

# LIV Golf Hong Kong

Thursday, 7 March, 2024

Fanling, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Golf Club

## Cam Smith

Ripper GC

## Andy Kwok

Hong Kong Golf Club

Press Conference



## HONG KONG 2024

Because of the unique format that LIV brings to Hong Kong, it's not just golf, but golf but louder. This is a completely new concept for our local audience.

I think it will be a very interesting week ahead to be able to welcome our usual golf fans from the region as well as some new or even non-golfers who come in just to experience the LIV Golf event or the entertainment that the event will bring for the audience.

I think it's also great that the event, besides all the tourists, all the spectators, flying in from what I heard, I think 29 countries and territories, they have arrived in Hong Kong for this event. This event will also be broadcast to over 110 countries and territories around the world. So this is also a great opportunity for Hong Kong and the club to be displaying what we have, and such a great city to be displayed to a global audience. We're all very excited about that.

**Q. Cam, you know Hong Kong Golf Club well. You previously came close to winning the Hong Kong Open last year. Talk about that week and where it puts some of your thoughts going into this week at LIV Golf Hong Kong.**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think I feel really comfortable around the golf course. I played here probably seven or eight years ago, as well, when I was a young professional and had quite a good week that week, as well. Lots of good memories.

I love how this golf course plays. It is really a smart person's golf course. It's a golf course, although it presents a lot of opportunities, you have to be really patient around here, particularly if you're off the fairway. It can bite you in the bum pretty quick around here, and just need to be smart.

**Q. What can fans expect who are coming to see the first LIV Golf Hong Kong this week?**

CAM SMITH: Oh, I think the atmosphere is great out here. It was great here in October. I expect the atmosphere and the crowd to probably be a little bit rowdier than it was then, given what LIV provides.

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We're joined by two captains today. We've got Andy Kwok, captain of the Hong Kong Golf Club, and Cam Smith, captain of Ripper GC. Andy, what does it mean to be hosting the first LIV Golf Hong Kong this week at the Hong Kong Golf Club, especially with it being the club's 135th anniversary year?

ANDY KWOK: Yeah, I think it means a lot to the club. As you said, this is to kick-start a year-long celebration. It's great to have LIV, all the LIV players here to celebrate our 135th year with us, and I think it also helps reinforce over a century long effort that the club has poured into golf development in the region.

It's also an assurance for the club. I heard a lot of good comments from the players earlier today that the course is playing well, so hopefully we can put together a very challenging yet enjoyable course for the players this week.

Also for Hong Kong, I think it's great to have LIV Golf come over to the region because it is one of the mega events that Hong Kong will be hosting, and I think it's also a showcase that Hong Kong is ready, the city, to host mega events for the region.

**Q. Hong Kong Golf Club has a really long history of hosting large scale golf tournaments and the past winners of the Hong Kong Open is really a who's who of golf. What's your expectation of LIV Golf bringing to Hong Kong?**

ANDY KWOK: Well, when was the last time we have over 50 champion golfers together in Hong Kong? Quite a few of them are major winners, as well, I think. Right, Cam?

I think it is really great to be hosting LIV in Hong Kong, to add to our already quite wide spectrum of mega golfing events that the club has been hosting.



But for the golf fan, as well, lots of birdies and just lots of good shots. This is probably the best field in golf, and can't wait to showcase that to Hong Kong.

**Q. Does this course remind you of any courses in Australia that you've played, especially maybe from the length or the tree-lined fairways, that type of thing?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, it's definitely got an Australian look to it, I would say. I think as far as it plays, it probably plays a little bit softer than Australia, but there's a lot of shots where you have to shape it both ways. Like I said before, you have to be smart around here. It reminds me a lot of home in that aspect, but probably just a touch softer.

**Q. It might be too early to start citing stats for the season, but the Rippers are 12th in driving distance. Given the length of this course, do you feel like it's kind of a great equalizer for all the teams that there's just not a focus on just bombing it from the tee?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. I would expect that the leaderboard, particularly at the top end of the leaderboard, is going to be a lot different this week, given what the course provides.

But at the same time, we've got some guys that are playing pretty outstanding golf at the moment, and they're going to be tough to beat.

It'll be an interesting week. Hopefully for our team, it's the week that really kicks off the rest of the season. I know all the boys are probably pretty disappointed in how they've played the first three events.

Feeling good and looking good this week early in the week, but we've still got to go out there tomorrow and actually do it. We'll see what happens.

**Q. Cam, you've been really, should I say, frustrated with your driver the last couple of weeks. Does this golf course then give you a lot of -- because I don't know how many holes you'll be using the driver on, but if it is in the bag for most of the time, do you think you have a great chance out here?**

CAM SMITH: Yes. Yeah, it's definitely a club for me that's been very frustrating, like you said. Probably not only this side of the season but probably the last few years.

We're working on stuff in the swing to try and straighten it out, and it's definitely kind of a step in the right direction. It's just been really hard for me to trust on the golf course.

Given that it only probably comes out five or six times a round here, it's one of those weeks where it's a confidence builder with the longer stuff, and just hitting off more fairways in general I think will help me.

**Q. Andy, we all know how big Taichi is over here. The fondness you guys have for him, did you really try hard with LIV Golf to get him one of the wild cards?**

ANDY KWOK: Well, obviously the local fans would love to see Taichi playing this week, but I think he went through the qualifying, and I think he's also playing well on the Asian Tour, so maybe in the future he'll get a chance to play with the big guys on LIV.

We hope that he can excel in his own way and play well for Hong Kong because as you all know, Taichi is really inspiring a lot of our younger generations of golfers in Hong Kong. With him being on the international stage will also be great for our future Taichis in the making.

Yeah, really hope that he plays well in the months to come.

**Q. Cam, you played here late in the year when the Hong Kong Open is on, and now it's kind of a different season, different time. Have you noticed differences in the course? We've obviously had a winter in between since you were last year.**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think leading up to the golf tournament last year, Andy would probably know better than me, but they did have a fair bit of rain, and the golf course, especially the fairways, were quite soft, and they were generally -- because the ball was stopping pretty quick, generally a little bit easier to hit.

The biggest thing for me has been that run-out in the fairways. It probably goes more into the shot shaper's hand, working it into a slope or something to try and keep it on the fairway.

Yeah, that's probably the biggest thing. I think the greens are probably a touch faster, but other than that, just controlling the ball off the tee will be pretty key.

**Q. Andy, how has that been for you and your teams here, like the greenskeepers and so on, because you're not normally setting up for tournament golf at this time of year?**

ANDY KWOK: Yeah, I think as Cam said, we had a lot of rain in the later half of last year, and then we just had Hong Kong Open in November. Right after that, we have to open up the course for our members and visitors and guests to play.

Within a short period of time to bring the course back to tournament ready conditions for LIV Golf is really challenging, so I really appreciate all the hard work that the course's team has done. Hats off to them.

I hope that this course at this time of the year will be a little bit different for our players. It will definitely be different for us because we never used to have music around the course. I played today in the pro-am, and it took me a while to get used to that, but I think it's quite helpful. It helps my rhythm. I guess I'm looking forward to a week of entertainment and good golf.

**Q. On the music, because I played in a pro-am, as well, and after a while you just don't notice it. Has that been the same for you, Cam? You're just used to it?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think if you do notice it you're probably not in the right head space, to be honest. You should be really focused on what you're doing. I think the music out there today is probably not how loud it's going to be tomorrow. Usually they turn it down for us on Friday. But there will still be a little bit there.

**Q. Cam, you said that we need to get rid of some rubbish and we'll be back to the top. Can you talk about what kind of rubbish you have to solve?**

CAM SMITH: That's a good question. It's basically just the driver for me. Just need to hit more fairways. Like I said before, just trying to get comfortable with some swing changes on the golf course.

We've had a lot of wind that kind of creeps into the back of your mind the first couple of weeks, so basically not trusting it out on the golf course. I get to the range and hit the ball really good and just can't quite get it to the golf course yet. Hopefully this is the week where it changes.

**Q. Last year on No. 18 at some point I thought you may beat Ben Campbell and win the Hong Kong Open. Now once again if you go to the 18th hole, what will you do? Will you do what you did last year?**

CAM SMITH: Yeah, I think given the situation, I was trying to go down there and make birdie. I don't think I hit 3-wood off there any other day. I was really trying to push it down there and give me a really good shot at birdie.

Didn't quite work out. Benny made a 20-footer on me, which hurt a little bit. No, I wouldn't change anything.

**Q. Andy, do you have a specific number of how many tickets have been sold so far? Also, what measures**

**will the club take to face the possible crowd to give a better experience to the audience?**

ANDY KWOK: Thank you. We don't actually have the breakdown on the 29 countries and territories that spectators will be flying into Hong Kong for this event, but I'm sure it will be all across the world. The club as well as our organizers, LIV Golf, have put together a tremendous effort in bringing what we call a brand new spectator's experience for our visitors this week, including we've never done before, entertainment such as bringing in a world class DJ for a concert on Saturday as well as the Birdie Shack on the 10th if you were out there, which I think we have never built any structure there before.

Hopefully we'll make it -- I don't know whether they will make it a drivable par-4 on one of the days, but someone will try to go for the green, I think. For some of the players it's reachable, so maybe it will be a very fun hole to watch. As I said, the course and the structures that we have around the course, it's never been as extensive in other Hong Kong Opens or other championships, so it will be a great experience for all those people coming in as well as watching it on TV.

**Q. Speaking of bringing Hong Kong to the world stage, Hong Kong Golf Club has made all the efforts. Within 12 months we have the World City Championship and then the Aramco Team Series and then the Hong Kong Open, and now we have LIV, and of course at the end of the year we're celebrating 135th anniversary together with the Hong Kong Open. Do you consider this as a really big achievement, and what kind of efforts the Hong Kong Golf Club team has put into all this effort? Do you consider this is a world record?**

ANDY KWOK: I don't know about world record, but I think our team as well as our Hong Kong government support has been tremendous in making all the events that you mentioned possible. Also I think it's also a reassurance for us that golf as a sport can really attract spectators and eyeballs from around the world. This is great for Hong Kong. We want to be the mega event capital of the region, and I think through golf, we can be one of the drivers to help Hong Kong government to achieve this goal, so we will really thrilled we are in this position to work hand in hand with various tours as well as with the Hong Kong government.

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