

LIV Golf Adelaide

Thursday, 12 February, 2026
Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
The Grange

Scott O'Neil

CEO, LIV Golf

Peter Malinauskas

Premier, South Australia

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, and welcome, everyone. Moments ago, gates opened for the first round of competition of LIV Golf Adelaide 2026, which begins with a shotgun start at 11:45 a.m. today.

We're pleased to be joined today by Peter Malinauskas, Premier of South Australia, and Scott O'Neil, CEO of LIV Golf. Gentlemen, welcome.

Premier, since 2023, South Australia and the city of Adelaide have really embraced LIV Golf and quickly made this event the most anticipated on the league's schedule. What is it about LIV Golf and this community that has made this partnership so special?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Look, I think it starts with the word "partnership." From the outset, we made clear to LIV that they should choose to come to Adelaide because there would be an all-in approach on behalf of the government to make it rich and fulfill the potential that we always thought was there.

I was telling the story the other night that the only moment of nervousness I really had was when the tickets went on sale the first time for the first event because I had an inkling that it was going to go well, but you never know until you know, and there had been a bit of controversy in the lead-up to it. But in that first moment when tickets went on sale and basically sold out, I thought, yeah, this is going to be good.

Ever since then we've worked together collaboratively across teams to make sure that the product for people who come and consume LIV Golf in Adelaide is enjoyable.

Word of mouth is more powerful than anything else, I think, in the modern era, and because it's been a genuinely good time for people who come and experience it, they tell everybody else, and we've seen every year ticket sales

grow, and that's what I'm particularly excited about this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Scott, what does it mean to have such strong support from the Premier and from local government and community and local partnerships?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Thanks, Allen. It's wonderful to be here, to be back. What a difference a year makes.

Well, I would tell you that there are several things that make a world-class event, and it starts with a public-private partnership. We do have a tenacious partner here who advocates very strongly on behalf of his constituents and South Australia, and it's been incredible.

I don't think you can create and build a world-class event without such a strong partnership with the local government. It also takes marketing partners. We have several of them here. And maybe most importantly, dare I say it, is the fans.

This is an Aussie event, period, end of sentence. It is fun. It is lively. It's a celebration of sport. It's a celebration of culture and music and fashion and everything that's right about being right here in southern Australia. It's been absolutely wonderful.

Q. Speaking of the fans, this week the event is expecting to welcome even more fans than previous years. Last year announced over 100,000 fans over three days and expecting to set new records for 2026. A significant portion of those fans will not only be from the local area but will be traveling from out of state and abroad to be here. What does that statement mean to both of you?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Well, it's essential and a benchmark because we're very clear as a government where we make investments in major events. We want to see a dividend economically. That is a clear KPI for us, certainly one that our Treasury officials pour over pretty closely, as you'd expect.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

What we're seeing this year, Thursday, when that got announced obviously is cream because that wasn't something we immediately anticipated. When it got announced as far as the state government was concerned, that's only good news because that's just another day more tickets to be sold.

Interestingly, though, ticket sales are up across the weekend year on year. What we have seen in the past is around about 37 to 40 percent of all the tickets sold go to people from outside of South Australia, and that's really high proportionately. Like for any major event in the country, if you're selling that percentage of tickets to people outside of the state, you're on to something.

The good thing is beyond looking at the ticket sales data, you can also look at other KPIs, and the one that we pay particular close attention to is hotel occupancy, and hotel occupancy across the weekend is up on the same LIV Golf weekend last year, quite substantially. In fact, specifically, and there's still a few days to run yet, over two and a half thousand extra hotel room nights have already been looked across this weekend versus LIV Golf last year. So that's not across what we would normally see; that's up on what was already a record for this event last year.

So that speaks to the fact that more Australians and some people from overseas, but more Aussies from outside of South Australia are choosing to spend their hard-earned dollars to come to South Australia to watch this event, which says a lot about the event but also says a lot about the experience they get when they get here.

Q. The Grange has been the home for LIV Golf Adelaide since 2023, including some of the most memorable moments in the league's young history. It was announced late last year that this would be the final year for LIV Golf Adelaide at the Grange before moving to Kooyonga Golf Club in 2027. Can you speak on what this venue has meant to this event and to the league, and then secondly, can you both please share updates on plans for the future of LIV Golf Adelaide beginning next year at Kooyonga?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Sure. First off, I just wanted to publicly thank the Grange and the leadership and the members. It is not always easy. We take over a course for about a month, and there's a lot of wear and tear that goes into a course for sure.

We've been handled with class and dignity and hard work and true meaning of partnership, so thank you to the Grange for a wonderful experience here. You've set the tone and you made it happen, and we'll be forever grateful.

We're very excited about next year at Kooyonga, and even more excited in 2028 and beyond as we go to North Adelaide.

We're also, just to -- I think this might even be news. We'll be playing at Kooyonga March 18 through the 21st next year, and we're going to put tickets on sale Monday. The venue is a bit smaller, and so I would say if this is the type of event you want to plan for and go, now would be the time to dig in and get those tickets.

I know we'll have plenty of feedback from fans. We appreciate it. Keep it coming. But here is your advance warning. Monday would be a good day to lock in tickets for 2027.

Kooyonga has a reputation of being one of the top courses in Adelaide. It's spectacularly beautiful, and we're very excited about our time there.

I actually had the chance to golf with some of the leadership of Kooyonga. I apologize for my drives. I still love you and hope you forgive me. But nonetheless, a wonderful group. They're as excited to have us as we're excited to have them.

I had the good fortune to tour North Adelaide with the Premier yesterday, and it is a beautiful canvas. It'll be a Greg Norman design, so a little nod to our past founder, one of our founding CEOs here with Greg Norman. We're really excited about that.

We spoke with several people who are excited about the changes coming. So it's pretty special to be able to build a venue that will not only be a celebration of the community, provide a world-class golf course, and continue to increase tourism and those incredible hotel beds and hopefully fill restaurants for years to come and create a venue for LIV that we're hoping can host 40 plus thousand people a day, and once again, shine the world spotlight on the incredible city of Adelaide and South Australia.

Q. If the dates hold, that would be the week after the Women's Australian Open. Is that going to make potentially a nice double for Adelaide next March?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Obviously we're really looking forward to the Women's Australian Open this year. We're only a few weeks away from that now, as well. We're really excited about that coming back to the venue that I think it always should have been in, in Adelaide.

We had the Australian Women's Open for some time. It had a lot of momentum behind it, and unfortunately the



state lost it, and that's life. But now to get it back, we're really excited about it, particularly the trajectory that women's about golf is on around the world but particularly here in Australia with some extraordinary players for people to get excited about.

Next year, we want to work through that with golf Australia as best we can to get the best outcome for both of us, but there is certainly a synergy there that is worth keeping an eye on.

I have been rather forthright in wanting to make South Australia a destination for people who want to experience good golf tournaments, and the reason I think we can do it better than others -- we've got the good courses, but other parts of the country have got good courses, too. That's just obvious truth.

But when a big golf tournament comes to a town of 1.7 million people, you can feel something is happening, whereas in a city of 5 million people, whatever. There is an energy when people go into the city on Saturday night and they go out to a hospitality venue, chances are they're going to be bumping into someone that was here during the day, and that just sort of creates its own sort of experience. To be able to potentially do that with a close adjacency to the Women's Open for the 2027 event is potentially an exciting proposition.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Can I just add, as well, just had breakfast with Golf Australia this morning, and the facts and stats on golf growth in South Australia and Australia are absolutely incredible. Kind of most important to me was to see a 200 percent increase in youth golf participation right here in South Australia, and the record numbers joining golf clubs and 40 percent of them being 35 years and younger.

What we are doing together is actually working. This is a game that matters. This is a game that builds the types of values, I think, that make a real impact on the world, and we're seeing results.

Q. Can I follow through on that. Does that mean other LIV events will change in date, as well?

SCOTT O'NEIL: You might have heard me mention tenacious before. We've had a schedule set for some time, and the big boss over here said we're going to go to March, so we're in March.

So yes, that will cause a ripple effect and cause some change in the schedule going forward.

But when you have a showcase event, a signature event, our preeminent event, and I believe weather -- or were you

just being a bully?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: It's worth talking about. We've always liked the idea of March, and we've been in discussions with LIV, obviously, and we're very grateful, and it speaks to the partnership.

SCOTT O'NEIL: I'm just kidding.

PETER MALINAUSKAS: Here's the truth. Scott said, I just want to see an AFL game. I said, in that case we're going to be doing it in March. That's the Australian Football League.

SCOTT O'NEIL: I grew up watching it.

PETER MALINAUSKAS: There you go. We don't need helmets. (Laughter.)

So yes, doing it in March is important for us. It fits strategically in the calendar right well. Weather is a variable. Like the weather this weekend looks really good, but it's going to be pretty hot on Sunday. Just mathematically, your odds improve in March. Of course there are never any guarantees, but strategically for the state, we think March works well.

It also speaks to a time of the year where the anticipation has started to grow with the Masters. The golf season globally is more underway in March than it is at this time of year. So there was a range of factors that informed, I guess, our request, and we're really glad that LIV has facilitated it.

The other thing that's really important is the fact that we're getting the dates out now. This is the longest lead period that we've had yet, and that matters, particularly for next year, given that Kooyonga is going to be more constrained on the tickets, so we want people to be able to plan, book their accommodation, take time off, go down to KI, which is the KI -- The Cliffs will be open, which you guys have been great in reporting on. The Cliffs will be open by then, so play a round of golf in Kangaroo Island. Spend a week there and then come to LIV, or vice versa. There's a lot of upside by doing it early and doing it in March.

Q. Premier, over 100,000 people expected, same kind of numbers as the national open for golf, which is amazing. Great job by you guys. Gathered round all this other momentum that's building, on a personal note, what's it like to be so supported by your constituents, if you will, compared to maybe other states at the moment? Do you feel pride in that?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: I absolutely feel proud of the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

state, right, because there is an energy and a pride associated with the fact that when we put on these events, we put them on to a level that is genuinely world class.

Now, if punters -- you put all the infrastructure up, but if punters don't turn up, it doesn't have the energy, and crowds make events. South Australians have turned up at these major events in record numbers, event after event.

The BP Grand Final for the Supercars, that had more people there on the Sunday of that race than was at the MCG for the AFL Grand Final, by a margin. The crowd numbers we've seen for gather around this, the TDU crowds continue to be strong. People turn up because we enjoy each other's company.

For me, sport, now more than ever, has currency because it is the great unifier. Across this weekend, there will be a lot of high-net-worth individuals here, and there will be a lot of people coming from regional suburban South Australia, all together, walking the golf course as one. You'll see representation of multicultural South Australia. You'll see different age demographics. The number of women buying tickets has been growing year on year.

Sport just has this thing about bringing people together, and I think the community at large want that now more than ever. Let alone the fact that players go out and put on a good show.

So yes, I am proud of the fact that the state is buzzing, that the rest of the country is looking at us differently, and that's something I think we should seek to continue to enjoy.

SCOTT O'NEIL: We should also add, too, Adelaide is going to be showcased to 950 million homes around the world. This is a commercial, and it's no surprise -- at least for me, no surprise experiencing the hospitality, the smiling faces, the drive to service. When you come here, you feel like you're home.

Q. Who do you think is going to win?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: I just had a fan-boy moment. I went in the clubhouse just very quickly, and the first person I saw was this young fella by the name of Elvis Smylie. I literally just bumped into him, and I felt like a bit of a goose because I asked for a selfie, which he obliged.

But I want to put that one away because he is a star on the rise, and something tells me there will be a lot of excitement about him over the weekend, particularly given a win on debut with Rahmbo breathing down his neck. Pretty extraordinary performance.

But I'm a big -- obviously all things Rippers I love. I love Leish. I've made no secret about that. I think Leish is an extraordinary golfer. He had a great win I think last year in Miami, from memory, and I was sort of watching Leish very closely in the U.S. Open. I was so glad to see him back in that field.

But I think if Elvis won and put himself on a trajectory to get a Masters qualification, that would be pretty extraordinary to see.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Yeah, I do root local just for great storylines. Elvis was extraordinary. He's an extraordinary young man. I think that would be really fun.

Lucas Herbert has played some incredible golf. Tough first round, but played some incredible golf yesterday. Cam's game is coming back in full force. So I think you'll have some hopefully Ripper rips through this crew here.

You're just up against a hell of a field, and Jon Rahm is hungry and charging. Bryson, Joaco, this is a very, very strong tough field. Thomas Detry, one of our newer players, played extraordinary last week. You've got a really fun full field. We'll have some great competition today.

Q. Scott, players like 23-year-old Elvis Smylie seem to resonate with lifelong golfers as much as people just picking up a club for the first time. Why do you think young elite players are able to connect with such a wide range of golfers?

SCOTT O'NEIL: You know, we've been really fortunate. If you look at -- when I came in, the narrative was a little bit around LIV Golf is a bunch of aging veterans or aging stars, and I thought, yeah, Bubba Watson and Phil Mickelson, they're certainly later on in their career. As a young man, getting to watch them and now getting to know them and see them lead, and Sergio Garcia wanting to grow and nurture this next generation, it's quite a gift to have them.

Then you fast forward to today and you have the last two U.S. Amateur champs Josele Ballester and Michael La Sasso; who's widely considered the best prospect to come out of Ireland since Rory with Tom McKibbin; Caleb Surratt is a hell of a player; Elvis Smylie clearly can play.

We are starting to get to an en masse of really, really young strong core of talent, and dare I say, some future major winners in our midst. It's really exciting.

How and why Elvis can connect and some other players do have this incredible ability and charisma and connection,

and in many ways when you're looking out at a golfer, you want to at least aspire or dream to think you can do what they do. I cannot do what they do.

Watching Elvis and his poise and his character and his confidence is pretty special.

Q. Elvis is young, he's hip, incredibly talented. He only lacked one thing, which was a PGA TOUR card. With the amount of upside he's shown and he's suddenly on the verge of major status, is he the ongoing ideal recruiting example?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Yeah, we haven't been too shy about this being a place for young talent. If I were -- I'm a dad of four girls. If I were a dad of a son who was an extraordinary golfer - both impossible - but if I were, I would say to them, to my son, what an opportunity.

You mentioned Leish and Herby and Cam. Pretty good people to mentor you. This is how you dress. This is how you travel. This is what you eat. This is how you prepare your body. This is how you take care of yourself. Here's how I keep my mind clean. Here's what I work on on the range. If they don't open their mouths and they don't say a word, what incredible examples to follow.

And they do, and they engage. It's fun. Golf is the loneliest sport in the world. If you're Tom McKibbin and you're Caleb Surratt and you wake up and your practice round is with Tyrrell Hatton and Jon Rahm, every week, and they're talking all the time about the course and the game and how they prepare themselves, I don't think there's a better place in the world for young talent to come than here at LIV.

Q. Just on the future of the tournament, how confident are you that the Kooyonga course will be a good replacement for Grange, and is there any more certainty about whether North Adelaide will be ready by 2028?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Want me to take the first part? The first part is it's an extraordinary golf course. Kooyonga is one of the elite golf courses in Australia and a preeminent golf course in South Australia. Several of our players have played, love the course. It's narrow. It's tree-lined. It's a hair difficult. And I think a tremendous test for our players.

PETER MALINAUSKAS: One of the things about Kooyonga, apart from the course itself, which is insanely good, in terms of for the spectator, it's more constrained, so we won't necessarily get the same number of people that are able to come in, but for the people that do, there's more vantage points because it's more hilly and undulating, so

the ability for the spectator to get a really good view when they've got a grounds pass improves a little bit, which we're excited about.

But in terms of North Adelaide, so construction is set to start in April. We've worked really closely with the golf course designer and the golf course operator through the council and now the golf club, the North Adelaide Golf Club, which has a portion of regular users there, to take them on the journey here, but all works are set to start in April with a view of getting two growing seasons in in advance of the 2028 year.

There is a timeline that's going to be -- it's ambitious, but everything thus far is on track, and we're really excited about it.

There is no other city in the country that has a golf course in it. In the city. Except for Moore Park. Is it Moore Park? They're turning it into -- nine holes. What's the rest of the use for, housing or something?

So in Sydney, they've got a golf course in the city and they're halving it, which I'm grateful for, because it will mean that we're the only place in the country that's got a golf course in the city, and mind you with some pretty spectacular views. I was showing Scott yesterday.

Once we take that golf course and turn it into an elite golf course, it'll be a legacy for the state forever. 49 weeks of the year, except for one week of the year for you guys, one week of the year for the Women's Australian Open and maybe another tournament here or there, we've got eyes on the Aussie Open, and the rest of the time it's the people of South Australia paying public golf course prices for a course that will be at the standard that other members have to pay thousands of dollars a year to get access to.

I think that's magnificent. Yes, I'm copping the arrows and the bullets from some people, but when it's all done and dusted and we cut that ribbon, we're going to have the world's best golf courses in our city with a fan experience that is unparalleled, and then as soon as it's packed down, the people of South Australia will be able to pay at a public golf course price, and the people in Sydney who won't be able to play in Moore Park anymore, they can come and play in Adelaide, too, except we're going to charge you like a Warrnambool, and that's the truth. There's going to be a South Australian taxpayer price, and then there's going to be a rest-of-the-country price, and we're going to charge as much as we can get away with.

I just think that makes sense.

Q. Another question on the future of the tournament.

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

Given there have been reports of the organization lacking profitability, defections of stars, do you think that young talent like Elvis Smylie will help sustain it and are the key for the future?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Yes.

I'm just teasing you. Yeah, we've had a -- it's a wonderful time to be in professional golf. There's certainly a lot of movement and quite a bit of action, and we have advocated for free agency in golf since day one of LIV.

Being able to have a field of 57 players and lose a couple is perfectly fine. I have such affinity and affection for our legends of the game and the superstars, Bryson, Dustin, Cam, Jon Rahm. It's a pretty amazing roster of stars.

I'm equally intrigued by this emerging young core of stars, yeah. I think we're in as good a hands as we've ever been. Strength of field is as good as it's ever been. I think that's only going to continue.

Q. Are you ready to potentially be dethroned as the most vibey tournament coming in March because South Africa is gunning for it?

PETER MALINAUSKAS: I am concerned about this. I won't lie. First thing is the last time I saw the Springboks play, I was very glad the Wallabies won. It doesn't feel like I get to say that very regularly, though, about the Wallabies lately.

We love the fact that we've got the best LIV tournament in the world, certainly in terms of crowd numbers. But I can't tell you how excited I am that we've got some competition coming our way.

South Africa is not too dissimilar to Australia. Here is a market that has produced some of the world's best golfers, and here is a market that's been underserved, frankly, by the PGA forever.

South Africa and Australia don't get the world's best golfers, not for LIV. Plain and simple. Jon Rahm, Bryson DeChambeau, Dustin Johnson, Sergio Garcia, you name it, these guys aren't playing in Australia, not for LIV.

Similarly South Africa, and your repertoire for contribution to world golf is as proud as ours. I will be cheering for big crowds in South Africa, just as long as you're one person less than us.

Q. Do you have any advice for hosting a first tournament of this caliber in South Africa, because we just want some advice maybe, but don't tell anyone I

asked.

PETER MALINAUSKAS: You don't need advice from em. I was in South Africa the first time for the 2010 World Cup. It was a whole 'nother unique event. It's an amazing country.

The only thing I'd say to South Africans is buy tickets because if you buy a ticket, you will not be let down by the product. It is different. Walking around a LIV Golf event with a shotgun start and the way the whole thing operates, the atmosphere that's created, if there is a crowd there, everything looks after itself. So buy tickets and enjoy it, and I promise you'll buy another one for the next day and the next year and so on.

SCOTT O'NEIL: We've had a wonderful experience in terms of tickets sold there so far. For the first time ever, we've slowed down, so we've actually put them on hold four times just to try to slow down the action. But we are going to cut it off at 90,000, so you will retain your championship for one year. They are coming like a freight train. They're already talking about '27.

PETER MALINAUSKAS: I wanted 90,000 the first year, and you put a cap on the tickets then.

SCOTT O'NEIL: That's what I mean. We're going to keep it at 90 for the first year. I just came from South Africa, I mentioned to the Premier yesterday. Look, I have a really growth mindset. I don't have a scarcity mindset. I have that with life. I have that with golf. I have that with LIV, and I have that with our events.

You have this opportunity, and just as long as we stay mission driven and our mission is to grow the game around the world and a healthy competition makes me very happy.

Q. A number of players have been asked about the change in rankings points this year. The sentiment seems to be it's a welcome first step but it's still not quite fair. Will you push for a better deal this year? Is this agreement just for this season, or where does the future lie with that?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Yeah, we're so grateful to be welcomed into the golf family officially. That's first and foremost. It's very nice, especially you have a board with two -- the commissioner of the PGA TOUR is on the board and the CEO of the European Tour is on the board. Arguably those are two that would have a bit to lose if you have a scarcity mindset, if you will, by our being recognized publicly.

So to be able to get to that point, what a tremendous nod



to what LIV Golf has built, is building, and where it's heading in the future.

They're led by Trevor Immelman, the chairman, a former Masters champion, South African great, their favorite son. He's been a wonderful leader and champion in the face of quite a bit of difficulty and scrutiny, and I think he's done an extraordinary job in pulling the board together.

For us, though, world ranking points, we're a nice recognition and a great step forward, and our focus is on making sure that as many of these young talented players that we have and these established superstars and these kind of solid-core veterans get the opportunity to play on the world's biggest stage, and that's the four majors.

Q. Is it just for this season? Will you push for a better deal next year? Where does that sit?

SCOTT O'NEIL: I've learned over time that sometimes the best negotiations are behind the scenes and not in front of the cameras. So we're just at this point just publicly really grateful for where we are.

Q. Mr. Premier, we know what your Watering Hole song is because you've come on the podcast, so we appreciate that. "Blue Sky Mine" by Midnight Oil, nice choice. I pivot to Scott. What would your Watering Hole song be, and how excited are you for the party hole this weekend and its impact on the tournament?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Walk-up song would be "All I Do is Win." And yes, very excited for the Watering Hole. It's one of the special spots and moments in all of sport. For those fans out there, hopefully you're reading, listening or seeing this, it's worth its weight in gold to go visit. There's nothing quite like it anywhere I've seen.

Q. It's also time for you to be a guest on the podcast.

SCOTT O'NEIL: I'm in. Yes. Allen, Laura, let's make it happen. Let's do it while I'm here.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports