

LIV Golf Miami

Wednesday, 2 April, 2025

Miami, Florida, USA

Trump National Doral

Phil Mickelson

HyFlyers GC

Sergio Garcia

Fireballs GC

Jon Rahm

Legion XIII

Press Conference



SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, I think it's just a solid golf course, like Jon said. It's a ball striker's golf course. Obviously I was fortunate enough to play well last year, lost in a playoff, but it's the kind of golf course that if you drive the ball well, you can be fairly aggressive to some of these pin positions. If you struggle a little bit off the tee, then even if you're just missing the fairway, you don't have to miss it by much out of this rough, it becomes tricky. It becomes tricky because you don't have as much control out of the Bermuda. Then the release, a lot of the pins are tucked in spots that you need to stop the ball quickly. It's a really good test. Obviously it can be windy, so it makes it even more challenging, and I think overall it's a wonderful test to try to get your game in as good a shape as possible going into next week.

THE MODERATOR: Phil, same question for you.

PHIL MICKELSON: What I really enjoy about playing Doral, it reminds me a little bit about St Andrews, and the reason I say St Andrews is because when you play St Andrews for the first time with a certain win, there are bunkers that are not in play, and you're like, why is that bunker there, and then the wind totally changes, and now it's the exact opposite. Now the bunkers that weren't in play are in play and the ones that you were worried about, they're not in play at all.

I feel like Doral, the wind changes so much that there's times where water and bunkers are in play with one wind and totally out of play with another, and it plays so different with each given wind that it's like a whole different golf course every time you play it.

I think that's what I enjoy about Doral. I've played here a lot over the years. I've only won here once, so it's not like I play awesome at Doral, but Sergio played great here last year, and I always enjoy the challenge of what this course presents because you really don't know how it's going to play each day and that's why it's so fun to play.

THE MODERATOR: I'm really excited to have three of you up here. You're all in excellent form heading into next week. Phil, you carded your best LIV finish ever in Hong Kong, finishing in third place. Sergio, you've been on a heater; you won once, your team has won three in a row.

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome three of our previous Masters champions. We are joined by Phil Mickelson, the captain of HyFlyers GC; Sergio Garcia, the captain of Fireballs GC; and Jon Rahm, the captain of Legion XIII. Before we get started on the Masters, we are back at the famed Blue Monster. Of course it demands everything from you guys physically, mentally, and most of all, patience. What is the key to managing risk-reward at this course?

JON RAHM: Well, being known for being extremely patient out there (laughter), I would say overall it's definitely a golf course that suits a ball striker. I think last year was my first ever competition here, and I enjoyed it. I think obviously if you can have it off the tee, you make your way around here very, very easily, but it's all dependent on the wind direction and wind intensity.

I think if I remember correctly, the first few rounds, 1, 10, 12, being par-5s but being very long, were all into the wind, so a couple of those holes weren't as scorable, but then holes like 17, 18 being downwind were a lot more scorable. So it changes a little bit how you play it.

You definitely need to pick your spots here. The greens are not the biggest, and even the ones that are big play small because the pins can be put in different sections of the greens. It's a good major prep because it's a very challenging golf course and you definitely need to have all aspects of your game in really good condition to have a chance to win. Definitely a challenge that I enjoy. Definitely a golf course that I enjoy.

THE MODERATOR: Sergio, one of the greatest ball strikers of all time. How are you managing this course this week?



Jon, you continue your impressive streak of no finishes outside of the top 10 in your LIV history. Incredible.

Phil, I'm going to start with you. Next week at Augusta, what would another green jacket mean to you at this stage in your career?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, it's hard to look that far ahead, but it's fun heading into the tournament, which is a week that we all cherish the most. It's the start of the major championship series. History is made there every year.

To be a part of the past history with the three of us having won there knowing that every time we go back we're a part of the history and we get to partake in everything that transpires that week and the way they treat the past champions, which is better than any tournament in the world, it's just a special feeling to be a part of that. It's almost a religious experience every time you set foot on Augusta National.

THE MODERATOR: Sergio, you will be competing in your 100th major next week. I know that's a lot to take in, but if you can just reflect on that for a moment and what that means.

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, not as many as Phil, but getting up there.

I think that to me, it just shows -- the same with Phil; it just shows the quality and the consistency that we've had throughout our careers. Not a lot of people have been able to get over the 100-major mark, so it's obviously an honor and something that I'm super proud of. I'm just looking forward to going there. Really enjoy the week no matter what happens game-wise. Obviously I'm going to give it everything I have.

But just really cherish the week, really enjoy it with the family and all my partners out there, and just try to have the best week possible.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, you are the definition of consistency as we've just talked about with all of your top-10 finishes. Do you feel like you have momentum heading into the first major of the season?

JON RAHM: I'm feeling good, yeah. I've been able to have a lot of good finishes, but I would say it hasn't been what I would consider playing my best. I think I've scored really, really well but with some level of discomfort in some parts of my game that I kind of need to get over to accomplish bigger things, right, especially talking about major championships.

I think I'm very close to that if not over that. I think especially the last few weeks, I've been playing really good golf, feeling really comfortable. Obviously Augusta is a whole different level and so is the Blue Monster, but that's why I like this week. It's such a good prep for a major coming up. I'm looking forward to this week to hopefully see some of those improvements and come into next week with a clear mind of what to do.

But either way, I'm always just absolutely blindly confident in my abilities. I think all of us up here, every time we tee it up, we think we're going to win, and that's why they have accomplished a lot of what they have and everything that they have. I'm looking forward to seeing those changes that I'm talking about that have been there for the better part of a year and a half, I just haven't gotten over that.

Q. Phil, you've done some fun things going into a major. Equipment changes for next week, are you changing any clubs in the bag or is it show up with what you've got now and see what happens?

PHIL MICKELSON: So I remember back in the '80s when -- I guess the '70s when Ray Floyd won and Curtis Strange in '85 when they were playing the course, they were putting a 5-wood in the bag for the par-5s, and now that the tees have been moved back on some of the holes, that's actually a club for me that is going to come into play, so I've been working on a 5-wood in the off-season. I've got one I really like and that I anticipate hitting into 13 and 15 based on the last couple of years where my ball is ending up off the tee and the yardage I have left. That's one club that I've been working on.

I tried to get a 7-wood in the bag. It didn't quite work out for me. Some of these guys hit that 6- and 7-wood incredible. I over-spin it, so it's not really a great club for me, but the 5-wood is a club I anticipate hitting like a high cut into 13 and 15.

I'm kind of curious what club you guys are putting in.

SERGIO GARCIA: I'm not really putting anything. I do -- I always play with a 5-wood, so that's a club that I already have in the bag. I'll probably put new wedges in just to have a nice set of fresh wedges. It's always nice to be able to have a little bit more confidence on being able to spin the ball around the greens when it comes down to chipping there at Augusta because it's so treacherous, some of the chips that you can have.

But other than that, I don't plan on putting anything new. I try to keep my bag as steady as possible throughout the season so that way I keep consistency on it, and hopefully that will work.



JON RAHM: I'm not changing anything either, but you knew that. For the people that may not know, the only club that will vary is either 2-iron or 5-wood, and pretty much unless I'm in Europe, it's 5-wood all around for the same reason Phil just said. Usually comes in better into playing par-5s, and the 2-iron, if anything, at the Open and some events in Europe I'll use it off the tee, but even then sometimes I'll still play with 5-wood. So no changes for me.

Q. Phil, the majors are the majors and they're obviously the four big ones. Do they take on even more importance now that you only get really the four times a year to play against the guys you used to play against and be on that stage? Does it take on more importance now that you've come to LIV?

PHIL MICKELSON: It would be easy to say that it does, but in actuality they've always had that importance heading in because those are what define a career, and those events have always had that extra incentive or elevation or status, and so it would certainly be easy to say that, but in actuality when I was playing the PGA Tour it still had that extra meaning, I would say.

SERGIO GARCIA: No, like Phil said, I don't think that's the main thing that makes the majors that much more important. I think for me, and I said it last year, now being at LIV and obviously loving it here, but because of the World Rankings and everything it becomes a little bit tougher for me to be able to play all four. I've come to realize that every time I'm in one of those majors that I have to not only give everything that I have, which I always do, but I also make sure that I enjoy it as much as possible because you never know when it's going to be your last one.

I've been very fortunate to play -- to pretty much not miss a major for 25 years. I only missed one I think in 24 years because of COVID, the 2020 Masters, and even if you don't want to, you start thinking that that's normal and it's easy to be part of the majors, but it's not.

I've come to realize that, and I try to make sure to enjoy every single one I play now as much as I can.

JON RAHM: I mean, I agree with what they both said. It's hard to make any of the majors matter even more. It's the pinnacle of our sport, and like Phil said, they define a career. It's hard to make it more than that.

Q. Have you noticed a difference in energy or experience, not only for the fans but for you as golfers at a LIV event compared to a traditional tournament?

SERGIO GARCIA: Well, there's obviously -- in our LIV events, we have amazing competition. We have great energy every week. I think the team aspect of it makes it extra special, and like you said, going out there and playing not only for yourself but for your teammates and getting a win together and everything like that, it's something that is very unique and very special. It obviously brings a different energy not only to the tournament but to the players itself.

We love that part of it, and we're always thrilled about it every single week.

JON RAHM: There's something that makes those events very special, and I can give you two examples that relate, one for Sergio, one for me. Even though coming down the stretch on a Sunday individually the last few holes, you may not be able to affect your position too much, it still has a massive impact on the team.

Sergio in Hong Kong had a big lead going down 18. He could have hit lob wedge, lob wedge, lob wedge, lob wedge, three-putted and won. He could have made that hole as easy as he wanted, but he still needed to par for the team to win by one. So there's an aspect of intensity and pressure that you wouldn't otherwise have.

In my case last year here, I was finishing on the second hole, and I think we were as a team one ahead. Individually I was out of contention. So finishing down the stretch knowing that if I were to make a par or birdie, it would definitely further the team's cause to win because none of the finishing holes at this golf course are easy, so having to go through 7, 8 and possibly -- I think Caleb was finishing on 5 or 6, which everything can get tricky on this golf course. I had a level of intensity into what was going on that otherwise I wouldn't have.

I think what makes it also so special is you're not only playing for yourself, it's also a team and a team to play for. Individually even though you may be out, you're never out as a team, especially this year now that all four scores count every day.

It's an added extra that makes it so special.

PHIL MICKELSON: I think that winning -- like winning when you're on the PGA Tour, you're in it for yourself and golf has always been an individual sport, and as LIV progresses and brings a team dynamic from a player standpoint, it brings in the support system that makes it a lot more fun when you play well.

Sergio wins individually and as a team, but even if his team didn't win, you've got three guys that are pulling for him,



supporting him and celebrating his success. Then to be able to share that on the team aspect, there's an element of kind of camaraderie that I haven't experienced on the PGA Tour when it was so individualistic. That brings a different energy that's fun to be a part of.

Q. For Sergio and also another one for all. I think it was your 19th Masters before you won. Was there something you figured out along the way that made it easier that you maybe didn't do early on? I would ask that to Phil, too. It took 12, I think, for Phil. That over the years you changed your approach to try to figure it out. Also, has that been missing maybe the last couple years?

SERGIO GARCIA: I mean, I think at the end of the day, like I said earlier, it's to go there and enjoy the week as much as possible. I think that sometimes we're competitors and we want to go there and do really well, but sometimes you cannot get too much in your head, and obviously I had my issues with Augusta when it comes down to that where I'd just get frustrated and maybe feel like I don't get what I deserve or something like that.

I think that, like I was saying earlier, it's important for me to go out there and enjoy the week no matter what and just do it because it's worth it, because it's an amazing week and it's something that -- not only for you but for your family. You can create so many amazing memories. It just doesn't have to be about playing well.

It's something that I kind of figured out a little bit last year. On Friday I kind of lost my head a little bit, and because of that it cost me missing the cut. I'm happy to say it; it was all my fault. You have to regroup, and that's what I'm going to do, and we'll see. We'll see what happens next week.

But I just want to go there and really enjoy it because it's the way it should be.

PHIL MICKELSON: Actually I'm going to just throw a little comment there on Sergio, too, because from a guy outside looking in, and I'm not Sergio, but it looked like the year he won you managed your emotions when you had a bad break or two much better and didn't let it get to you. You've always had the game. You've always had the talent. You've always driven it so well. You've always been such an incredible ball striker. Augusta is a great course for you, and it seemed like when you had a few bad breaks or whatever reason you were just in this calm state of mind where it didn't affect you, and I thought that was an interesting thing as players to take away, to learn from.

For me personally, it was something very similar. It was the 15th hole is a hole that I would press. I would force the

issue. I lost the tournament a number of times on 15 before I ended up winning it, and when I finally did win it in '04, I felt like, all right, a 5 is okay there. Like I could lose the tournament on 15; I don't need to make 4 every time. So I would always press the issue, and I'd make 6, 7 a number of times trying to make a 4, and when I finally accepted a 5 on that hole and tried to win it elsewhere, that's when I seemed to finally break through. In fact, in '04 I shot 31 the back nine to win by one, and I did not birdie 15, I made a par.

That was the hole that I felt like being more patient and taking a different strategy and not pushing the issue allowed me to ultimately take advantage of the other holes to win.

Q. Have any of you guys been there this spring leading up to this?

PHIL MICKELSON: No.

SERGIO GARCIA: I heard there's a lot of different looks with some missing trees and stuff. I'm sure it'll be great.

PHIL MICKELSON: I'll give you a little Augusta story if I may while we've got a minute, speaking of trees going down. I was playing a practice round there one year. It was two weeks prior to the tournament. Probably nobody even knows that this happened.

But two weeks prior to the tournament, I'm playing the 11th hole, I'm back lining up my tee shot, and I see this tree on the left fall over right in the middle of the fairway, crash down, like right by the group in front of us. They were probably 100 yards away. This massive Georgia pine comes down, rips up the fairway and so forth.

By the time I had walked from my tee shot into the fairway, I could hear on the walkie-talkie get off of 2, get to 11, get off of 4, get to 11. 100 workers, I don't know how many, there were a number of workers piling in, racing to this tree, firing up the chain saws, started cutting this thing down. So now the limbs, by the time I walk off of 11 green, all the limbs of the tree have been cut off and put on a truck, on the back of these carts. By the time I got to 15, I looked down, they were cutting up the trunk, and the tree was being -- the entire tree was being brought away.

By the time I got done and get back to 18 tee and I looked down, they're resodding the fairway. You couldn't tell two days later this had happened. I just thought, if that was my home course back -- that tree would still be there like three weeks later, and they had this thing removed. It was one of the most impressive things I had seen, their ability to handle stuff like that. I'm sure the course is going to be in



great shape.

Q. You mentioned the traditions, one of them being for the former winners, one of them being the dinner on Tuesday. For each of you, what that tradition means going to that dinner on Tuesday and just how much you look forward to that, and Sergio, you said in 2018 you couldn't wait to get around all the great champions to hear their stories. For you, additionally, do you have a favorite story that you may have heard from anybody that year?

SERGIO GARCIA: Yeah, Tuesday night is one of the most special nights we have all year. I think that to be able to sit in that room with so many champions, and like you were saying, so many amazing stories, it's great. It's great. You get to spend time with your fellow players and friends and talk about all kinds of things going on in life with your family, with your game, with the week. You get to hear some really cool stories from everyone but mostly from the older guys. It's always great fun to hear some of the stories from, like, the '60s and '70s and how they were playing the course and things like that. None in particular obviously, but I think it's a treat. I think it's a very unique little club that you get to be a part of. We always look forward to it.

JON RAHM: I've only been to one dinner, so I'm looking forward to this one. I only know the stories from the last one. It was April 9th when we had the dinner, which was the anniversary of -- it would have been Seve's birthday, so a lot of that dinner was Seve focused.

Now, having Ollie there sharing stories of what happened and things that Seve did is really incredible, but I think it was really cool how everybody in the room kind of came together, started sharing stories that was Ryder Cup based or Seve based, and it was really fun for me to see a player that's kind of known for being quiet, Bernhard Langer, almost take over, and he couldn't wait to tell his next story and just keep on going and going and going to the point where somebody said, let Ollie speak because he might have a few better ones. But Bernhard just took over and started sharing stories, and that was really cool. That was really special.

I heard things I had never heard before, and just to be in that room when you have some of the greatest if not the greatest champions of the game listening to him share their stories about Seve was quite special. If every dinner is like that, then yeah, I don't know how you can top that one, but that was quite incredible.

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, I think the older guys -- like Gary Player is a great storyteller and he's got some great

stories that he's shared. Bob Goalby, Jack Nicklaus, when they talk, their stories are incredible. Bernhard, Olazábal, they have -- I think that's my favorite part of the dinner is kind of during dessert guys will stand up and tell some stories.

I remember Palmer, I wish they would videotape those guys tell some stories because it's so much better coming from them than hearing it secondhand. But I remember a story that Palmer used to tell me when we played one time. I'm not sure if he shared it at the dinner or not. But he really looked up to Ben Hogan. That was a big thing for him.

He had an opportunity to play a practice round with him just prior to the '56 Masters and he had just won a tournament Sunday, and he drove all night. He drove like eight hours to get to Augusta to play a practice round with Ben Hogan, Dow Finsterwald, and I forget who the fourth was. They go out and play, and Arnold is tired, he hadn't slept, and he had just won, and he's emotionally spent, and he kind of hit it everywhere, he slapped it around. He overheard as they finished the round as they were having lunch and he goes to wash his hands or whatnot, he kind of hears Hogan say, how did that kid get into this tournament. That really got him upset, and he said, he never called me Arnie, he never called me Palmer, he always called me "kid." I never liked that.

He said, that really spurred me on. I was determined to show him, and he went out and won that year. It just gave him that little edge, like I'm going to go show him what I'm doing here.

That little comment that he overheard kind of spurred him on, and hearing him -- like hearing me tell it is not anything like hearing it from Arnold. That guy could really tell some stories. But I thought that was always an interesting take because he had that little extra motivation.

Q. Phil, obviously a lot of attention will be on Rory next week. There was a time in your career, six majors or so ago, when the question every week would be is this your time. How hard is it to compartmentalize, to put away what other people are going to expect of you, or in Rory's case, of him next week?

PHIL MICKELSON: Yeah, that's challenging. But he's done it so many times in his ability to win tournaments. He's been able to compartmentalize that. I don't think that's going to be an issue for him.

I think he drives the ball so long and straight that he has a huge advantage on that golf course. He and about 20 guys that drive it like he does will have an advantage of

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playing it a certain way. They can play it a certain way that is much more aggressive and take advantage of holes than some others, than guys like myself. But you still have to execute, you still have to hit the shots, and I think that's what he's focused on.

I think his ability to compartmentalize all the things that have transpired in the past is a strength of his, so I don't think it'll be an issue or I don't think that's what's holding him back from winning the Masters.

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