

# LIV Golf Adelaide

Wednesday, 24 April, 2024

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

The Grange

## Greg Norman

CEO and Commissioner, LIV Golf League

## Peter Malinauskas

Premier, South Australia

## Jon Rahm

Captain, Legion XIII

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome our CEO and commissioner of LIV Golf League, Greg Norman. Let's welcome the captain of Legion XIII, Jon Rahm, and the Premier of South Australia. Welcome, guys.

Premier, we are a year back from last year's Adelaide where we won World's Best Golf Event. What do we have to do this year to top it?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Well, I think punters and people will look after it. The thing about this event last year, there was an awful amount of work that went in from the state government and the LIV team to put all the infrastructure in place, make sure we promote the event as best as possible, but ultimately it was fans that brought this event to life. It was people.

We always took a calculated risk as a government that Australian golf fans had been starved of high-quality professional golf for decades. I mean, there's a generation of golf fans in this country that had never seen elite golf before, and we took a bit of a hunch that people would respond to the opportunity to see the world's best golfers here in South Australia, and they responded in droves.

What I think will take this event to another level this year is that there are a lot more people here. We've increased the capacity of the facilities here at Grange. A lot more passes have been able to be sold as a result of it, and I think that is going to add a whole other level of atmosphere over the course of the three days.

Critically, from the state government's perspective, it's on track to meet all the economic metrics that we care so much about, particularly overseas and interstate visitation, and that's given the city a real buzz. You feel that walking



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around, and I suspect as we get closer to the event that will only increase.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, you're making your debut here at LIV Golf Adelaide. I know you've heard a lot about it from the other players, and just wondering what your expectations are for this week.

JON RAHM: My expectations of the tournament or myself?

THE MODERATOR: Of the tournament.

JON RAHM: Well, yeah, it's definitely one of those dates that when the season started, it was highlighted because of how highly everybody spoke of the tournament. There was no negatives. Great city, great golf course, great fans. Emphasizing great fans.

Obviously I think everybody who watches golf, and some people don't watch golf, I've seen the images of the Watering Hole, which I thought it was a lot shorter. I don't know, it's a lot harder of a hole than I ever pictured to be honest to have that many people. If you're going to do a stadium, maybe give us a bit shorter of a hole so the chances of making it are a little bit higher. But it's still a sight to see. That's absolutely incredible.

I'm really excited to be here. I've seen the golf course a little bit, and I can see why everybody was raving about it. If we don't get a lot of wind or any rain, which it doesn't look like it, it can get really firm and fast and make it a really entertaining event, not only for us but for everybody watching.

THE MODERATOR: Greg, you are an Aussie through and through. How much does it mean to you to bring really the best golf event that's ever been to Australia and you've really spearheaded this initiative?

GREG NORMAN: Yeah, thank you, and good morning, everybody. That was one of my initiatives when I was asked to come on board as CEO and commissioner of LIV. I knew the value of Australia, what Australia can represent to the game of golf and what Australia lacked, and the Premier hit the nail on the head. Basically the fans spoke in droves last year. They continue to speak this year.



To be able to bring the quality of Jon Rahm plus 53 other guys down here for the Australians to experience was meaningful for me because I came down here, it was my mission every year as a player to bring back my skills to show Australia, to grow Australian golf the best way I possibly could, but that was with 14 clubs in the bag and what I did on the golf course.

To be able to do it here with the impact that we've had, not only on the golf course with the players, commercially, as well, economically -- the economic impact that we've brought to Adelaide, and the Premier touched on that, those are things that people don't really speak about very much, but when we as a team working with SATC see the value of what we've delivered here, it's just incredible.

As we look into the future, last year is one, this is number two, and then we keep building on top of that and making it better and better and better. Very, very proud of it. Proud of my country. Proud of what we delivered. Proud of what the boys like Jon were just saying now about the excitement about coming down here because of what they've heard about what happened at LIV Adelaide last year.

To be honest with you, this event here from last to this year is the benchmark for LIV. We get all the other events, 13 events around the world to take a look at what we've delivered here and what Adelaide has delivered and what the state government has delivered and what the local community and the region has delivered, and you go, it can be done. Here it is. Let's work together.

**Q. Adelaide and South Australia are on the global stage this week. We've had the players go and visit some of the incredible places in South Australia. They've been to Kangaroo Island, they've been to the Bend, Cleveland Wildlife Park, wineries. How important is it to have this global platform for South Australia and Adelaide?**

PETER MALINAUSKAS: It's really important. We made a deliberate policy decision as a government some time ago to look for opportunities to invest in major events, to try and put South Australia and Adelaide on the map in a way that we haven't necessarily been in the past.

LIV we saw as a big opportunity. Here is a breakthrough event, a breakthrough tournament, and we're a state that's seeking to break through. We've got some runs on the board at the moment.

The economic impact is often the focus, filling hotel rooms, putting bums on seats on planes, having our restaurants

full. That's where lots of the focus goes, and for good reason, because we can measure that.

But the real power with these events comes from having the international media and the national media all training their focus on our city and our state, and that gives us an opportunity to tell our story, and not just the Tour's story but also the story about the Commonwealth Bank just a couple of days ago ranked the South Australian economy as the No. 1 performing in the country for the second quarter in a row, a status that we've never had before in the history of the state, amongst other really strong economic credentials.

It gives us an opportunity to engage. That's certainly what I'll be doing at every opportunity I get. And the platform that an international event of this caliber provides is exceptionally powerful, more powerful than the immediate transactional benefit, and that's what we appreciate.

We said from the outgo, and when I was making my pitch to Greg that we should host this, that what LIV will get from the South Australian government and the South Australian people is a sense that this tournament takes over the town and the state. It really provides an atmosphere that you might not get in a bigger city or a bigger state.

I think we've honored that commitment, and I think if there's doubters about that, they need only to walk the course over the course of the weekend and they'll know otherwise.

**Q. Greg, obviously LIV Adelaide has set the blueprint for what LIV wants to be and should be, and the proof is in the pudding. How do you recreate Adelaide around the other 13 markets?**

GREG NORMAN: Yeah, that's a great question. Look, every market is different because we've got to look at the different cultures that we work with. But when you look at the three specific things, you have entertainment and you have golf and you have culture.

So if you take those three ingredients everywhere you go in the world, you'll be able to figure out the right way to inject a LIV event somewhere. We as a team look at that all the time. Culture is very, very important for us. We use this as the benchmark saying look how we've dealt with the local culture within Adelaide, within South Australia and then in the more south end of the country.

Everywhere we go, we study that.

A little different in the United States because the United States obviously has a tour there that's existing. But I can



tell you in the one year that we've gone through even the United States now, there's different markets there that go, oh, we haven't had a PGA TOUR event, we would love to have one there because of what you can deliver.

Like I said in the beginning, we bring everything to the table from the players to the production to the event, so we can move it to a place and just make the adjustments we need to make from a marketing perspective to suit the culture, to suit what the state government might be doing some other place, and it works.

You know, it's hard to imagine we're basically less than one and a half years into this thing and the impact that we've had on a global basis -- you can talk about Adelaide, you can talk about the United States, you can talk about Valderrama and Spain. The impact that we've had on this in such a short period of time has been extremely powerful.

One of the things that I'm most proud of is the fact that what we've done to the game of golf and how golf is looked on as an asset class, and if it wasn't for LIV, this additional investment dollars going to the game, into the sport, would never have happened.

Very, very proud of that. These guys are very much part of all that because they have seen the value of what we can deliver, and they see the long value of what they will have in ownership in their teams, as well --

**Q. Jon, it's obviously hard to ask you about Adelaide because you weren't here last year, but I'd ask that outside of the majors, what type of event do you most like playing and why? What excites you the most outside of the majors?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, that's extremely subjective to the player. I think there's a few things that make a tournament special for somebody. Could be golf course, the design, the history of the tournament or just simply you having performed properly there.

In my case, I usually go based on atmosphere. That's why Phoenix Open has been something that's really interesting for me. That's why San Diego in the past where people have made it an atmosphere that's incredible coming down the stretch, why I keep going back to Spain as often as I can, just simply because the atmosphere I experience there is incredible, and the reason why this event is as popular as it's been.

No matter what the golf course and the golf is or the weather conditions are, when the people show up and they're more excited than you are to be here, it's what makes the tournament is so great. It's what happens in

majors. It's what happens in Ryder Cup. It's not really us; it's not really the golf. It's the spectators who come and support the game and want to be there so badly. That's what makes it something that's really enticing for me to go and perform because at the end of the day we're entertainers.

**Q. Greg, you were at the Masters last week. What was it like being back as a former pro and a golf fan? I saw you on 11 green sadly near the 1987 chip-in, but what were the golf memories like being back there?**

GREG NORMAN: It was phenomenal, to be honest with you. I went there specifically to support the boys. I wanted them to know that I was there for that reason, so I tried to get around to shake hands with each and every one of them to wish them the best.

To walk with the patrons, I've never done that before in my life anywhere in the world. I think I walked one playoff here in Australia when a friend of mine was in the Australian Masters. I walked with his family on the playoff hole.

But it was incredible. The support, the recognition, the comments that were made, it was almost unanimous for three straight days walking around with people. I had people with me, so I do have witnesses to the fact that that's what it was.

To see it and to hear it and to hear the comments they made about what's happening to the game of golf and the go that LIV has brought to the game of golf, it was very, very strong for me. It was a very powerful three days.

I must admit, Wednesday when I was going out there, I did leave the house with trepidation because I didn't know what to expect because I have a lot of great friends at Augusta National, I've got a lot of history at Augusta National, and I just didn't know what to expect. My first hour walking around, I went, whew, and I just relaxed and had a great time.

**Q. That trepidation, once you got there and felt a lot better about it, did that tell you that maybe the average golf fan's opinion is far different to the media and maybe some of the criticism around LIV?**

GREG NORMAN: A thousand percent.

**Q. Greg, flowing on from that, big picture, where is LIV and the PGA at? It's been 10 and a bit months since the framework agreement was announced, but do you have any insights that you can offer as to the process of what's going on?**

GREG NORMAN: I would love to give you insight but I don't have any. We at LIV are totally separate to that part of the negotiation. We at LIV are a standalone company being invested by the same investor interested in the game of golf.

Now, this goes back 10 minutes ago what I said to Evan was investment dollars are flowing into the game of golf for the right reasons, not for the wrong reasons. Our investor wanted to invest into LIV because he loved the opportunity of the franchise model, what he could do with it and how we can build it out on a global platform.

So me specifically, I don't know what's going on over there. I really don't want to know what's going on over there because we are so fixated on growing and developing and building out what LIV is today and looking and doing our schedule for 2025 and going into 2026. Our responsibility is to look after our people, our players, and where we want to go. I don't have an answer.

**Q. Jon, from your experience at the Masters, is there an impatience among the playing cohort to have this resolved in some way?**

JON RAHM: I really don't know. There's a lot of unknowns, I think, on everybody's side. The people that are very smart and are behind this are trying to figure out what's the best for golf. But I haven't spoken to enough players on the PGA TOUR to know what their position is, to be honest. I don't know if it's impatience or just lack of knowledge in general.

But I think we all want to see this resolved. We all want to see this resolved. Like I've said many times, we have the opportunity to take golf to the next level in the global markets, and I think if done properly we can come up with a better product for anybody, and putting golf as a bigger product in general as a worldwide sport.

**Q. Jon, as a player, what would a perfect schedule look like for you if the two parties do come together, you have a merger or framework agreement or whatever? As a player would it be 14 LIV events, half dozen PGAs, the majors, Ryder Cup? If you were telling the people making these decisions, what would a perfect one look like to you?**

JON RAHM: I don't know. That hasn't really presented itself yet, right, so I don't know. Right now obviously it's 14 LIV events that I want to play, so that, majors, Ryder Cup for sure, and then after that, yeah, there's some PGA TOUR events that if it's not conflicting with my LIV schedule I'd love to go play. I've said numerous times and I'll say it again, Palm Springs, Torrey Pines, Phoenix, LA, if

I'm allowed to be able to play PLAYERS. Those are events that if I could, I would love to play.

I'm no stranger to playing 23, 24 events a year in the past, especially with my PGA TOUR schedule and DP World Tour schedule. Yeah, I would be up to playing, and I'd still try to go play the Spanish Open and whatever I can in Spain, as well. That's just what I want to do.

Again, if given the opportunity I would try to play as many as I can within the means. I still want to perform at the right times and perform at the right tournaments.

**Q. Greg, do you see the tournament in Adelaide being the only Australian tournament you have on the LIV schedule not only over the next two years but into the future beyond that?**

GREG NORMAN: Yes, I do, honestly. I don't mind saying this. Been working very closely with the Premier and his team. They've had their viewpoints about what they would like to see going into the future, and it's all around about the partnership that we've created.

We have created a true partnership. We've touched on a few of those points and the datapoints that we're pulling out of here.

As we sit here and we negotiate, and every day is really a negotiation, to be honest with you, no matter just what our relationship is like, but everything we do for the event is a negotiation, how do we improve on it, how do we get better, how do we look into the future, how do we invest into the future, not only through VIK but dollars, and how do we -- we're sold out here basically except a few tickets on Friday and maybe a little bit of hospitality. So when you think about where we are today compared to our goals of coming out of the event last year, we've reached those. So our goal is to make sure we work in a very close collaborative effort into long-term vision about what we can do here in this country.

Has there been interest from other states? Yes, absolutely there's been interest in other states. But we were in South Australia first, the Premier took it on, the responsibility of taking on LIV right from the outset, not too sure about the result, and now because he's done that and because South Australia has done that, we've got to look at that into the future, as well, too.

**Q. Can I just get the Premier's response to that and the fact that it's here, it's Adelaide and it's nowhere else in Australia? Does that give you confidence to put even more money into this event if required going into the future?**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Look, we've got existing agreement with LIV, which we're very grateful for, which has another couple of tournaments after this one. Greg is right; in the same way that we've got the challenge with Gather Round -- South Australia took the first mover risk, but that brings with it the first mover advantage. Other people have seen the success we've been able to create, now they want a piece of it. That's life.

What you have to do is be willing to invest the effort and the energy to make sure that we make it impossible for someone to want to go elsewhere, and the way we do that is to make this event elite. We want to make sure that the commissioner and all his investors and the sponsors, we want to make sure that the players, they don't want to play anywhere else but Adelaide.

So far I think we're ticking that box, but most critically we're going to make sure that the fans' view is heard, and they are speaking with their feet. They're speaking with their hip pockets, and they're choosing to not just go to the event in Adelaide but travel to Adelaide to experience the event.

We've got to earn that right. We've got to earn that privilege. That's what we're committed to, so we don't rest on our laurels. We don't see the event's success last year and think, well, that's done and dusted. We've got to continue to evolve, we've got to continue to adapt, and that's where the partnership matters.

That's where the state government has got to look at things that we can do that aren't -- that's not necessarily just putting more money in. There are other things that we can do, but it's also working collaboratively with LIV to give this event all of the life that it has but also all of the potential to be realized, and that's what we're all about.

**Q. Similar to what you both were just saying then to Greg and the Premier, with Adelaide being here for the years to come, how do you see LIV Golf here in Adelaide evolving? Obviously we've seen the Watering Hole expand this year. Can you give south Australians a glimpse into how it will look in the years to come?**

PETER MALINAUSKAS: More people. Effectively every time tickets have gone online for sale they get sold. Last year -- I've made no secret about this. Last year, the tickets were capped. We would love to have seen that increased as we saw the demand reveal itself with people purchasing tickets.

But LIV, to their credit, decided to put the fan experience first over an above the immediate commercial opportunity

to make sure that, well, this is the first event last year, we want patrons to have an exceptional experience so they come back next year, and more tickets weren't sold.

Having experienced the event last year and learning how the course functions with that volume of people, this year there has been an increase in the investment and infrastructure. Last year there were four viewing platforms, four general admission viewing platforms. This year there's 14. There's a lot more food and beverage facilities, a lot more toileting facilities, a lot more fan engagement experience facilities to allow the capacity to grow, and of course what that means is for people like Jon, more people, more atmosphere, everything goes up a notch.

We can continue to evolve around that. But then there's also what happens off-site from Grange, and that's where the government does have a degree of responsibility making sure that interstate and overseas travelers are able to experience with the greatest of ease all the experiences that we offer within an hour's drive of where we are now: Hills, wineries but also McLaren Vale, so investing in those efforts will see the event expand into the future.

GREG NORMAN: From LIV's perspective, I'll answer my side of it. We brought on a new guy, head of events, a guy called Ross Hallett. Had 27 years of experience of doing events for IMG around the world.

Just in our first day or two of him being on the ground here, the thought process of just answering your question, what we can do into next year and the following years, he's already on that. I'm not going to tell you what they are from our perspective, but we're already starting to think about that from an internal perspective, how do we become better, how do we do this. Little things, for example, here, looking back at last year, getting people off the golf course before dark or during the dark. We only had I think 16 or 18 mobile lights. This year we have 64.

So we're making the whole process a lot easier and a lot smoother and a lot more seamless because of what the Premier is saying, we're having more and more people. The more and more people you have, you want them to enjoy it and walk away with a better experience than last year, and those are the little things that we look at and improve on each and every event, even each and every day.

**Q. Jon, you were quoted by the BBC last week saying you'd like to see the tour go to 72 holes. Can you elaborate on why you'd like to see that? For Greg, is that likely to happen? If so, when? If it's not likely to happen, why not?**

JON RAHM: I think there's a level of comfort when I say that because it's a little bit more of what we're used to seeing in golf. I came to this realization, and I think it could help a lot of fans' trust in LIV a little bit more because that's a lot of the complaints that I see from a lot of people, but I made the analogy a little bit ago of why I think we can end up with a great product. In football, European football, you have the Premier League, you have the Spanish League, you have the German League, you have Serie A, you have the Champions League, the Euro Cup, many other things. The one thing I realized is they all play under the same set of rules. While we play under most set of rules, the one key difference is 72 holes.

The only sport that I see that does it a little bit different to where they play pretty much the same and then the Grand Slams are different is tennis. Even within then, every tournament or every championship sat same set of rules. That's one of the main reasons why I believe it could help us.

But at the end of the day, LIV is a business. If it doesn't fit the product, it doesn't fit the product. I'm just a player. There's a lot of people that are a lot smarter than me that can figure it out and explain why they believe 54 holes may be better for them.

I can tell you from player experience, and I tell the people that give me that argument, if you come watch an event, you forget by Sunday that you've only played three rounds. It makes no difference. You're competing to win. You win or you don't win. By the end of the day, if I told you, oh, it was 54 holes, you really don't think about it because you're just immersed in the competition, and the competition is the same. You won going down the stretch with a one- or two-shot lead or one- or two-shot deficit, the feelings are all the same. That would be also my counter argument to that. If you haven't experienced it and haven't given it a chance, it's not fair to judge without knowing.

GREG NORMAN: I think from LIV's perspective, we're very open-minded about it, but you've got to understand there's economic impact about putting television on for 72 holes.

Right now Jon hits the nail on the head. There's no -- when you can tee up on Friday, it's a sprint to the end. There's no warm-up time period to get you -- I'm talking about from a player's perspective now. Sometimes you can have an average first round and then you come back and shoot a 64 and get yourself back into it, now you're into the weekend. If you really don't play well on Friday here, you have a hard time because the quality of play here is so high, you know when you tee it off -- you'll speak to most of the guys out there. It's a question you should

ask them. It is intense pressure on it straight away because you have to perform immediately right off the bat.

It's a great conversation to have. We will continue to have that conversation going forward. But we sit back and say, what value do we get on putting on television on Thursday. Now, go to Evan's -- how do we build out in the future? How do we get more people, as the Premier says, to the golf course? Maybe it is Thursday and you allow another 30,000 people coming in on a Thursday.

There are things that we sit back and look at to see what is the most optimal solution to make this a better and better and better event, and 72 holes is discussed.

**Q. Greg, there was a report last week that Rory McIlroy had been offered \$850 million to join LIV. He seems to have shot that down and committed himself to the PGA TOUR again. Have you or LIV ever put an offer on the table for Rory, and despite his criticism of LIV, would you welcome him to the Tour still?**

GREG NORMAN: Look, I'll make the comment if you look back over that time period of that dialogue that was going, there wasn't one comment about LIV. LIV never put an offer to him. We didn't need to make a comment about this. This is just typical white noise that gets out there in the industry.

If Rory was willing to sit down and have a conversation with us, would we be happy to sit down with him? 100 percent, no different than any other player who would be interested in coming on and playing with us.

It's understanding the facts about what LIV represents and what LIV can deliver on a global basis. It's up to you to determine it. I've sat down with one top, top PGA TOUR player in his house with another member of my team, walking through the whole process, and he was so impressed -- he said, well, that's not what we're told in the locker room. This is really impressive.

But he made the decision -- he told me up two days later and said, I've decided to stay where I'm at. I said, happy days. You made a decision on fact. If you're happier over here, fine, stay there. Your door is always open; if you want to come back and have a conversation with us, happy to do that.

**Q. Bit of a lighthearted one. The Ripper GC guys were just up on stage and they talked about how nervous they were as the hometown lads pretty much to hit the shot on the 12th. Lucas Herbert talk about how nervous he was to pick the right Watering Hole song. Jon, what are you more nervous for, the Watering Hole**

**song to hype up the crowd or to actually take the first shot on the 12th?**

JON RAHM: So there's a lot of conversation from a lot of people about what song we've picked. Apparently it's a big deal. I was not aware of that. I'm going to have to think about what I want. But yesterday while I was playing with Tyrrell, Kieran and David Puig, everybody was talking about, I've picked this song or I've picked that song. I'm playing golf; it's not like my mind is that focused on what song I'm going to be playing.

But it does help when you have the positive reinforcement of a song that you like. You just go in there with a little bit of a different feeling.

Now, in my case, it's a lot easier to pick the right song to hit a drive as hard as you can. Like I said earlier, it's a much smaller green than I thought. So you probably don't want to go let's say too high on your heart rate trying to hit a distance controlled shot with an 8- or 9-iron in a most likely windy area. You're going to have to find that balance.

But definitely more nervous about the shot than the song. If you just pick anything up, I think the crowd is going to like it no matter what.

**Q. Greg, what would your song be on the Watering Hole if you had to walk up and hype up the Aussie fans?**

GREG NORMAN: You're probably all too young for this, but AC/DC "It's a Long Way to the Top." That would be mine.

**Q. Premier, Greg mentioned before that there's constant negotiations every day with this tournament. How soon would you like to have an agreement in place that extends this tournament beyond the two years that currently exists?**

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Yeah, that's a good question. We've got an agreement that's in place, and it's going to be in place for the foreseeable future, for another couple of years yet. Are we open minded to extending that agreement, reshaping that agreement? Absolutely. But of course we'll only be doing that if we believe it's consistent with the best interest of the state.

That's ultimately what's got to inform our judgments, as of course it's got to inform LIV's judgment about what's in the best interests of LIV and golf more broadly.

But we're certainly open minded. We're certainly keen to engage because we think that this event is rapidly

becoming part of the economic story of the state, or it gives us a powerful platform as I mentioned earlier, so we're pretty open-minded about it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys so much for the time this morning, and we are so excited for this week. Thank you for hosting us, Premier, and looking forward to your performance on course, Jon.

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