

LIV Golf Riyadh

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Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Riyadh Golf Club

Smash GC

Talor Gooch

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome Talor Gooch, captain of Smash GC. Well played today, 5-under par 67, currently tied fifth after round 1 here in Riyadh. Talk about your round today. How would you assess it? Did you feel any more added responsibility making your debut as Smash GC captain tonight?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, you want to come out and get the year off to a good start. You want to lead your team.

Yeah, I put a little bit more pressure on myself, I think, so it was nice to go out there and have a good round.

Q. Smash GC sits T3 in the team standings with three rounds to go. What's the game plan for the team as you look ahead to the rest of the week?

TALOR GOOCH: Last night I texted them and I just said, guys, let's go get it, let's go have some fun, let's get the work in, let's get off to a good start. The scores are going to be low when the greens are this good and the wind is this little around here.

You've got to go make some birdies out there if you want to compete. I actually haven't had the chance to see how the other guys are doing, but hopefully they're making a bunch of birdies.

Q. I was just curious, you were playing with Ben An, obviously his first time as captain. Did you guys have any kind of discussion out there as first-timers as captains? What was it like also playing with Bryson?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, first of all, I always love playing with Bryson. It's amazing what he can do with the golf ball. We like talking stuff outside of golf, so I love playing with Bryson.

It was great to see Ben. We were joking -- I can't remember the last time we were able to play together. So it was good to see him again. We go back all the way to junior golf. He's a great player, and good to see him out

here, obviously.

We talked through some stuff. Like one of the first things I said is how cool is night golf; like this is awesome. Also, it's an amazing start to the year of being here in Saudi, seeing the night golf, seeing this golf course, and then going to Australia, playing in the daytime. It's just totally different weeks.

He's getting a lot of LIV Golf really quickly into his career. Yeah, it was fun.

Q. Obviously our first 72-hole event. Do you feel like there's a bit of a different mindset now that is not just a sprint anymore?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, it definitely has a totally different vibe. Only 18 more holes, it's not that vastly different. But even on the range when we were about to go, I was giving everybody a little fist bump and said let's go get it, and Harold said, hey, don't come out the gate sprinting; it's not a sprint anymore. It feels a little bit different.

It'll be interesting. We've all talked internally, all the players, about it'll be interesting to see how it plays out throughout the season and how guys either do better with it or struggle with it or whatever the case may be. But it'll be interesting to see if there's really any differences.

Q. I'd be remiss if we didn't get your opinion on the world ranking points. It would seem like those points could be really important for a guy like you.

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah. I mean, obviously I don't think the right thing was done, which is not any different than what we've experienced here at LIV for the last four or five seasons now.

Yeah, it'll be interesting to see how it plays out. But I think anybody who says that the right thing was done and the fair thing was done, I don't think they're in tune with the reality of things.

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Hopefully there's some improvement there. Time will tell.

Q. Obviously the league has made some changes to get the OWGR on side, and it seems like the OWGR is asking for more changes to get the full accreditation. Where do you think LIV should draw the line if it is trying to be different and distinct from other tours? Would you like to see it become even more closer to traditional golf, or do you think you're going to compromise the identity too much to where it doesn't become something that is distinct?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, I think we all agree we need to stay us, true to who we are and what we are. We're a global golf league that brings a totally different energy to the game. So we've got to continue to maintain the fabric of our character and who we are and what made us -- what we started with in the beginning. I hope we don't go too far down the path of replicating everything just to appease somebody.

At the end of the day, for the ranking of things, everybody knows the quality of golf that's out here. It's unfortunate that it's not recognized in the way that it should be. I just hope we don't lose ourselves in the chase for that. Like I said, for four or five years, we've experienced this and this being treated a certain way. I look forward to the day that we are treated the same as everybody else in the game of golf, and I think we've made plenty enough strides to try to join the ecosystem and try to appease people.

I don't know what else to say. It'll be interesting to see how it all plays out.

Q. Going back to playing with Bryson, it seems like he plays his own game sometimes. What's it like watching him on 15 hit it near sideways into the trees and then put it on the front edge?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, so I forget what hole we were on. We were on the third or fourth hole, and I said to Ben, when was the last time you played with Bryson. He's like, man, it's been years. I was like, it's a little different, isn't it? He's like, bro, because the first tee box I hit 3-wood off the tee and I had like 120 yards into the hole and Bryson hit driver like 20 yards short of the hole. Ben was like, I didn't know where he was hitting it on the -- I didn't know if that was good or not. I was like, when he's driving it, it's a different ballgame.

It's fun to see, and obviously everything he does for the game and what he brings to the game is incredible.

But as a peer of his, it's equally as incredible to see specifically just the way he drives the golf ball. It's

unbelievable.

Q. Do you have to stay in your own bubble and remind yourself of your own limitations compared to his?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, I'm definitely not trying to be Bryson DeChambeau. I will never be that. I know who I am and what my game is. Hey, I can dream. Maybe one day. Maybe one day, but not anytime soon.

Q. In the previous days, the weather was a little bit warmer. Today it's a little bit colder. Did that affect anything in terms of play?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, first of all, it's always great to be back here in the kingdom. It's especially great being here, playing such a different format, being night golf. To your point, the weather changes. The last couple evenings it was warmer, and I had to throw a hoodie on when I was playing. The ball travels a little bit differently when it's colder, so you have to make those adjustments.

From the beginning of the round to the end of the round, the ball was going different distances the beginning versus the end. As the weather changes you have to adapt to it. That's part of our job being a professional golfer. We were able to adapt today, but I wouldn't mind if there was a little bit more warmth the next couple evenings.

Q. Being the captain of Smash, what makes you a great captain in your opinion, and how do you like to lead usually?

TALOR GOOCH: Well, I'm new to this, so I'm kind of learning what to do and how to lead this team. But fortunately the three guys on my team, we all get along very well. I have a great relationship with all of them. They know me well. They know how I go about my business. I know how they go about theirs.

So the best thing I can do for them right now is try to lead them on the golf course and play the best golf that I can.

I'm looking forward to kind of putting my stamp on this team as the year unfolds, but leading on the golf course is the best thing I can do, and that's what I intend to do.

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