

LIV Golf Singapore

Wednesday, 12 March, 2025

Republic of Singapore

Sentosa Golf Club

Smash GC

Brooks Koepka

Graeme McDowell

Talor Gooch

Jason Kokrak

Press Conference



PRESENTED BY



GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, obviously it's a very exciting city. Obviously an international business hub and lots of great potential partners for a tour like LIV. Like you said, I've been coming here for probably the best part of 15 years, back in the Barclays Singapore Open days. I've had some success on this golf course in the past, and like the boys said, it's a super quality golf course, potentially one of the best courses in Asia. It's a phenomenal venue for LIV Golf. Like I say, it's just an international business center and obviously an emerging market for golf. Glad to be here.

Q. Jason, how does having two Singapore champions in the field this year give you an opportunity to post a score this week?

JASON KOKRAK: Yeah, obviously Brooks and Gooch have won here. Graeme is in some great form right now. I've had a little bit of success here. Finished fifth or sixth here the first go-around, didn't play as well last year, so looking forward to this year. The greens are impeccable, probably the fastest greens we've played this year, and looking forward to a tough test.

Q. What's the Smash vibe like for this week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Vibe has been actually pretty good. We haven't played as well as we would have liked. That's pretty obvious. Look, you can't say it's due to hard work; everybody has been doing what they're supposed to do, and essentially the results are going to come.

We have not played to our potential. I know Graeme played pretty solidly the last week, but I've seen the way he's hit the ball the last month or so, and it's been impressive. I see what he's doing, Gooch is working hard, and J is doing the exact same, he's working hard. I've been terrible, but I feel like I'm definitely playing a lot better than what the results are. It's just sometimes that happens. That's golf.

Counting four scores, it's difficult if you get two guys that don't play well on the same day. It's very difficult and we get behind the 8-ball pretty quick as a team.

I was pretty proud of the way everybody battled in the

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome team Smash GC. We've got Jason Kokrak, Graeme McDowell, captain Brooks Koepka, and Talor Gooch. Welcome, guys. Brooks, you're the defending champion this week at LIV Golf Singapore. Can you walk us through your win here last year and what brought out your best that week.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I just think it's a good golf course. I think it challenges a bunch of different aspects of your game. You've got to drive it well out here, position yourself really nicely, and these greens are so good. You pretty much know if you've made -- anything inside eight feet, I'd say you really need to make it, otherwise you're going to be losing strokes to the field.

But it's a good golf course. It's a good test. It's nice to finally play a tough golf course.

Q. Talor, you won back here at Sentosa Golf Club in 2023 as part of that incredible season you had. Does returning to a course where you've had success before, does that give you that confidence to really kick start your season this year?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, I mean, like Brooks said, it's one of the best courses we play all year. I like the sights, the lines of the place. It feels comfortable. It kind of -- I think it fits a ball striker's -- it's fit for a guy who's a good ball striker out here. It's nice being back at a place where I've had success and see if we can kind of get things kick-started.

Q. Graeme, you've been coming to Singapore and competing here for several years now. What is it about Singapore that stands out to you, and how have you seen golf develop here over time, especially since LIV Golf has been hosting events here?



... when all is said, we're done.®

second round last week. Me and J and Graeme, we played together the first round, and me and J did not have a good opening round. But to be a pro's pro and watch J go out and go fire, I think, 5-under in the second round, that's what you're supposed to do. We set ourselves way too far back, but at the same time, it's always nice to see guys rebound properly.

Q. This is quite a tight golf course. How do you plan to play it?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't know. I think it's different for everybody, the way you've got -- Gooch can work it both ways. I primarily fade it and these two draw it, so we probably see holes differently. You've got to attack the par-5s out here, and there's definitely a few par-4s you can take advantage of where you can hit driver and give yourself a wedge or lay back with 5-wood, a longer iron and kind of have a mid-iron into the green and play it a little safer. It all depends on wind, hole location, all these different types of things.

Q. Brooks, I wanted to ask you about your putting. You lead the league in strokes gained putting. You haven't changed putters. I don't know if you and Jeff are working on something specific, or do you feel like you're just putting the way you usually do? Obviously it's early in the season.

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't know, I kind of find that hard to believe, to be honest with you. I didn't putt very good in Saudi. I don't think anybody did. Australia I putted well. Hong Kong I think I made one putt outside -- I think those stats are a little skewed.

But we're doing our own stats, so I haven't looked at them exactly. I'll get a report here the end of this week and see where we're at. But I feel good. My whole game feels good, just the results haven't been there.

But that's why this will be our seventh round in the daylight, so I think we're all looking forward to moving forward and trying to play some good golf.

Q. What's been the most surprising thing about these first three events from a team standpoint? You kind of referenced the slow starts. Has it been that? Has it been something else that you can kind of pinpoint?

GRAEME McDOWELL: I mean, I think we have very high expectations for what Smash GC are capable of. I don't think there's really any one thing in particular. I don't think there's really any one thing in particular. I think as a four we just haven't played consistently well. I think all four of us have showed signs. The games are there. It's just a

case of putting it together.

It's early in the season, even though LIV is a short season, so you can't really hang around too much, either. We come into this week highly motivated. We've got two guys that have won the last two times we've been here, so it definitely goes without saying that we are very focused this week and looking to improve on past performances the last few weeks, which shouldn't be difficult to do.

Q. Talor, do you rattle any cages in terms of the team concept? Is there anything you do or do you talk about it or is it just like it'll iron itself out at some point?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, like Brooks said, everyone sees the hard work we're all putting in. We all know that good golf is coming. It's just this game sometimes doesn't reflect what's actually happening. You've got to be patient. Personally I think the first three events I think were the three worst finishes in the last three years of my LIV career. Hopefully I got the bad golf out of the way early and it's all up from here.

Q. All four scores counting, that would make it a little bit easier to play catch up, but in realty does it make it easier?

JASON KOKRAK: We haven't played any courses that you can play catch-up like that. This is one of them this week.

Q. Brooks, you lead the LIV Tour in terms of victories. You've got five, and you won twice last year, but you couldn't carry on that form into the majors last year. Are you going to do anything consciously to try and translate that into victories this here at the majors?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't really focus on trying to win. I just go do what I've got to do, make sure my game is sharp coming around the four majors.

Yeah, last year I thought was a pretty down year. I didn't think it was good. The major performances weren't there. I never really felt like I was in complete control of my golf ball from tee to green. This year I feel a lot better all striking-wise, short game-wise, putting-wise. Typically I'm a slow starter. I've never gotten off any season I've played professionally to a hot start. Usually it takes a couple rounds just to get going. But we're running out of time here for Augusta, so something better change.

Q. Just coming to a golf course where you've won before, does that give you confidence?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't think so. I think it's just familiarity. I wouldn't say confidence. Golf can change. You see guys all the time, they miss the cut and they go win the next week. Golf is a crazy game where you could do what me and Gooch have done the last year and finish last place. That's how golf goes. You've got to be lucky to win, first off, and sometimes things don't go your way, and then sometimes you can just get flat-out beat.

But I would say it's nice to come to a course that you're familiar with, but like I said, I think this is the best course we've played thus far, so this will actually really be the first one where we're tested where our games are at instead of more of a wedge and putting competitions.

Q. When results aren't really going your way, does it help that you're in a team -- does the team format make it easier to go through these difficult periods of time and try to figure things out?

BROOKS KOEPKA: To a certain extent, yeah. We can rely on each other a little bit so you're not getting down, but on the flipside I feel like I've let everybody else down. Instead of letting me and Rick down and my coaches, I feel like I've let three other guys and their caddies and their coaches and everybody else down.

You can look at it that way, but it's hard for me to look at it that way, especially over the last three weeks, because I know everybody is trying and they're doing their best and they're working, and it's very difficult to look at somebody when you see the effort that they're putting in on a daily basis.

Look, golf is a crazy game. Everybody who's up here has definitely gone through their struggles. But yeah, it's just about trying to, hey, I see a little bit of this, I see a little bit of that, you're doing something a little different. Or just patting you on the back, hey, come on man, we got you, things like that. But I think everybody up here has, as Graeme said, high expectations. We know what we can do.

Three tournaments aren't going to make or break our year, but we've got a lot of road in front of us.

GRAEME McDOWELL: I think that's one of the very unique things about LIV is the team format. At the end of the day, it's a very individual game. All I can do is control my ball, same as these four guys sitting up here.

You do feel like if you don't play well, you let your team down to a certain extent. Back on the other tours in the world, it's just you and your caddie and your coach or whatever. It's a very individual kind of ownership of maybe

not playing well. Out here it's a little bit different. You look at the other three guys and you're trying to help and you're trying to grind and I feel like you're nearly more motivated, you get a chance to pick the brains of -- you've got the best major player of the last 15 years, you get to play practice rounds with him, pick his brain, watch him play, get inspired by how good he is and the other two guys around you, as well. I think it drives you on.

There's definitely a combination of it's tougher, but at the same time, you feel like you have a team around you to help motivate, inspire, keep you grinding.

Q. Jason, you're in the middle of a three-week run and I think you've got a chance of Open qualification next week in Macau. I wondered your thoughts on your form going into that next week and then your thoughts on the opportunity that you're getting to be able to play for Open qualifying.

JASON KOKRAK: Yeah, I mean, as these guys said, we're all working hard. We've striving to play the best golf we can for ourselves and for our team. I think this week looking into next week, obviously the key this week is Sentosa, the LIV Golf event this week. But we're just trying to day by day get better and better.

I think with the work we've put in, I'm starting to feel better and better with the ball-striking. The putter is heating up, so I'm looking forward to this week. I had a solid showing last year in Macau, so looking forward to competing against some of these guys for those Open spots next week.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, obviously it's a great opportunity next week in Macau to have three Open Championship spots. Especially for me with it being Royal Portrush, my hometown, there's a little bit of extra motivation there.

Obviously the focus is on this weekend. It's a very, very important weekend and then we'll turn our attention to Macau next week, but for me, I feel like I'm starting to feel more comfortable with what I'm trying to do out here. I feel like the first couple of seasons I really didn't have a purpose. I didn't really know what my purpose was.

I'm really starting to kind of see the light again as pathways to these majors start to emerge again. Small, but there is light at the end of the tunnel for sure.

To me, I feel like my purpose -- the biggest picture, I guess, I feel like the first couple seasons you were so focused every week on just in the now, when I felt like most of my career there was always something else out there

that you were working towards, which kind of helped nearly numb the present and get you kind of cranking and pushing forward.

I love being in a team like this where I feel like there's a bigger purpose, something bigger to play for, and obviously looking to try and get back into a couple of the majors, which would be amazing.

Q. Brooks, there's been a bit of expectation about your future with some reports saying that you want to return to the PGA TOUR. Could you just clear the air about that situation and whether there's any truth to these reports?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, Fred texted me after, I guess, the comments came out. I don't know when it was. Sometime last week. Yeah, everybody seems to have their own opinion and no one asks me.

I talked to Fred quite a bit, but we don't go too much into detail about what's going on. Like I've said before, I'm not in those rooms. I've got a contract obligation out here to fulfill, and then we'll see what happens.

I don't know where I'm going, so I don't know how everybody else does. Right now I'm just focused on how do I play better, how do I play better in the majors, how does this team win, and then we'll figure out next year and how to play better again. It's the same thing. It's just a revolving cycle.

I've got nothing. Everybody else seems to know more than I do.

Q. Graeme, I wanted to ask you about the hole at Portrush that was named after you --

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, that was obviously a great honor. There's 36 holes in Portrush. You have the Dunluce course, which is the championship course, and the Valley Course, which is kind of the course I grew up on. When they redid the Dunluce for the Open Championship in 2019, they took a couple holes off the Valley Course to rebuild two holes, and then the Valley Course has had a complete redo by the R&A. They actually picked one of the holes on the new redo on the Valley Course to name after me. It was obviously a great honor. I figured you had to be dead to do that stuff. But I don't think I'm dead yet.

Listen, obviously a huge honor. Very, very proud for me and my family. The Valley Course is kind of where I learned the game, fell in love with the game of golf, and I haven't been back over there to see the redo yet. Maybe I'll get a chance the next couple months. But yeah, really

cool. Obviously a huge honor.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

