

LIV Golf Hong Kong

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Fanling, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Golf Club

Crushers GC

Bryson DeChambeau

Charles Howell III

Anirban Lahiri

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined today by Crushers GC, the team champions from LIV Golf Hong Kong 2024. We are joined by our captain, Bryson DeChambeau, Anirban Lahiri and Charles Howell III. Welcome back, guys. The golf participation in Asia right now is up 27 percent year over year. All of you guys recently went to India to play. Can you talk about the importance of traveling around the world and playing new markets to this golf boom in Asia?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Yeah, since COVID, I think globally but also in Asia, you've seen a big boom in golf in numbers and volumes, but I think there's been a massive uptick in the younger population playing golf as well, the junior golfers and even the younger amateur golfers.

I think that's an amazing sign for Asia, and like you just mentioned, playing the International Series at DLF I guess just over a month ago or about a month ago, it was amazing. Bryson was also pleasantly surprised to see how many kids came out and the overall reaction and how they welcomed us, and I think that's something we're going to find all over the world but in Asia especially. It's growing really fast.

I think as a team, that's one of the things that we care deeply about and we're focused on that.

Q. Bryson, you're one of the biggest stars in the world. How important is it for you to travel to these golf-starved markets and allow the kids in India to see a Bryson DeChambeau up close and personal?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, it was so much fun going to India, first off. People were fantastic, golf course was great. As it relates to coming to Hong Kong, as well, last year, I was pleasantly surprised. Everywhere we've been, it's been a warm welcome.



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I think this game needs the growth globally. It's growing globally, but it needs to be shown globally, as well. That's a part of why I think we all joined. It's a part of why I love leading this team and helping this team be one of the global teams.

We're going to continue to not only explore those options but do our best around the globe to change people's lives, and I think that's what we're trying to accomplish, what we are accomplishing, and what will continue to happen for the game of golf over the course of time. So we're excited.

Q. Charles, can you speak a little bit about the APAC region overall, playing golf here?

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah, so we first had a bit of experience going to play in Asia on the PGA Tour with some events, and it was my first taste of it. Had no idea how massive golf was in Asia.

Returning here last year to Hong Kong for LIV, obviously back this year, Singapore, et cetera, it's incredible. LIV being a global-based product is awesome. Not only selfishly do we get to see the world and play many different golf courses with different types of fans, but exposing the game worldwide, seeing Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka and all these stars come play these places is incredible.

Obviously we love being here, but at the same time, if it does grow the game of golf at all, then it's a win for everyone.

Q. Obviously we just talked about you guys won the championship in Hong Kong last year. Bryson, both you and Charles finished in the top 10. I wouldn't assume that this course would be one that would suit your game, but can you talk about the Crushers' affinity for Hong Kong Golf Club and how you guys are going to fare this year?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, I think it's a strategic golf course. I picked three other individuals that are strategic in their own right, very consistent. I think that's what makes our team so great is that we are able to be consistent, relevant. No matter if somebody has a bad day, they're not going to go crazy high.



I think we're all in it to win it, as well. We deeply care about being the best, and I think that that only spurs us on in any test of golf that we have. But mainly at golf courses like this where, yeah, you wouldn't think that I'd play solid around here, but I did last year because I was very thoughtful, strategic, and moseyed my way around.

It's the same thing as in India. You wouldn't think I'd do well in India at DLF. It's a very tight golf course. But for me, I just hit iron off the tee and iron on the green.

It's fun to hit it far, but I also like playing well, too.

Q. Charles, you played great here last year. Talk about your experience at Hong Kong Golf Club.

CHARLES HOWELL III: First, let's reiterate, Bryson is a thoughtful guy. He's thoughtful on the course, off the course.

Yeah, I actually loved the golf course the first time I came and played it. All kinds of different holes on it. It's got some open holes and it's got some holes up in the trees like 8, 9 area. It requires really everything of your game. You've got to shape it both ways.

A bit of moisture out there, a bit of rain makes it a little bit tricky controlling the spin and whatnot. But one cool thing on LIV, we play so many different types of golf courses. This is one of the shorter ones where you've got to think your way around, and whoever wins at the end of the week has hit every shot in the bag and every club in the bag, I promise.

Q. Baan, I read a fun fact that all 18 of your wins have come from Asia. Is that a fact?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Yeah, I'd love to make it 19. Coming back to Hong Kong Golf Club, I played here the first time in 2008 on the Asian Tour, and I've come here so many times over the last decade and a half.

It's been one of those courses which I think stands the test of time. It's one of the few original layouts that remain.

I have my short game coach here, James Sieckmann, and he played this course in 1991 on the Asian Tour, and he said it's the same tee shot on 1, it's the same tee shot on 18. If you actually look at the history of the Hong Kong Open which is a very prestigious event, one of the great national opens in Asia, it's not always easy to shoot 15-, 20-under par, which you would think would happen on a short course.

Now, we're playing this on a wet week. We played it in soft conditions last year, as well. Probably going to see a lot of birdies.

But I've seen this golf course play really tough for how short it is, and like Bryson said, it all comes down to course management, managing your golf ball, and I think that's what I do best. That's my biggest strength is managing the golf course, managing my golf ball and getting around golf courses.

I really love being here. I love tracks that are set up like this. I feel like I've got off to a good consistent start. I'd just like to keep that momentum going and just throw my hat in the mix on Sunday and see what happens.

Q. Seems like Asia is your good luck charm, so I think you've got a good shot.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Yeah, it is home for me, so every time I'm in Asia, I love it. I love the people here, the food here. The hospitality is amazing. The vibe is amazing. Yeah, why not.

Q. Shifting gears a little bit, Bryson, when we left Adelaide on that Sunday, we announced an extension to 2031 to be going back to Adelaide. You're a very forward-thinking guy. I wanted to get your thoughts on where you see LIV Golf six years from now.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I continue to see LIV Golf growing. It's going to grow at an exponentiating pace for years to come, and we aren't going anywhere.

Q. The Masters is coming up very quickly. Can you just talk a little bit about your Masters prep and how that's going and how you're feeling heading into the first major of the year?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah. I'm excited. I'm ready. I feel like I'm ready at least. I've made some switches with the golf ball, and this week we're trying it out. It's been pretty solid so far, so we'll see how that works.

But I'm just comfortable. I'm excited is really what it comes down to. However the cards play out, they'll play out, but I am genuinely excited for this year.

Q. Have you had a chance to go to Augusta yet?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I went there on the 6th of January, so I had a little practice round. I might get one more in before Miami, but we'll see.

Q. Going back to the length thing, Bryson, when you



won at Canterbury in 2016, your first pro win --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Gosh.

Q. That was a course that was just under 7,000 yards, and your next 12 wins I think the average length was 7,360. Would you say your game has evolved to the point where you're as comfortable on a shorter course now as much as a longer course?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah. I feel like when I gained all that speed, I had to learn how to manage that, and it's taken me a while to get back to hitting it somewhat straight with that speed. I was able to play pretty well last year, and then coming into this year, I feel like it's a little bit better, too.

Playing at DLF, I played well, finished second. Australia, still played pretty well, was leading after the second round of 10, 11 holes but didn't finish off the way I wanted to. Then Riyadh was a shorter golf course and I played pretty well.

In order to play well for me, I've just got to get my wedges a little more dialed in. They aren't dialed in as they need to be, and that's where I think I'll thrive on short courses is when I get my wedges better. I'm continuing working on that. That's like my next goal, to get the wedges dialed in.

Q. What goes through your mind as you prep for a 6,700-yard course?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: It's mainly focusing on 10:00 o'clock shots, wedges, trying to get my irons as dialed in as possible and putting pretty well. That's every week. But where the low-hanging fruit is is my wedges.

Q. Baan, Charles, have you seen Bryson's game evolve that shorter courses aren't much of a factor for him now in terms of maybe throwing off his game?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Well, he's got the 100-yard shot down, as everyone found out.

But no, I think going back to what he mentioned about DLF, a lot of people before they went told me, have you told Bryson what the golf course is like. I'm like, no, I haven't, because it's very similar, if not quite a bit like Mayakoba where we used to play, which is like really tight, short. DLF is longer, but if you go off-line you're reloading, and from where Bryson was three years ago with his body and his game to where he's gotten now, I think he'd love to go back to Mayakoba and have some revenge because he's hitting it so much better.

So yeah, to see his game evolve -- more than his game, just make better decisions on the course.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: And off the course.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Well, outside of the press conference --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I'm just saying, I'm more focused on making good decisions for my wedging. Nothing else.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Okay, that's your opinion.

But no, it's gotten so much better. The one thing that I was thinking of when Bryson was answering the same question to you is that he's gotten more mature on the golf course, off the golf course, and in general. I think that's showing in how he's approaching some of the most strategic courses, not trying to overpower every golf course, and he knows that's his strength, but he also knows that putting is a strength. He also knows that iron play is a strength.

It's nice to see a more balanced Bryson DeChambeau on the golf course.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah, I think two aspects of Bryson's game that are incredibly underrated is how straight he drives it for how far he does. Yeah, I think that's -- anybody that plays with Bryson or sees him, they're surprised at that, number one. Number two is he's become a phenomenal putter. I remember when Bryson first came on the PGA TOUR and we were friends, and we have, I think, about the same -- similarly and he'll tell you he wasn't a great putter. He didn't enjoy it --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I was one of the worst.

CHARLES HOWELL III: So he's actually made himself from one of the worst to, in my opinion, arguably the best, and if not the best, he's in the conversation of three.

I think those are the two aspects, and it doesn't matter what golf course he goes to. Those two things serve him well.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: How have you guys' games improved over the past year, couple years?

CHARLES HOWELL III: I think my golf swing has gotten better. I think I drive it better. We like our captain. We get along.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Speak for yourself. Don't speak for me.

Q. Under the new team competition format, what I personally see, I find the strong teams go stronger, and this is perfect for the strong teams. Let's say the top five teams would occupy every station on the podium. Do you agree?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: What do you mean --

Q. It would be like you, Fireballs --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: You're just saying they're going to be up there more often than not with the four scores counting?

Q. Yeah.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, we hope that this format breeds another competition level. That's what LIV is all about is bringing the best competition around the world. We think by having the stakes raised where every single score counts, it's not going to be lackadaisical. We care about winning every single time we come up here.

I think that's where, yeah, there's going to be a separation for a little bit, but over the course of time, I think we'll start to have the competition level raised because of it. So yeah, the best teams are going to win. That's the way I think it should be.

But I also do think it's going to breed some competitive fire in some teams that don't necessarily have that firepower. They're going to want to figure out how to get better. I think it's a good thing competition breeds excellence. I think that's true for LIV.

Q. There's been various headlines around the world in the last few days about you. A lot about returning to PGA golf, not happy with this, contracts, so on. Do you want to put the record straight here and now with what's going on?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: No, I'm very excited about the future of LIV Golf. I'm very excited to be the captain of the Crushers and continue our legacy that we're starting to create. That's my goal is to create this lasting legacy where we impact millions and millions of golfers' lives around the world. That should tell you everything you should know.

Q. Anirban, you're from India. You must be a cricket fan, as well. India reached the Champions Trophy final last night in Dubai. That's on Sunday night. Are you trying to make plans so you can watch it somehow?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: I've been watching every game. I

watched it last night. I stream it. We've got a couple of physios -- my kids woke up after the match finished.

No, we've got a Kiwi and English physio, so I've had a really good go at him the last 10 days or so. Like you just mentioned, we've been playing in Dubai so I went for the India-Pakistan match 10 days ago, which is like a bucket list thing to do.

Yeah, it's been good. It's been good. I'm happy to see the way they're progressing.

Q. As a golfer, are there things you can pick up from watching great cricket players in terms of attitude --

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Absolutely. The thing is it's funny you asked me that question. Ajit Agarkar, who's the chief selector for the national team, is a friend. We play golf together. None of the active cricketers do, but I had the privilege of being there on Friday night last week for India's last practice session before the game on Sunday against New Zealand, and I just watched all of them go about how they prepare for about an hour, hour and 15, tried to pick up on their cues, how they get into rhythm, their trigger movements, how much time do they take between shots between every delivery that's bowled. Sorry, guys. This is a lot of technical talk.

It's just me trying to draw comparisons in every competitive sport and every elite professional athlete, there's always something that you can learn. There's always something that you can imbibe. You can see how they switch on, how they switch off, and I think that's what the best athletes do. They know how to switch off very well. Everybody knows how to be on, but you can't be on for six hours just like that. Just watching and learning and observing, it was just fascinating.

Q. Charles and Bryson, do you ever watch other sports or mingle with other athletes from other sports and kind of find there's a crossover between what you do and pick up tips from each other?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, in certain instances there are crossovers. Football, locking in, quarterback locking in, being able to table in all the variables that are coming at you. When I played with Tom Brady for the "Break 50," we talked about how you just lock in as an athlete, and when you're in that zone, how you stay there, how you focus even more when you're in the zone and how to continue that. That was a big thing.

I asked him, in your biggest moments, what did you think about, what did you do, and it was only how am I going to get this ball to the guy. What's the best option I have. It

was always knowing what the other team was going to do to me.

I liken that to a golf course. What's this golf course going to throw at me. How can I be best prepared to dominate this golf course. I think that's kind of a likeness we bring to each other as athletes.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah, so I'm a bit older than these guys, I'm 45, so I've reached out to some of the successful athletes that played late in their career, asked for a lot of advice and help on stuff as it deals with longevity and things of that nature. That's something now that's important to me.

These guys at their age, they don't think about that. As you get a bit older and whatnot, it becomes a big deal.

Yeah, I think at different parts of your career you reach out to different people and learn from people that obviously came before me and did it really well.

Q. I got two questions. First one is the weather forecast is wet for this week. The greens will be slower. Do you think this is the best for your form? And for Bryson, for the short par-4, No. 4, do you think you'll be more aggressive to hit a power fade to one on, or you will keep two on is the better call?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I'll take the second question first. For me, it's a fun green to go for in a practice round, not for tournament competition. You're going to have a wedge in every day. You want to be 2-under par for that hole. The best way to do it is to hit it up short and chip it on, make birdie. You can hit a great drive and then get absolutely unrewarded over the green and to the left and it becomes quite difficult, or if you over-flare it to the right you're in the trees.

It's really not worth it. It's a cool hole for a practice round, but I'll definitely be probably laying up this week.

The first question about it being wet, yeah, it's going to affect us a little bit. It's going to be who can control the speed the best this week on the greens and who can control the spin rate on their iron shots. That's the key for this week.

Q. Do you guys have any thoughts on the course playing wet this week and the slower green speeds?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: I think that's just one that happens on LIV is we play all grasses, all weathers, all kinds of conditions. This is nothing new. I think all of us have seen green speeds ranging from 8, 9, all the way up to 14, 15.

I'm saying extreme conditions on both sides, cold, wet, hot.

I don't think it's going to affect any of us. What it does affect is scoring, because as the greens get softer you can be more aggressive.

The fairways are going to wider because the ball essentially doesn't roll off the fairways as much. You're probably going to see more birdies is all I'm going to say. I think if you get it really firm, really fast, it plays a little bit harder. Shorter but harder.

Longer is not necessarily harder for us, not on a course like this. It's probably going to make it easier.

CHARLES HOWELL III: Yeah, I think there's another thing not talked about. The zoysia fairways here, or paspalum, whatever you want to call it, when they get wet, the ball tends to launch a little bit higher off these fairways, so there's definitely controlling spin rate on it.

Yeah, the green speeds, there's enough slope in the greens where you have to pay attention to them, as well, even though they can be a bit softer and a bit slower.

Yeah, every day is a bit different. It looks like it's going to dry out on the weekend a bit, so the temperature is a bit warmer and no rain, so I'm sure it'll change quite a bit from Friday to Sunday afternoon.

Q. Based on your experience playing in Hong Kong last year, what do you think of the golf course here in Hong Kong as compared to other golf courses in other parts of the world that you've played in, and also, do you see potential in Hong Kong Golf Club and other venues world class sporting events like LIV Golf?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, it's a great strategic golf course. It's a gem. That's kind of my style. Whenever I go into some design works, I'll take the likeness of this great golf course, Hong Kong. No. 12, that par-3, what an incredible par-3.

That's the type of golf that I like playing, where there's a bit of risk-reward but it's not too long of a shot. Makes you think, and I like golf courses that make you think, and this is definitely one of them.

Valderrama is another great golf course that makes you think. There's numerous places around the world that are just great layouts that can stand the test of time that aren't that long, and I think that's the way golf needs to move.

Being a long hitter, I'm sure people will appreciate that we don't need to keep expanding. We all hit it far enough, and

humans are going to continue to hit it farther. We just are. But there's no need to make the golf courses longer. There's different ways to accomplish that. It's a strategic game. There's bunkers everywhere, there's water hazards, there's trees, there's rough, fast greens, slopes. So many things you can do.

That's what I think is so cool about this golf course is you have the ability to create a tough test of golf that stands the test of time.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: I'll just add to that being Asian and having played here for over 15 years. I think Hong Kong Golf Club is probably in the top, I would say, three, maybe five in all-time best courses in Asia, and I'm not saying that just because of the layout. I'm also saying because this is one of the few courses that, like I said, it's untouched. It's stood the test of time. It has different characteristics in different weather and different conditions, and that's what you want a golf course to feel like.

I think if I was a member and I was playing here every day, I think every day would be a new challenge, and that's what defines a great golf course.

Yeah, I think it would be lovely and wonderful for us to keep coming back to Hong Kong, keep coming back to Fanling, to Hong Kong Golf Club, and putting up a show for all of you.

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