

LIV Golf Adelaide

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Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
The Grange

James Sutherland

CEO, Golf Australia

Cam Smith

Captain, Ripper GC

Nick Adams

General Manager, Ripper GC

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined, of course, by our captain of Ripper GC, Cameron Smith. We are joined by James Sutherland, the CEO of Golf Australia, and we are joined by Nick Adams, the general manager of Ripper GC.

James, thank you for joining us here today. I am told that you have a very exciting announcement about Golf Australia and Ripper GC, so I'm just going to kick it over to you to tell us what the big news is.

JAMES SUTHERLAND: Thanks, everyone, for sitting in on this.

On behalf of Golf Australia, it's my absolute pleasure and with great excitement that I can confirm today that Ripper GC will take over the new principal partner responsibility for MyGolf. MyGolf is the junior program for primary school aged kids in Australia. It's a program that's been running for 10 years now. Over 220,000 kids have been through the program, and now with this announcement today, we feel that we can really reset our goals around junior golf in Australia.

Last year there were 37,000 kids that went through the program, and I think over the course of the three years that this agreement will go to, we don't see why we can't go well and truly past 50,000 participants per annum.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Nick as general manager of Ripper GC for his vision and support of what we want to do with junior golf, which is very much about inspiring kids, more Aussie kids to play golf. Simple as that, more boys and girls.

Secondly, to Cam and the Ripper GC team for getting behind this program, for believing in junior golf and all the



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possibilities that we see in the future of Australian golf. Thanks.

Q. James, Australia is obviously a massive sporting country and they really lean into team sport. What impact do you think it has on the future generation of Aussie golfers having our very first all-Aussie golf team for them to get behind and support?

JAMES SUTHERLAND: Yeah, I think we've seen that over the last couple of years. There's no doubt that the Ripper GC team being all Aussies, for all Aussie golf fans, everyone is behind them, and for kids to have that inspiration and aspiration to play more is something that's really important.

I think the other thing to add is that one of the things that I've been really impressed with in talking to the Ripper GC players is that they're absolutely passionate about junior golf. They're absolutely passionate about it, and no one more so than Cam. He's been doing it for a long time. Ever since he's turned pro, he's been giving back to the game in all sorts of ways, but particularly I think he has a passion for junior golf, and that's reflected in the way he gives back, not just with his time but in other ways, as well.

I think this just goes hand in hand with a great partnership and the way people will look up to this principal partnership with MyGolf from Ripper GC.

Q. Cam, how important was grass-roots junior golf to you growing up to getting to where you are today?

CAM SMITH: It was massive. For us back in the day, it was actually the Greg Norman Junior Golf Foundation and Golf Queensland events that I used to go or drag my parents around to. They were fortunate enough to -- or I was fortunate enough for them to follow me around, take me everywhere I needed to go and play those events, and not only that, but also just the little range sessions, the local pros getting out there, giving the kids a lesson, all that stuff I remember so fondly.

It's definitely led to where I am today, and that's why I'm so passionate about it. I want to give back to golf in Australia. I want as many kids with golf clubs as possible, and I think this is a really big step in the right direction for us.



I think this is going to be a mutually beneficial agreement here, and hopefully in years to come we just keep growing, and like James said, probably 50,000 this year would be unreal, but it doesn't really stop there. We want to keep going.

Q. Cam, every time I'm with you in Australia there's kids chasing you down with matching mullets, asking you for autographs and photographs. How seriously do you take your role in inspiring the next generation of golfers in Australia, both on and off the course?

CAM SMITH: Well, very seriously. I know I'm in a very fortunate position to be in the position I am in. Like you said, the mullets and stuff, it's cool. I'm not sure if the parents really enjoy that, but I really enjoy it.

Yeah, like I said, it's just a really fortunate spot to be in, and hopefully we can just keep doing the right thing here.

I think golf brings so many attributes to life. It can -- things like integrity and all of that stuff is learned off golf, and not only does it mean that more kids are hitting balls, it means that they're better people, which is awesome for Australia.

Q. Nick, tell us about how this partnership came together, and then what is your vision for the future of little Rippers?

NICK ADAMS: Yeah, one of the goals of the Rippers is to grow the game both globally and more importantly domestically. We want to provide an opportunity for young Australians or a pathway where they can reach that global stage the same way that Cam and the rest of the boys have.

It was great being able to work with Golf Australia and figure something out that made sense to both of us, and we hope by combining forces we're going to give all those young Australians the opportunity that want to take up golf a direct pathway in supporting the Rippers to achieve their dreams, which is play on the global stage like our guys are.

Q. Nick, do you envision this being a recruiting mechanism for the future Ripper GC golf team?

NICK ADAMS: Cam is the golf expert. If it can provide a pool of players that can learn the game at that level and then we can start identifying them along their journey, I think it's a great way to do that.

I think what's unique about team golf which we provide in LIV is that it's great to follow individuals, but when you have a team brand and there's four opportunities and

there's four spots on one team, I think it allows a young sports fan to really identify with something. So it's not just one person, it's a group. That's what we're really about is the collective, a group of people, providing that opportunity in a group setting for someone to apply their skill, which is obviously swinging a golf club.

I think if you're a kid learning a sport, that's something really to aim to and make something for those guys that's very identifiable. I'm going to play golf, I'm going to go through the junior golf programs, and one day I might be able to become a Ripper.

We're really excited about the opportunity it provides through MyGolf, working with Golf Australia, and again, just to try and grow the game both globally and more importantly with Golf Australia domestically.

Q. James, it was mentioned earlier that reunification is a bit of a buzz word in golf just on the back of some pretty positive comments out of the U.S. this morning from Jay Monahan. I'm wondering is this sort of relationship more evidence of -- I think Brooks said yesterday that LIV is part of the golf ecosystem now and it's sort of taking that on board?

JAMES SUTHERLAND: Well, personally, I mean, I don't know much about what's happening in all of those other conversations, but I think what I can say is part of our strategy and our purpose is about more Australians playing more golf. We believe if that happens, the game of golf will thrive.

Clearly competition, tournament golf is a great platform from which people can draw inspiration. So we believe in that.

We've also got a saying within our strategy that all golf is golf. We've had that for a number of years, and we believe no matter whether you're hitting a ball in a paddock, you're hitting a ball in the Australian Open or you're hitting a ball at a LIV Golf tournament, all golf is golf, and we welcome everyone as a golfer.

We've never had a different view of that. I'm not sure how things are going to evolve. We'd all need a crystal ball for that. But the truth is that all golf is golf, and what we're announcing today is something that we believe will be truly inspirational for young Australian golfers.

Q. Will it also open the door for some more conversations about the evolving nature of the Australian Open with Cam in particular, just given his comment before and all his teammates about what it should look like going forward?



JAMES SUTHERLAND: Yeah, I think the announcements over the weekend around the separation of the two events -- as my comment said at the time, it offers flexibility for us. In a funny sort of way, bringing the men's and women's together was historically a necessity that was born out of difficult times during COVID. But the separation gives us actually more flexibility now to be able to adapt to whatever may happen in world golf over the coming years.

Q. Nick, this is a little bit unique in that it's effectively a sports team branding itself on a golf program, as it were. Is the evolution of Ripper GC going to be branded on various things, whatever it might be, given that you are a sports team?

NICK ADAMS: Yeah, that's a good question. I think I go back to our role and what we're trying to achieve is just get, like every other sports team in the country, it's a very competitive landscape. We're the only professional -- we're actually the only professional sports team to come out of Australia that isn't run by an organization, and we happen to be a golf team.

But obviously in a competitive marketplace both domestically and globally, the idea is to get your brand across to as many people so they can understand what you're about and what your ethos is and what you're all about. Look, we're looking at all different types of things in order to give awareness to our guys and their amazing ability and what they do on a global stage.

But as it pertains to what we're doing with MyGolf, that is really around -- Cam has been a very big advocate of wanting to support junior golf in Australia. These guys at Golf Australia have spent 10 years building together what we think is a really good program, so it makes a hell of a lot of sense for us to join forces with them so we can get more kids swinging golf clubs and playing golf and also give them a direct pipeline to look at a brand where you've got the best golfers in Australia in one team, so give them the dream that one day they can potentially make it and be in our team.

Q. James, as Nick alluded to before, sport in Australia is a very competitive field. We're kind of oversaturated with sport at times, and that's no exception at the grass-roots level. Has it been tough getting kids into golf specifically as opposed to all the other sports that we offer here in Australia, and how are you going to manage to combat that and get kids into golf?

JAMES SUTHERLAND: I think historically it probably has been. I think golf has been seen, I think, or perceived to be an adult sport and even a grandfather sport in some

people's eyes.

I think that's changed. There are some things that have changed in golf where -- take our MyGolf, the entry level program. 37,000 kids went through the program last year. That's a record level to what we've ever seen before.

Junior membership of golf clubs in Australia went up 33 percent. Just stop and think about that. The membership of golf clubs in the junior category was up 33 percent last year. It's a phenomenal number.

That is a changing face of the game. It's a changing face in the way that kids are being welcomed on to golf courses. The flipside of it is it's a changing face in the way that kids look at golf. So their perception of the game is changing.

What I think I believe -- I know Nick believes that technology is playing a huge part in this. Kids are very dextrous when it comes to technology. They're into it. They teach us adults a lot -- certainly my kids teach me a lot about technology. But the reality is that golf plays into technology beautifully. You can learn to play the game for free on YouTube, but also you can create your own content. It's fun. You can watch real golf or you can watch fun golf, and kids love that, as well. I think that's all part of a whole lot of things that are conspiring together to see the face of the game change and the inspiration for kids to have to play the game.

I think people like Cam and what he's done and what he's achieved over the last four or five years has also changed the face of the game. Welcoming kids to the game in the way that he does, it makes them feel like it's their space. It's incredibly powerful.

Q. Looking historically, as well, we have seen golfers maybe in upper class or an elite level sport. How are you planning to make it more accessible for all kinds of kids across the country?

JAMES SUTHERLAND: That's absolutely 100 percent part of the mythology or perception that golf isn't accessible. There are more people in Australia today that play golf off course than on course, and again, this is part of the changing face. Yes, there's a perception that 18 holes of green grass golf at a private club is what golf is. It's not that. It's going to a driving range. It's mini golf. It's a simulator. It's 18 holes of green grass golf at a private. It's all golf. That's part of the changing face of the game.

The game is more accessible than it's ever been, and that's why right now we've got 3.8 million adult Australians who hit golf balls last year. That's one fifth of the adult population of Australia, and that number and that

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

percentage has never been so high.

Q. Just interested to see how the inner workings on the PGA Tour of Australasia pathways, the DP World Tour and stuff, have you given any thought about how this connects with that at some point, obviously pathways with the juniors with LIV and then the professional guys later on? Is this sort of the first step in maybe bridging the gap there?

JAMES SUTHERLAND: I don't think that we're that far ahead. So MyGolf as you know is a junior program, entry level, primary school aged kids, boys and girls. What happens next is there's a progression to on-course golf and perhaps membership and then maybe competitions. That fits within our current structure amongst the states' junior competitions, all of that. Then you've got the sort of more senior amateur competitions and then that flows through into the pathway.

I think this MyGolf announcement today is very much at the entry level, and there's four or five layers above that that I think has -- Nick, you're probably beyond our contemplation at the moment, even though we do say that ideally these kids that come through the program will one day in the future go from little Rippers to being big Rippers.

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