

LIV Golf Riyadh

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Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Riyadh Golf Club

HyFlyers GC

Michael La Sasso

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining us for today's press conference at ROSHN Group LIV Golf Riyadh here at Riyadh Golf Club. We're pleased to be joined by one of the league's newest stars, Michael La Sasso, who joins us as as the newest player of Team HyFlyers GC. Welcome, Michael.

Michael, welcome to LIV. You're making your professional debut this week in Riyadh after you recently joined the HyFlyers. What are you most excited about as you look ahead this season, and how does it feel to be part of this new generation of young stars who are playing in the league this year?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, I can't tell you how grateful I am for the opportunity to be here. Kind of being able to travel the world and come to a place like this and have this as my pro debut, I can't be grateful enough to be out here, and really, I'm so excited to play.

Q. Coming off an amazing year yourself. Where do you feel your game is coming into Riyadh, and that transfer into the professional game, how are you feeling about that?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: It's good. I'm excited to have a caddie this week, around people that have had success in their career, and I'm able to pick their brains on questions about the golf course.

It really does have a team feel, which I've played well in the past, so it's so cool to be a part of something like that and have the ability to play as a team, with a team. So I'm excited. I think it's going to be great.

Q. Going into that a bit more, you're obviously got amazing HyFlyers teammates who have had global success all around the world. How much are you looking to lean on them for mentorship, for advice as you begin your LIV Golf career?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: I've already learned so much, and

it's been a pretty short journey so far. I've definitely had a couple rookie moves pulled on me early from the vets, but kind of besides that, being around these people, the fact that I can ask them questions and go to Phil and Cameron and Brendan for all the questions that I have and the fact that they answer them and they want to see me succeed, it's the coolest thing ever. Actually having the ability to ask questions and be a part of that is pretty cool.

Q. Can you just talk us through your thought process as you made the decision to join LIV? Obviously you gave up a couple of perks, but at the end of the day it's a new exciting chapter for your career.

MICHAEL LA SASSO: One of the things that went into my decision, when I was 10 years old starting to play golf, like, the goal for me was to play professional golf. Having people that have been very well-known in the golf space and are so experienced, and to be able to be a part of a team that's with Phil, somebody that's had so much experience, I feel like he'll be able to answer any question that I throw at him, to have the ability to be able to ask somebody that on a daily basis, that played a very big part in it for me because not every 21-year-old has the opportunity to be able to ask questions to those people. So that was a big factor for me.

I think so far, I'm so grateful that I made the decision, and I am very happy to be here.

Q. What about the appeal with this league? You're the youngest player in the league now, but there's obviously a lot of younger players here that have grown since they've joined LIV. Did you see that, and was that also part of your decision process?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, so I've had a very good relationship with Caleb Surratt. Not many people know this, but he was committed to NC State at the same time I was. He's from North Carolina, I'm from North Carolina. Growing up, I played a lot of golf with him, and we were very close.

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I remember when he first came here, he stayed at my house because he was getting a swing lesson from -- we go to the same instructor. Everything that he had to say, it made me excited. From a very early start, hearing about LIV and every perk that it had and hearing him talk so highly about it, the fact that I actually had an opportunity to come out here and play, and I asked him a bunch of questions and kind of from the start, everything that he had to say and people that I talked to, everything was so, so good.

Q. You're replacing him as the youngest player in the league. I don't know if he likes that title or not.

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, I was joking about that with him, actually, on the range the other day. I think our birthdays are about six days apart, so I think I do take the youngest player in the league now, which hopefully is a good thing.

Q. What about the team concept? You're coming from college, obviously; that was a big part of any college experience. Was that also a factor, like, I loved that in college and I can continue that here at LIV?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, I think that makes the transition a little bit easier. I feel like my golf has kind of taken off when I've been in a team environment. For me, having a team around me was very appealing.

I've played good golf as a team. I like the camaraderie, kind of the friendly banter that goes back and forth between the guys. For me to have the opportunity to come play on a team environment for a professional career, I think that's the coolest thing ever.

Q. Do you set goals before a season, and if so, what would be the goals for this year?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, I've talked with a bunch of people on the team. I know Phil is very big on having a team win and an individual win. Now being the youngest player in the league, I'd kind of like to come in and make a good noise, and I would like to win a couple times. I would like to see the team win for sure, as a team event. I think that would be pretty neat, as well, and kind of take it one day at a time.

Q. An interesting debut for you being night golf. Have you had any experience with playing night golf before?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, so our facility back in college, we had lights at our facility. At the beginning of my career at Ole Miss, we used to have a lot of guys out there and would just go play in the dark.

I think it's great. Kind of being able to see a place that has all these light shows and everything, it's probably honestly the most fun I've had on the golf course in these two practice rounds the last couple days. I think it's so cool. It's unique.

I think that's kind of what it brings to the table. If I was told coming into it you're playing night golf, I think it's so sick. I really do. Kind of being able to be here this week, and considering it's the first event of the year, it might be hard to beat this one. But it's also my first event.

But I think it's been so cool so far.

Q. For fans who don't necessarily track the amateur game, the college game, what can fans expect from you on LIV this season in terms of your style and the way you approach the game?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: I would say I'm a little bit raw at first. Everybody is a little bit young. I think that's why I have a pretty sick caddie that I've asked to come join me so far in my career. I think hopefully he'll be able to sharpen me up a little bit in some areas.

If you can kind of tell by my personality, I'm a little bit fiery, so hopefully I bring some good laughs and stuff to the older guys, I'll say, on the team, and kind of bring in like a little bit of a new young flair.

Q. Do you think you're naturally aggressive and maybe you need the caddie presence to rein you in on some shots that might be a bit too adventurous?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: A little bit. I feel like I'm pretty smart on the golf course. I'll say that. Some people might shake their heads at it.

Yeah, I think that kind of plays a little bit of a fact into it. But I feel like I've had some good golf so far in my career, so I don't really want to shy away from anything. That's kind of what I've been told is play aggressively and play your game.

Q. You start with LIV in Riyadh, then go to Adelaide, Hong Kong, Singapore. You mentioned about travel; how does it feel in your first season to go all around the world and come back to the United States by the end?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, this is honestly my first time really traveling. That's the first time I've slept eight hours on a plane. So I'm kind of getting used to the jet lag and everything. But being able to be here, play under the

lights, be able to travel the world at such a young age, the experience that I'll get from this, you can't really pass up. Especially kind of being so young, I feel like the amount of stuff that I'll be able to learn in the next few years, just even being able to be here, like really, it's hard to say how cool it really is to be able to travel the world as a 21-year-old kid and just see different cultures.

Even just being able to see camels this week, first time seeing camels. So that's pretty cool to me, as well.

Q. What would be your message to the young generation, those who would like to be in your position one day?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: Yeah, I would say believe in yourself. That's the big thing that I kind of always preach on. If you told me when I first started playing golf that I would be sitting in this chair talking to you guys right now, I probably would have said you're crazy. Knowing that it's a very small amount of people that are actually able to play professionally, I would say bet on yourself. Believe in yourself. I think that's such a big thing.

I feel like I've made a lot of decisions recently, and that's kind of what I fell back on is bet on yourself. You're the one that talks to yourself in the mirror, and just believe in yourself because you have to be your biggest cheerleader for sure.

Q. You touched just now and you mentioned that you're the youngest in the league. What would be the dream for Michael in the first season?

MICHAEL LA SASSO: I think kind of a dream for everybody. This is the first time that I'm now playing golf as a professional, so to have that ability, to have it around people that are so supportive, and to be around people that show that they very much care about what I do and they're just trying to help, I think this year is going to have a lot of growth, and I think that's a good thing.

People have to grow up pretty quickly. I think you learn a lot of stuff. Kind of being the youngest guy here and having the ability to say that, I would really just like to learn. I feel like this year is going to be about a lot of learning, and there's going to be good, there's going to be bad. But the fact that I'm able to do it at such a young age and have such a good group of people around me, it's exciting for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Michael, thank you very much for your time, and good luck this week on your debut.

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