

# LIV Golf Riyadh

Wednesday, 5 February, 2025

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Riyadh Golf Club, Saudi Arabia

## Legion XIII

**Jon Rahm**

**Tyrrell Hatton**

**Caleb Surratt**

**Tom McKibben**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome Legion XIII to LIV Golf Riyadh 2025, our season opener. We are joined by Caleb Surratt, we are joined by Tom McKibben, our captain Jon Rahm and fan favorite Tyrrell Hatton. You guys have a new member of the team.

I'll start with you, Jon. Talk about the off-season and how you decided to welcome Tom to Legion XIII.

JON RAHM: I've come to realize quickly that the off-season is arguably the most stressful time when you're involved with a team in this way, just because all the decisions that need to be made and all that goes on that maybe the league or the GM doesn't tell me when I'm playing. It becomes very stressful.

We all have the habit of waiting until the end for different reasons to sign, so my resting heart rate just keeps going up every week.

But it's been amazing to get Tom as an addition. To get such a young player with his experience, already established and a winner as a professional multiple times is hard to come by. I'm thrilled that he decided to join the team or join the legion.

Really looking forward to seeing what he can do because he's very talented, and I think the sky's the limit.

**Q. Tom, you are a couple days in to LIV Golf. Tell us your initial reactions, your thoughts, your experiences and what your hopes and aspirations are for the first week out here?**

TOM McKIBBIN: Yeah, it's been an incredible last couple of days getting to hang out with these guys and playing

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together and then also just the whole experience of something being new. It's been really cool just to see this whole new environment, especially night golf this week. It's been pretty cool the last couple of nights playing in the dark, and just really looking forward to getting started tomorrow and just seeing what the vibe is like all day tomorrow, and I'm really looking forward to it.

**Q. Obviously you guys had an incredible maiden season debut. Legion XIII was the first expansion team last year and you guys won four team events. Just kind of looking back on last year, now with a new team member, you've got some more firepower, what are your expectations for yourselves this year and who are the other teams to beat?**

JON RAHM: Well, I think we saw in the Team Championship that any team can win, I think, with the Iron Heads making it all the way to the end.

You can't discount anybody, but I think you have teams like the Crushers who have been playing really good throughout the last few seasons, obviously the Rippers, and a couple others -- Torque and the Aces that might be ahead of that list, but anybody can win at any time. If I start stating reasons, I'll give you a reason for each one of the teams.

As it relates to us, I'm really excited because not only do we get a fantastic player in Tom, but Caleb, what I believe obviously, and I think he would tell you he didn't have his best golf year last year, he's capable of a lot more and has talent for a lot more.

I think we could be having a repeat of last year, but I think we'll be more consistent this year than last year because we did have some ups and downs, but I think we could have an even better year this year. That's certainly the hope.

**Q. Tyrrell, you've been playing some of the best golf of your life since joining LIV. You just won in Dubai recently. Talk about your form and what's causing this awesome play and if you're feeling really strong heading into this first event of the season.**

TYRELL HATTON: I don't know specifically what's caused

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my form to go up a little bit. I guess in a way it started in Nashville last year. Winning again for the first time in three and a half years was massive for my confidence.

It was sad to miss out on the top 3 in the individual rankings the final event. But obviously finishing fourth was -- you had to play some pretty good golf to even finish there.

I take the confidence from Dubai recently, winning there, into this week, and hoping that I can perform better and hopefully more consistently across the season.

**Q. Have you guys played practice rounds as a full team yet? Caleb, are you taking on almost a mentorship role to Tom since you're no longer the new kid on the block?**

CALEB SURRATT: I think we're still both in that mentorship criteria. It's nice to have somebody my age, and I think me and Tom have been getting along really good, and I think it's going to be an incredible dynamic that I think is going to lead to a strong year for us. But we're both learning and definitely a great opportunity that we both have.

**Q. If you had one piece of advice for him starting out this week, what would it be?**

CALEB SURRATT: I'd say just keep your head down. It's still golf. Obviously there's moving parts and there's noise and it's a bigger stage than I think where we both previously competed. I think that was one of the things I had to learn this past year is the ball is still the same size, the hole is still the same size, and you've just got to go out there and try your best, regardless of the lights that are on you. I know he's going to do great, and I hope to have a solid year, as well.

**Q. Tom, do you think you'll have some first tee jitters?**

TOM MCKIBBIN: I'm not sure. I think it'll definitely be a different feeling. I've never really done a shotgun start, and I think it'll be certainly different as well with it being in the dark but something that we've got used to the last couple of days. I think it'll be pretty cool, as well, with the music and stuff going on. Something I haven't experienced before and something that I'm looking forward to listening and watching out for.

**Q. We've touched on night golf a couple of times. Obviously it's a really cool new experience for both the fans and for you guys. Would love to hear just a little bit about what your expectations are with that, some of the challenges. I'll start with you, Tyrrell.**

TYRELL HATTON: Yeah, it's going to be a new experience for everyone this week. But ultimately it doesn't change how you go out there and try your best and come Saturday there's going to be an individual holding the trophy and there's going to be a team winner, as well. I won't look at it any more differently than that.

**Q. Jon, how have your preparations been this week? Different from a normal tournament week?**

JON RAHM: From the moment I found out we were going to play under the lights, I've been really excited. It's all about what LIV Golf is all about. It's innovating and creating a new product for the consumer. It reminds me a little bit to the first few times to a different scale. Formula 1 decided to go at night. TV looks very, very cool and I hope golf comes out that way, as well.

On my personal experience, it's really fun to be a part of. It's so different, so unique that I think we could be having a very special week.

Obviously we're all going to have our shortcomings because we're not used to it. We've never done it. Back home there's a par-3 course that is lit at night that you can go and play, but there's a different between trying to hit a pitching wedge and a driver. It's a whole different feel.

But I think it's going to be quite special. My biggest thing is being the 6:00 p.m. tee time. We're so used to by 6:00 p.m. we're home, almost thinking about dinner and going to bed if you're not having dinner. So trying to shift that mentality of the schedule, it's been the most interesting part.

But I do think it's really fun. It's probably the closest feel we're going to get on a week to what other sports' athletes get, having those 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 p.m. start times, and I'm all for that. I think it'll be something special, maybe see more of it.

**Q. We have a new official airline partner, Riyadh Air. You got to spend the day with that team and do an unique activation, hitting golf balls over a Riyadh Air airplane to announce the partnership. You were out there with Bryson and DJ and Sergio. Tell us a little bit about that activation and how fun that was.**

JON RAHM: It was fun. I think the director came to a quick realization that we were not going to hole it. They really wanted us to make a hole-in-one. I don't know if they know the odds of within 10 shots making it, in an airport where the green is not a real green.

But we had some fun with it. We came close. Sergio I think was trying to give the CEO of Riyadh Air a heart attack trying to hit it under the plane and getting close to the plane where we were specifically told not to hit it.

But I'm really looking forward to the partnership, a brand new company that is going to be easily one of the better airlines in the world. For them to have faith in LIV Golf and us is quite special.

As a captain to be able to go and do fun things like that with any company, any sponsor that joins, it's a lot of fun, so we're looking forward to more of those.

**Q. This is obviously the first leg of the 2025 season. From here we're going to Adelaide which is our biggest event of the year. Just a couple quick thoughts from you on how excited you are to be going back there and what you're looking forward to.**

CALEB SURRATT: Yeah, I think Adelaide was easily probably my most enjoyable event last year. I've never really played in front of that many people. To play on a golf course that's pretty tight and you've got thousands of people lining up each side of every fairway, it was a new experience.

To get back there, back in the beautiful town of Adelaide and be able to compete there is something I've been looking forward to for a long time. Aside from the crowd, what a great golf course it is. Incredible venue and very, very well run and maintained. Very excited.

**Q. Tom, I know you've probably watched it on TV, but what are your thoughts and expectations for next week?**

TOM McKIBBIN: Yeah, obviously very excited to go there. I haven't been before. But definitely I've watched it on TV, on YouTube, and watched the playoff last year, which seemed unbelievable. I don't think I've ever really seen that in golf before. So to get down there and play in front of those fans -- I've played in Australia a couple of times, and the fans down there are absolutely amazing.

I think to get down there and experience that sort of atmosphere that I think is a little bit crazier than normal weeks, it's something that I'm really looking forward to.

**Q. Jon, are you ready for the Watering Hole?**

JON RAHM: I'm ready for the week. I'm looking forward to being a different time of year. It'll be a little hotter. Hoping the golf course is a little firmer and plays a little bit more like some of those Aussie courses are supposed to play.

Trying to get Tom ready for what it's going to be like, but I don't think you can possibly explain what the Aussie fans are like and how close to the fairways they are. When you're standing on some of those tees all you see is fairway, heads, and then trees. There's no in between. It's quite unique.

It's very difficult to find a better atmosphere. It's a lot of fun, and the Australian fans, not having had as big and strong a field as this one very often in their lives in general, I think embrace it very well. They know how to have fun, as well, and have fun with us. So it makes it much more interesting and entertaining for all of us.

**Q. Tyrrell, are you ready for the excitement of Adelaide?**

TYRELL HATTON: Yeah, definitely. That was definitely the best event I think on the schedule last year, and the atmosphere that we got to play in that week was brilliant. I think every player will say that they loved that week. One of the ones on the schedule that you sort of look for and you're excited to get there. Very much looking forward to getting back down under.

**Q. Tom, you're the youngest new player out here but you're not the only 22-year-old joining LIV Golf. Can you take us through your thought process and what appealed to you about joining LIV?**

TOM McKIBBIN: Yeah, obviously it was a decision that I made, obviously being young and 22. I've watched this for the last couple years since it started, and it's something that I've really liked to watch, something very different, something that probably appeals to more people my age. I think sort of the opportunity to get to play with these guys here and learn from some of the best players in the world week in, week out is something that appealed very, very nicely to me.

I liked the whole concept of everything, as I said, something from a younger age standpoint is something that -- I sort of liked the atmosphere of it. It was something cool and something new to me and something I'm very much looking forward to.

**Q. Do you feel like the benefits of playing against the really strong fields we have out here will maybe accelerate your career a bit? Obviously you've already won, so you're already pretty on a fast track right now.**

TOM McKIBBIN: Yeah, I think so. I think just getting to spend a lot of time with guys like Jon and Tyrrell and other guys, guys that I haven't gotten an opportunity to really

play with before, and I know when I have got a chance to play with some great players, it has definitely helped my game. I've definitely learnt a lot from getting to spend a lot of time around those guys, and I think it's something that can only help my game going forward.

**Q. Caleb, how much of an acceleration process did you feel just in the year that you've had out here?**

CALEB SURRATT: Yeah, I think I was thrown into an environment and realm of players that if I had stayed in college I was not at least going to get to within the next four or five years. I've told all my friends and family back at home, just from one year last year, regardless of my play, it felt like I got three to five years of experience.

I've learned from a lot of these guys out here that less is more, and I kind of always grew up thinking the opposite. Just some little valuable information that I've learned so far, and it's really changed the trajectory of my career, and I couldn't be more happy to be here.

**Q. Jon, Tyrrell, just wanted to get your thoughts on all four scores counting this year, your reactions.**

JON RAHM: I like it. I like it. I think it benefits a team like ours. I think we have four really strong players that are really consistent. So I think it's better for the league in general for everybody to matter every single day because Sunday is usually really, really fun. At least last year it was incredibly fun in that regard.

But I think it's better for the teams and the players' development, as well, for every round to count. I'm very much in favor of it.

TYRELL HATTON: Yeah, I think we saw last year even on Sunday how quickly the leaderboards can change. Having that from round 1 certainly brings a little bit more interest there earlier in the week. But yeah, like Jon said, I think we're a pretty consistent team, and hopefully this move kind of benefits us over the course of the year.

**Q. Tom, you explained your decision, why you made your decision. I just wonder, we were in Dubai as you were and Rory was talking about it in discussions with you. He said he didn't think it was worth the things you were sacrificing. I just wonder if you thought about those things -- I guess he's talking Ryder Cup, potentially majors. How much was that in your thinking when you were thinking about what to do?**

TOM McKIBBIN: Yeah, it was definitely in my mind, but to me, I wasn't in any of those anyway. Again, the opportunity to get to play with guys out here more often,

more consistently was definitely a huge factor.

But I think I wasn't in -- I'm not in those majors anyway at the minute, so it really didn't bother me too much.

**Q. In your practices, did you guys ever think of doing the practice during the nighttime just to see how you play at night versus during the day? Did coming here have a shift in the way that you guys maybe sleep or train?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, I think it's been an experience in all of that. I think the only time two of us -- I think Tyrrell and Caleb are going to play during the daytime is today in the pro-am. We've played every practice round at night because we're playing at night, so might as well try and get used to it.

It's a shift because when we finish tournament rounds it'll be 10:30, 11:00; by the time you get back it's late, physio. Usually I'm in bed -- I'm asleep by 9:30 when I'm at home and I'm up early, so been trying to stay up and go to bed closer to 1:00 in the morning just to -- for a couple things: To not have too much day in front of me when I wake up, and to just get used to trying to perform at that time.

It's definitely been interesting, especially when you travel far away, to have to stay up this late. But it's part of the appeal to a special week like this one.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys so much. Good luck this week. Can't wait to see you out there.

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