

LIV Golf Hong Kong

Wednesday, 5 March, 2025

Fanling, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Golf Club

Phil Mickelson

Captain, HyFlyers GC

Andy Kwok

Captain, Hong Kong Golf Club

Scott O'Neil

CEO, LIV Golf

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome Mr. Scott O'Neil, the CEO of LIV Golf, Phil Mickelson, the captain of HyFlyers GC, and Andy Kwok, the captain of Hong Kong Golf Club. We are in Hong Kong, the first stop of our Asia Swing. Can you talk a little bit about the importance of Hong Kong on our schedule and us being in this region.

SCOTT O'NEIL: I absolutely will. I first want to say to Andy and Ian and Peter Lam and this whole team here that we're so honored and humbled to be back at the Hong Kong Golf Club. It is a course, you'll hear from Phil, I'm sure, that our players absolutely love. It's one of their favorite stops on the Tour. It's been an absolutely amazing experience, so thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart on behalf of the organization.

In terms of Asia, it's no secret golf is booming here. I believe we're up about 30 percent year over year in terms of participants playing golf, and it's no surprise that this is a place where we feel like home. We'll obviously be in Hong Kong and Singapore and Korea, and those are three markets that we're very passionate about.

In terms of how we're doing, it's been fun. I've been on the job about two months as CEO, and I've seen nothing but momentum, starting with a big U.S. television deal with FOX and then a big television deal in the UK with ITV, marketing partners at a rate we've never quite seen before. We're having quite a bit of fun. Life is pretty good.

Q. Andy, Scott mentioned we are up 27 percent in golf participation year over year in the APAC region. Do you think LIV Golf has played a role in that?

ANDY KWOK: First of all, thank you to Scott for his kind words. I'd say definitely. The club has always been in the



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forefront of trying to develop the sport in the region. We have been hosting the longest running international golf tournament in the region, the Hong Kong Open, for over 60 years. We have numerous community outreach programs that try to bring golf to the community and introduce the game to them.

But with LIV, I think we're now seeing a whole new demographic of keen, interested golfers trying to pick up the game, especially a much younger crowd, too.

We're very excited now that LIV is coming back to Hong Kong for the second year. We're looking forward to a great week ahead.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Can I mention just at the Hong Kong Open, the amazing Patrick Reed won last year, and I believe a course record 59?

ANDY KWOK: Yes, that's right. I think also Saturday he shot 59, so he definitely has an advantage this week.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Do you know whose record he beat? Ian Poulter, in 2010.

ANDY KWOK: That's right, yes.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Another LIV Golfer.

ANDY KWOK: We have one here that might beat that number this week.

PHIL MICKELSON: I mean, 59 on this golf course is pretty amazing. It's got so much character. It's so challenging and fun to play, but 59 is unreal, what Patrick did in the Asian Series event there. It's pretty impressive.

SCOTT O'NEIL: As are your six majors. That's not too bad, either.

PHIL MICKELSON: No, I'm very happy with that and looking to add even more.

Q. Andy, this club was founded in 1889, I believe. It's steeped in tradition. Talk about how the club respects tradition but still embraces the next generation of golf, you embracing LIV, and if other clubs can take a cue



from that around the world.

ANDY KWOK: Well, we just celebrated our 135th anniversary a few months ago. We're one of the oldest golf clubs in Asia. We have a very rich history and heritage at the club, but as I said, one of our objectives is to develop the game and to allow more people to enjoy golf and learn about golf.

We're never shy of trying new things. Partnering with LIV is a prime example. We're very proud that we're now staging the second edition of LIV in Hong Kong, so we hope that we'll be seeing a lot more new golfers and people interested to learn about the game to come to the course in the next few days, and hopefully they will start picking up a club soon after they see Phil and other pros swing. We're very happy and excited.

SCOTT O'NEIL: It's a pretty good fun fact that 30 percent of LIV Golf attendees that come to our events are actually first-time golf event attendees. As we partner together with golf club executives around the world and media partners and youth initiatives, it's all about growing the game of golf. So we're really, really proud to be here.

Q. Phil, it's no secret that you love the Asia region to play golf. You've made that known. Can you talk about what it is you love about this region so much and why you love playing golf here?

PHIL MICKELSON: Well, for a guy that's always struggled with the weight demons, the food here is amazing, and I have a little bit of Italian in me. Our team went last night to a three-star Michelin restaurant, Italian food. I think it was called 8½ Otto e Mezzo, and it was mindblowing how good it was. The food here in Hong Kong is some of the best in the world. Like I say, for a heavy-set guy, it's great.

But what I really love about coming to Asia is the excitement of the youth and the way the club has really helped to support the youth programs and get young players into the game. That's the biggest impact in the growth of the game.

When I was a kid, I would go out and watch the tournament that was in my backyard, and I was inspired by the guys and dreamt about being out and playing professionally. I think sometimes you need to see it to be able to dream it. That's what LIV is bringing throughout the world.

The ability to take many of the best players in the world and bring them throughout the world and inspire the youth into this game is just a huge thing for the game of golf.

Q. Phil, I'm going to take a quote from our CEO. LIV

Golf has turned our headwinds into tailwinds. We have incredible momentum now; the wind is at our back. As one of the founders of LIV Golf, here from the beginning, watching the whole thing develop, can you talk about the progress that you've seen, particularly this year, and where you see the future of LIV?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, I don't even know where to start with the momentum change that we've been seeing and the tailwinds that we've been having. The sponsor interest on a LIV level as well as on a team level, the interest and the attendance and the fan support throughout the world in the regions that we're going to, it's just been -- and then you look at some of the things that the teams and the players are able to do together to help promote LIV, promote the sport and promote the game is pretty special.

Bryson I always use as an example because what he's doing on YouTube is inspirational --

SCOTT O'NEIL: And what you're doing on social media these days is not too bad.

PHIL MICKELSON: It's a small glimmer of what he's doing, and again, sometimes you have to see it to dream it. Seeing what Bryson has done and the way he's been able to create interest at a much younger target audience, that's crucial to the game of golf. That's something that throughout my career we have struggled with doing, and the last few years we're starting to really see it turn around. YouTube golf is huge, LIV Golf, and then the ability to move the best players throughout the world is just massive to inspire youth.

SCOTT O'NEIL: But to have one of the all-time greats of the game, leading a team, kind of contributing to the next generation of golfers for me is one of the most fun thing about LIV. Is that something you think about and contemplate in terms of passing down wisdom, knowledge, et cetera?

PHIL MICKELSON: So this team dynamic allows us to kind of work with players. We had our whole team in San Diego at my house working together in the off-season getting ready for the year, and I didn't realize how much I really enjoyed that aspect of it, of, some will say, give back, but I think just kind of sharing knowledge or helping others get the best out of themselves. That's been really fun, and the team element has brought that out amongst the players on LIV.

You look at a guy like Tom McKibben being able to kind of lean on the ear of Jon Rahm, or you look at Luis Masaveu being able to talk to Sergio. I was in a car ride with him

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yesterday, and he was talking about how much he's learned in just the last few months being able to be around his teammates and be around Sergio.

So there's a huge aspect of that that's a real positive, but I didn't realize how much I would enjoy doing it. It's been really fun.

SCOTT O'NEIL: I think it's a little bit like that for us when we come to a market, too. We had the privilege of being with Ian and Andy and Peter and a whole host of the group here, and just knowing and recognizing that we have to be part of the community when we come in, and the golf course, the golf club here and the family that gives up their time, effort, energy and their course for us is so critically important, and we're so grateful.

It also takes government support, and we have a really supportive government partner here, and that matters. Then we need sponsors to come on, and that's happening, and then the fans will show. What the fans will walk into, if you haven't been to one of our events, it's almost a festival. So you have, I'd say, the biggest stars in the game of golf, in a shotgun style, which means they start at the same time, which is fun, which means it's not an 11-hour experience, it's four hours and 35 minutes, which is great.

There's music. We usually have a concert or two, which is absolutely wonderful. Peggy Gou, I believe, is coming on here, who's a famous DJ, and then there's chefs and incredible food experience. It's a wonderful time, a place you can bring your family.

That's one thing I wanted to ask you about because you said this to me the first day I met you. I don't know if you remember. I said, what's the difference between a LIV Golf experience and a PGA Tour golf experience. Do you remember what you said?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah. First of all, it's an incredible experience, but you walk away feeling like you had fun rather than being anxious not wanting to upset the players or making sure the kids are always in the right spot. It's much more relaxed to where the whole family comes, enjoys the experience. There's a kid zone where if they get tired they can go lay down, they can play --

SCOTT O'NEIL: I might lay down there, as well.

PHIL MICKELSON: I get it. We're all kids at heart.

The overall fan experience is what LIV has done the best I've ever seen.

Q. Andy, first, what is the significance of Hong Kong

hosting this mega sporting event? Second, the government is actively working to establish Hong Kong as a hub for mega sporting events. What role will Hong Kong Golf Club play in this initiative?

ANDY KWOK: Well, I think it's great that we're now bringing mega sporting event organizers coming to Hong Kong to host mega sports events. I think it's great for Hong Kong, great for our people, great for the economy, and as the club, being a golf club, obviously we want to bring the best golf events of the world to Hong Kong.

We were quite successful in hosting the first edition of the LIV Golf Hong Kong last year, and we're looking forward to an even more successful LIV Golf Hong Kong event this year, and hopefully we will try our best to continue to bring world-class events, and hopefully LIV can come back continuously in the future.

We will try very hard to facilitate that.

SCOTT O'NEIL: I'll just add, the Rugby 7s event obviously is a world-class event. You have a new world-class stadium. That's company we're very happy to keep.

Q. You talked earlier a bit about government support. Are you in a position to expand on what the finance minister said the other day about the potential for a long-term deal?

SCOTT O'NEIL: No, I'm not in a position to talk about that (smiling), but I can tell you we're really fortunate. LIV is an event that brings tens of thousands -- in the case of Australia, more than 100,000 people into a market, and oftentimes from outside the region.

We've been overwhelmed with positive energy, whether that be in Hong Kong or Korea or Singapore or Australia or the other markets we go because I think we're all interested in bringing people in.

We fill seats on planes, we fill hotel rooms, we fill restaurants, and we put on some world-class golf. What we didn't talk about, we're fortunate we're in 800 million television homes around the world. So if you want a commercial in 100 countries about how wonderful Hong Kong is -- you all know better than I do, but Hong Kong is approaching pre-COVID levels for the first time right now in terms of tourism. So this is a place the world should want to come.

For those of us that have been coming to Hong Kong for quite some time, I know what you're thinking; I look 30, but I'm not, sadly. I've been coming here for quite some time. It's one of the crown jewels of the world, Hong Kong. So to

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the extent that we can bring more people to this region, I think the better off the world will be.

Is that the best "no-comment" answer you've ever had? Top five, at least? Thanks.

Q. I think everyone would expect LIV Golf would come back to Hong Kong again. Not exactly like Adelaide, they have a very long deal, but our expectation is high to have LIV Golf come to Hong Kong again next year, and I think this is not only the effort from the Hong Kong Golf Club but the government should also take more role or more responsibility to make that happen because when you see now we have Singapore, we have Korea, we have Japan, they all have LIV Golf. Hong Kong without LIV Golf, I think that is a pretty sad story for the golfers --

SCOTT O'NEIL: We'd love to have you in our marketing department.

Q. I know you have a lot of experience in managing sports teams and sports events in the past. What do you think the advantage of Hong Kong is when hosting a large scale sports event?

SCOTT O'NEIL: I can only speak from a LIV perspective, and I can tell you it starts with a world-class golf course, and we certainly have that here. Secondly, we're trying to create a sports league that is the most player-friendly sports league in the world. You look to your left, and you have one of the all-time great golfers in the world, and for him to love Hong Kong actually matters. He talks about the food and the people and the culture and the experience, absolutely. Yes, yes, yes; check, check, check. For us from a business standpoint, is this an opportunity for us to create a business.

I think Hong Kong, as I said before, I think it's one of the great gems in the world, and anybody that doesn't know that or agree to it hasn't spent enough time here.

Q. Scott, may I ask what kind of characteristics that the club actually sees in Hong Kong that helps to bring the event back into Hong Kong again? Also, even though you might not be able to give a very concrete answer, are you optimistic about actually making it a long-term event in Hong Kong, and what is the current progress? Thank you.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Well, I can tell you that, as we were talking about before, LIV has got some tailwinds. Apparently when we started the league, there was a bit of friction, and finding courses became very difficult.

Now we wake up every day with our inboxes full and our voicemail full of people saying, can you come. Can you come to India; can you come to Japan; can you come to mainland China; can you come to Germany; can you come to France; can you come to Sweden. For the first time in our short life, we have incredible options.

I can tell you though, as I told you before, Hong Kong, we love it here. We absolutely love it. It has all the ingredients of an absolute success story, from a PR standpoint, from a golf standpoint, from a business standpoint.

If you were me, you would be thinking through all those different elements, but it doesn't hurt to have Andy and his team and Ian and his team here. They're wonderful partners, and that's where it starts because it is a partnership.

Q. This year will be the first event in Korea. What's different between previous events to this Korea event?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Sure. Well, there's some ingredients that I think are what you can come to expect from a LIV event. You can come to expect the biggest stars in the game, absolutely. You can come to expect music and food and kind of a festival-like atmosphere. You come to expect fun. We've come to expect playing on world-class courses in amazing parts of the world.

Usually when we go into a market for the first time, there's a bit of an adjustment period. We spent quite a bit of time -- Ross Hallett is in the back there. He can give you a lot more details than I can. The event king. He calls himself that, by the way. That's not what I call him.

But he's got an amazing team of people who are on the ground trying to figure out how you map this world-class experience to the market and the course we have.

I will tell you it's one of the markets that we're all most excited about kind of entering for the first time. We'll be coming from another new market in Mexico City. That's quite a trip, I think, from Mexico to Seoul.

PHIL MICKELSON: We're going to head out Sunday night, fly right into Seoul.

SCOTT O'NEIL: So we're excited, not only for the kimchi, but also for our love of that market. I will tell you, there are some markets that are growing absolute mad for golf, and Korea is one of them, and we're looking forward to being there for a long time.

Q. Phil, you've been to Korea before. What is your

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expectation for the Korean tournament based on your experience?

PHIL MICKELSON: I was really interested in the city of Incheon and the way it was designed to be kind of a self-sustaining city, and my experience there was incredible for the Presidents Cup. I thought the golf course was spectacular, a Jack Nicklaus design, a lot of great character, and I think it's going to be a great challenge and a perfect site and venue for a LIV Golf championship.

But I was really impressed with the entire city and culture, and I'm looking forward to getting back.

Q. Last year Andy mentioned about the challenges to organizing the LIV event in Hong Kong Golf Club.

ANDY KWOK: Well, of course there are changes, and there are challenges on turf management, on the requirement of LIV as a mega event and also the improvement of the fringe entertainment like Peggy Gou, the DJ, and then the food and the marquees and everything. Everything is improved with the assistance of LIV management. We appreciate it very much because we're expecting a lot of spectators coming in this weekend and then we're excited about the event. We're going to have fun.

SCOTT O'NEIL: We're definitely going to have fun. I want to add, too, a special thank you to the members of the Hong Kong Golf Club because it's a bit taxing. There's a lot of work that goes on. I know it's more difficult to get a round in, and you lose a period of time. A heartfelt and humble thank you to all the members of the Hong Kong Golf Club. Thank you very much.

Q. Andy, how is the box office now? Are you expecting an average expenditure per spectator coming in for the event?

ANDY KWOK: I think that's for Scott, as well.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Andy can answer that one.

Q. What's the expectation on development in Asia for LIV Golf?

SCOTT O'NEIL: Well, great. Well, we had tens of thousands of people last year, and we're expecting to have more people attend this year. We're very happy with where we are. The golf course is a beautiful course, and I think we'll have really great crowds. I'm really excited about what's to come.

ANDY KWOK: Can I supplement that because last year

was the very first year that we held a LIV event in Hong Kong, so I think after last year we had a lot of positive compliments about the event, and so this word of mouth will really help to drive more people coming into the course this year.

I think we started preparing much earlier for this event this year, and also we have -- I remind everybody that Hong Kong is not just with 7 million population. We have over 80 million population living within one hour train or bus ride from Hong Kong. So we are really looking forward to receiving more people, not just from Hong Kong but from across the border, from the greater bay area to the course to watch this exciting tournament in the coming few days.

SCOTT O'NEIL: That's one of the reasons we're up here today. We would love to invite more people to come out and see this incredible event.

What was the second part of the question?

Q. The second part of the question was about the development expected in Asia in the future.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Oh, parts of Asia. It's no secret, this is a key part of LIV's overall strategy. If you look around the world, Asia is where golf is growing the fastest, and we plan on having a major presence in all the markets that matter in Asia.

Q. (Question on estimating average ticket cost.)

ANDY KWOK: I think it's going to be quite difficult because we are still selling tickets --

SCOTT O'NEIL: I want to also just add, if you haven't been to a LIV event, be I would tell you it's like no other event you've ever been to. The hospitality experience -- to answer your question, it's a hair complicated. There are grounds passes. If you were coming and you wanted to walk the grounds and you came with some friends or you had your family, you could walk the grounds, and it's a wonderful experience.

Then we have several different layers of hospitality that have varying layers. I was walking through our Club 54 yesterday, and it looks like a five-star restaurant. It's absolutely spectacular. It sits right over the 18th green, and you have just this wonderful experience.

We have all different levels and layers of hospitality, so it's a very different -- we like to say golf is for everyone and everyone is welcome, and there are different opportunities and price points and ticket opportunities and hospitality opportunities depending on what experience you're looking



for.

Q. Phil, what is the winning score this week?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, that's really hard to predict. I'm going to say 17-under par. It could be way off given weather, but that's going to be my rough estimate.

SCOTT O'NEIL: Thank you, Jane. We have the best communications team in the world. I know a lot of work goes into this. I'm very grateful. He promised me so rain, by the way, at dinner, so I really appreciate that. We'll have sunny days the next four days.

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