

LIV Golf London

Friday, 7 July, 2023

Hertfordshire, UK

Centurion Club

RangeGoats GC

Talor Gooch

Thomas Pieters

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome the RangeGoats GC. We are joined by Talor Gooch, who shot 4-under today, and Thomas Pieters, who shot 5-under today, and Florence Pieters, who's supporting them today. Welcome. You guys each tell me a little bit about your round today.

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, it was a good day. This golf course is not as easy as what Cam just made it look. There's some tricky pins out there and some uncomfortable tee balls, and it was a blast as it was in Australia playing with TP and HV. HV didn't have the best finish, but until the last few holes, we were kind of feeding off each other all day, so it was fun out there.

TP played great and made a great putt to beat me, but the good thing was Harold was in last of the three of us, so he owes dinner.

THOMAS PIETERS: Yeah, I played really well. I think my game is coming around, which is nice. It's positive for me. Yeah, it was fun playing with all three of us when we saw the draw. We had such a good time in Australia playing together. It's so relaxed.

Obviously Harold keeps us relaxed, even on those last three holes when he's hitting shots everywhere. He's still laughing.

Yeah, I'm pleased with today.

Q. Does it really change the dynamic for you guys playing out there with your teammates? Does it have a different feel than a normal competition day when you're playing with a mixed bag of guys?

TALOR GOOCH: Yes and no. We're still out there busting our butts trying to shoot the lowest score that we can. But in between shots, there's just probably a little bit more chatter than on a normal round, which is good, and getting to see Flo out there is always fun, too.

Q. You've got one team at the top, and you guys are together, too. I assume there's some substantial benefits to playing together, and you can see that today. What do you think the main benefit is?

THOMAS PIETERS: One, for the fans. If you like the RangeGoats, you can see three at a time. And for us, I think it's a little bit more relaxed, obviously. When you have H in your group, it multiplies by 10, the relaxed mood, whatever. It was just funny.

We were all making putts. I think we were all 3-, 4- and 5-under at one point, and it's a shame Harold didn't finish it, but that's fine. He'll get back tomorrow.

Q. Talor, you played here last year. You were actually the Torque captain. Can you talk us through what it's like to come back here? It's such a different thing for you now. You've won three times. You're on a different team. Take us through the comparison to last year.

TALOR GOOCH: Well, first off, it's a little bit more enjoyable spending time with you guys this year than maybe last year. When we showed up here last year, we didn't know exactly what to expect. There was definitely some questions, some uncomfortable, like, never played the golf course, do we register, all the little things that we're so accustomed to in professional golf, we didn't know what to expect.

There's just so much more comfort this year. We know what to expect. Everyone is confident with where things are and where things are going.

It's nice to really get back to we're competing out here, and this is about showing up and trying to win a golf tournament. There's not as much hoopla with stuff outside of golf.

For me, and I can speak on behalf of all the players, it's nice that a year later we're here strictly business playing golf and not dealing with a bunch of other stuff that comes with it.

Q. You were one of just nine guys that finished under



par last year. You talked about the course a little bit. Did you find it, though, easier than last year?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, the greens were not as firm today. That obviously makes all the difference in the world. A little bit of soft greens and the wind not quite up as much and a little bit of heat, the ball is going far, and the 9th hole that was a par-4 last year is a par-5 now, so that's going to skew it by a shot.

Yeah, it was an easier golf course today, but that could change really quickly out here.

Q. What's the feeling like being on the heater you're on right now for the last few months?

TALOR GOOCH: The first hole, one of the tougher holes out here, I had about a 30-yard bunker shot and made it. When those things are happening, you just want to ride the wave.

Obviously I think my game is in a really good spot, and I think -- I know this game is always going to humble you, but I'm definitely a better player now than I was a year ago, and so hopefully the high moments last longer and the low moments don't last quite as long. So we'll just ride this wave until she bucks us.

Q. Thomas, what's it been like to be a teammate of Talor as he's gone on this --

THOMAS PIETERS: It's easy. I mean, he keeps winning, so you can't -- we're nothing but happy for him. He's killing it, like he said, just ride it as long as it lasts. He could win three or four more.

It's really cool, and obviously it's good for the team. First of all, it's awesome to see him win.

Q. Talor, I know you've been asked a few questions about the Ryder Cup this week, but from your perspective is the game plan to be so good that Zach Johnson can't ignore you?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, I'm not going to probably have -- my voice probably isn't going to mean much. My play is what's going to matter. Just go out there and try to prove that I'm a good enough quality player that they can't deny it, and I've got a couple more weeks to do that, and we'll see.

Q. Obviously Brooks Koepka is probably going to be in the team. You hope to be in the team. Do you also hope that the best Europeans who are part of LIV can be part of the European team?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, I would say there's a large portion of the entire golf world that just hopes the best of the best are there on both sides of the pond. We'll see what that looks like.

But I think everybody wins when the best are playing against each other.

Q. You spoke about everything that came with last year and this event. Just give me a little bit more of a sense of how difficult it was to focus on practice, to focus on playing golf with the extra attention that came with the opening events of LIV?

TALOR GOOCH: Well, one funny story was last year in one of the pressers in the beginning of the week, one of the journalists took a dash from his seat towards the table at a few of us, and Jane had to come to our rescue and be the body guard for us.

Yeah, it's quite remarkable the difference a year makes.

Back to what I was saying, it's nice that we're talking about Ryder Cup, we're talking about winning tournaments, we're talking about team golf, we're talking about all the stuff that we on this side have known for the last year, that people are going to love it. We love it. The fans are going to love it. Everyone involved is going to realize what a great thing this is. It's just nice to start getting on that side of things.

Q. Thomas, I think you were otherwise engaged when I asked Talor about the importance of having the best European players that are part of LIV being part of the Ryder Cup team again.

THOMAS PIETERS: I mean, in my opinion he should be on. How do you not pick him? For myself, I haven't played well enough to be on it, I think, but I feel like I could be close. But it's not my choice. It's up to them.

But yeah, if I was Zach Johnson I would definitely pick Talor, yeah. Their loss.

Q. TG, you flight it so well and I've noticed how you really work the golf ball. Around a golf course like Centurion, how does that help you, and do you think it's going to be a good thing going into Royal Liverpool in two weeks?

TALOR GOOCH: Yeah, I grew up in an area of the world that gets pretty windy, and so as you can see out here, there's going to be some wind, so that is my comfort zone.

I wish I could hit tee balls like he does sometimes where I

don't even have to worry about the wind, I just send it. But yeah, I think as the wind continues to blow out here, it plays into my advantage.

Q. You always talk about the rule of 67. You shot another 67 today. Do you think about that when you're coming down the stretch? In the back of your head are you like, oh, maybe I shouldn't make a birdie?

TALOR GOOCH: Not at all. I always joke with my caddie, if I didn't have the scorecard, the little section of keeping my own score, I would forget my scores at times. I have, I guess you would say, a quiet mind out there that I'm not thinking about outcomes, results, all that. I'm just trying to hit the next fairway, next green.

Q. Thomas, does the Ryder Cup ever go through your mind at all? Do you ever think, if I can win a couple of events I'll get on to it?

THOMAS PIETERS: No, because I've been playing so crap, so it has not crossed my mind. Not really. Like I made this decision to come to LIV, and I kind of left everything behind. If they decide otherwise in the end, that's maybe good for me. But as of now, I'm not worried about it at all.

Q. When you joined with LIV, Mark Steinberg and Excel dropped you almost immediately. Did you have any conversations with him when you were coming to join LIV, and why do you think they got rid of you?

THOMAS PIETERS: I'm not going to comment on that.

Q. Talor, it's obviously undeniable that the strength of field in LIV Golf events is now very strong, and you're playing very well. That being said, the conversion rate through the PGA TOUR through 54 holes is around 40 percent. What would you say to people who suggest that maybe you shouldn't be part of the conversation for the Ryder Cup, given you play 18 holes less every week?

TALOR GOOCH: How many days is the Ryder Cup?

Q. Tell us a little bit about the fans out there today. We had big, big crowds, at least double or triple from what we had last year. Did you guys feel a big presence, and how were the UK fans receptive of you guys?

TALOR GOOCH: It's always fun playing with Harold in the UK because his caddie is from over here, and there's always the argument of who's got the better fans and who's got the more boisterous fans.

Yeah, it was a great day out there, and obviously a little bit different than a year ago. The walking paths between holes were a little bit more crunched this year than last year.

Yeah, it was awesome, and it's cool that this is starting to become the norm out here.

Q. Thomas, how was your experience with the fans today?

THOMAS PIETERS: Really good, yeah. She was really loud, kept yelling, so that's good.

No, the fans have been good. Yeah, same as every tournament really. But the fact that it's sold out every day is pretty cool.

Q. Are you guys going to go watch DJ Snake, most important?

THOMAS PIETERS: I'm putting her to bed.

TALOR GOOCH: It's my girl's birthday, too, so I've got to go celebrate with her.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports