it's going to be really special.

**Q. Joaquín, you just got a special invitation to the PGA Championship and the Masters. Congratulations. You have been really dedicated to playing around the world in the off-season and doing absolutely everything you can to get these special invites. This is two years in a row now. Talk a little bit about how special these special invites are and what you're thinking going into the majors season now?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, obviously they're special, especially these last two years that it's been tough for golf, not being able to get direct access to the majors. But being recognized from Augusta and now from the PGA, as well, for two years is really special. Yeah, I'm really happy about it. It's only one step; I need to be there, and then obviously got to play good in those. Yeah, I'm happy to be in those.

**Q. Yesterday we had a really fun day. We went out to Riyadh Air, which is our new global airline partner for LIV Golf, and we had some fun hitting some golf balls over an airplane trying to get a hole-in-one à la Bryson DeChambeau. Can you tell us about the day?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, it was a lot of fun. Obviously you don't do that really often hitting over a plane, so yeah, thanks to Tony, the CEO from Riyadh Air that he put the plane and all his trust on us on not hitting the plane.

There was a few guys that were trying to convince someone else to hit the plane and ended up not doing it. We didn't do a hole-in-one. We were close. But Tony said that we're going to have seat 1A for the next flight. So that's good.

**Q. I want to ask about next week in Adelaide, our biggest event of the year. Obviously, Cam, home turf for you. How excited are you, and are you using this week as a prep week the best you can given it's very different conditions?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think, like I mentioned before, it's definitely been -- it's going to be different for us, particularly this year. I think usually we've had four or five events to



get kind of into the rhythm of things, and like I said, we obviously want to do well. It is such a cool week. It's going to be a great week next week, not only the golf but the acts we've got after golf, and the Australians love it. I can't wait to get back there and showcase what LIV brings to golf again.

**Q. Joaquín, I know Torque love the fan environment at the Watering Hole and everything that happens at Adelaide. Talk about how excited you are.**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, when Cam was talking I was remembering the playoff from last year, and everybody was so excited watching that playoff from the clubhouse and how the people were into it. They were a little bit drunk but they were having fun, and I think that's all that matters. They were really pulling for the Rippers. I think it's a special week, not only for just the Rippers, I think for everybody else, too. To have all those fans against you I think is still pretty cool.

**Q. Cam, just a question. Obviously last year Greg is gone and Scott O'Neil is here. Talk about the job you think Greg did and what that means for LIV going forward.**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, it's a weird one for me obviously getting very close to Greg the last couple years. I think he's done a really great job. He's taken a lot of bullets for the Tour, and I don't know many other people that could have done that, to be honest.

On the other hand, I think we're making some great strides, and as a tour we're really going in the right direction, which I think everyone is really happy with.

Like I said, it's a little bit of a weird one for me, but I'm happy the trajectory that the Tour has gone.

**Q. How does it feel being in the capital with the LIV Golf tournament happening here? What do you think will be different this year and from the previous years considering it was Jeddah before?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, I think the biggest difference is obviously playing during the nighttime. I remember last year when we played, I was in the press conference and I was watching all the people coming in for the light concert that they have, and it was a crazy amount of people. I feel like having that fun part outside golf is going to bring a lot of fun here from Saudi.

Obviously golf is pretty new here, so they get a big incentive of coming and seeing live music and getting to know the golf tournament, the golf players and what we do.

It's going to bring more fans, too. So it's pretty exciting.

**Q. Cam, Joaquín, what is it that is going to be the deciding factor in your opinion given that it's the first event of the year; how are you guys going to start off strong? What is the one thing you are going to make sure that is going to make you start strong?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think the work has to be done in the off-season to start strong, being our first event. I'm confident in myself and my team that we've done the right job, particularly the last month or so. We've all been texting each other and getting on calls and making sure we're doing the right thing.

From here on out basically it's just about letting go and trusting what you've done in the off-season, and hopefully it all goes to plan.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, we've got to make a lot of birdies. That would be a good start.

**Q. Joaco, a year ago you started the year shooting 59. Just wondering what you're going to do for an encore?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Well, I started last week my first round of the year and it wasn't a 59. Probably the first tournament on LIV of the year, so we'll see tomorrow what's going on.

**Q. I wanted to get your reaction when you did hear the news about all four scores counting. As you mentioned, that's probably going to benefit each of your teams. Just your general reaction in terms of especially the early rounds?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, I think it's going to bring a lot more pressure into every team. I feel like having every guy on their best form and having every shot count is going to bring the best version of every player. I think it's going to be great. The competition level is going to get higher.

I think anything could happen. Even on Saturdays and Sundays you can have four really good rounds and take advantage from it.

I like the way it is set up now. I think it's going to be better for the consistency of teams, during the year especially. Yeah, I like how it is.

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think like he mentioned, I'm not overly concerned about the change, to be honest. I feel like we've got a really nice team. We did really well on Sundays last year, which hopefully we can take into all three rounds this year.

But I think like Joaco said, it's probably going to bring the best out of everyone, everyone be the best versions of themselves every day. I feel like the three scores counting was nice if you have a bit of a bad round.

But just digging deep and doing something extra for your mates for three rounds is something else. Yeah, I like it.

**Q. The biggest challenge about playing night golf, is it dealing with the shadows? Is there something else? How would you categorize it?**

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: The biggest challenge is probably missing the fairway. There's not many lights. But I feel like it's going to be great. I think it's the whole challenge of waking up later in the day, start your day a little bit later, going back to sleep at 2:00, 3:00 in the morning. You've got that, then you've got playing at night, playing in the cold, not seeing -- the depth perception is not the same as during the day, so you've got to adjust to that.

I feel like everything playing at night is a little bit different. It's not normal to look up and see a moon instead of the sun. I feel like that has to change a little bit. You can maybe ask Bryson if that would change the air density, or...

**Q. Cam, does it impact how you'll read the greens at all, for instance?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, for sure. I think they definitely look different at nighttime. There's definitely a few slopes that you can't see.

For me, I'm an AimPointer anyway, so I kind of get adjusted with my feet. But I think the biggest thing on the greens is kind of the uphill/downhill, getting the speed right, and with that depth perception, too, just has been a challenge even at the start of the week.

Yeah, it'll be interesting to see how everyone adapts.

**Q. I would like to hear from both of you in terms of your previous participation in Jeddah and here in Riyadh. In terms of the weather conditions, is it fitting your game, or is it better in Jeddah or here in Riyadh?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, the golf course in Jeddah I really liked but I didn't play too well on. I never really had a good finish there. It was a struggle for me. Really windy, really hot. Then you come here and it's actually quite still and quite cold. So two completely different scales in terms of weather.

I think the golf course is very similar in how it looks and the

layout, but last year I played it for the first time. Joaco obviously won but had a really good round the last year and felt really comfortable out there.

I think this is hopefully the week for me in Saudi that I can get off to a good start.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, same. I feel like the last couple of events in Jeddah it's been extremely hot, and here it's a little bit cooler. Yeah, it is different. The ball goes a little bit short in that case. You've got the cold weather. But like Cam was saying, the courses, the layout is pretty much very similar. It's almost the same type of grass.

Yeah, I feel like there's some little things that you've got to adjust, but other than that, I feel like it's a great course, and I really like it and enjoyed playing it last year.

**Q. We've heard Arabic in here, heard Spanish, obviously talking in English. Joaco, you were in India last week. This week we're in Saudi Arabia. Next week we go to Australia. Then we take a break and go to Hong Kong; we go to Singapore. We say this is the first truly global golf tour and this really strikes me as that ringing true. You guys are both international players, Cam from Australia, Joaco from Chile. Can you talk about this tour or this league and how we really are the first and only truly global golf tour?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think you only have to look at international events and the crowds we draw, the time that the fans have out there. Seeing really good golf in different parts of the world is something really special, and yeah, no one else does it like we do it.

It's so cool to be a part of. It's so cool to travel. I think being Australian and probably Chilean, as well, we're natural travelers. We have to go so far to get places, and it's definitely a part of my life that I miss, and I'm happy it's back in there.

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, same. Being from Chile, obviously it's a country that we haven't seen those many golfers come to our country and play, and I know there's a lot of countries around the world here that they have the same thing, and being able to see all these good players playing in their home countries is really special.

Yeah, traveling to different cultures, different countries, knowing different people, different crowds -- every crowd is different in every part of the world, so that makes it really unique, and it made me download Duolingo, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys so much. Good luck



... when all is said, we're done.®

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