

LIV Golf United Kingdom

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Rocester, England, UK

JCB Golf and Country Club

Majesticks Golf Club

Lee Westwood

Ian Poulter

Sam Horsfield

Laurie Canter

Press Conference



things, a few different activities for the youth.

Majesticks have really led the way off the course. How proud are you of the continued difference that the team has made over the years?

IAN POULTER: Yeah, I think we're all exceptionally proud.

I think when we look back to year 1 and the vision of what Little Sticks could be, we sit here today, and as you say, it's over 40,000 kids, it's closer to 50,000, 300 plus schools that it's in the PE curriculum. That in itself I think is a credit to the whole team, Jordan and the team behind the scenes that have built this programme and the vision behind it to try and get golf clubs into kids' hands in the school system.

We've all done days and we've all spent time with these schools, and it's just amazing to see how good they work as a team and as a unity and as groups, even individuals that take on all these challenges.

It's been a hard four years to put it into all these schools, but it's very, very special to be here today. Proud that from a team perspective, Majesticks, I think, have done an amazing job with that. Long may that continue.

THE MODERATOR: Sam, you've got very strong local ties to the region, to this course. This event has become one of the marquee stops for LIV Golf the past few years. As an English player, what does it mean to compete in an event here and one that continues to grow year over year?

IAN POULTER: Sleep in your own bed as well.

SAM HORSFIELD: We can't say that very often, can we. It's really special. JCB, Graeme and Mark, who's the GM here, have been amazing with me, and they let me use the facilities and practise and play here when I'm in the UK. For me, it's such a special week. My family actually just moved back from the States to England a couple months ago, so this is their first time seeing the event and everything that the Majesticks do, the tournament, what it holds.

Really looking forward to the week. I know I know the

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Let's welcome to the media centre Majesticks Golf Club. We've got co-captains Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter, Sam Horsfield and Laurie Canter.

Lee, we'll start with you. We've seen the success that the Rippers have had in Adelaide, the Southern Guards have had in South Africa, when the host team really owns the event and the fans really rallied behind them. This is now our third year at JCB, fifth year in England. We've got the Majesticks Pub, we've got the Tea Party hospitality. Is this a week that each year you really circle and look forward to coming back to?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, for sure. It's always great playing in front of home fans, and our best ever result so far was in the first one at Centurion.

IAN POULTER: Was it that long ago?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, and it feels like it as well. We started off pretty strongly last year and just dropped away a little bit, but it kind of gives you a good feeling with all the crowd support and playing 9 and seeing the Majesticks and the Tea Party and the pub back there, as well.

I think we probably have a lot of friends here. I've certainly got a lot of friends coming town in Nottinghamshire this week. I'm a Midlands lad. It really is a home game this week.

Q. Ian, the Little Sticks programme is in over 350 schools. It's throughout the UK. It's impact more than 40,000 students. I know this Thursday, I believe the team is wearing special polos to honour the programme, is partnering with HSBC on a few different



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support for us is going to be better than what it was last year. It's always a week that we circle on our calendar.

THE MODERATOR: Laurie, your journey with LIV Golf has been a unique one. You were part of the original Majesticks squad at Centurion in 2022. You've competed in 20-some events over the first couple years. You've won on other tours. You've played as a reserve, as a wild card, then made the decision to rejoin the Majesticks entering this season. How would you put into words what this experience with LIV is for you and certainly with this team and what it means to be part of the Majesticks?

LAURIE CANTER: Wow, that's a big question. Yes, generally being part of this league has been so eye-opening for me as a golfer. If I was just giving that as the opener, just the experiences I've had through the events I've played, the people I've played with, mates I've made, it's been like an incredible journey. Really supported me as a player.

Then as this team, obviously the two guys to my right, I said this in 2022 at the opening event, they were generally role models, guys I looked up to growing up. As I've gotten to know them, I respect them a little bit less now (laughter) -- no, they're a couple of very special guys.

Then like Sammy as a fourth, it has been really fun to come back this year.

I think we're probably all looking at the team results this year, and we're looking and hoping for a bit more in the last four events.

As a journey and to sum up, it's been absolutely amazing.

Q. As you guys mentioned, this is the first time that the four of you have been together on English soil since 2022, the first event as a team. Just wondering what you remember about that first week and how you managed to pull off the draft coup of getting all for Englishmen on the same team.

IAN POULTER: Yeah, 2022, it feels a while ago now. Look, there was a lot of uncertainty this week. Obviously it was our first week, and we weren't sure how everyone was going to accept us.

I think today when we sit here as four Englishmen on this great team, we had a lot of success that week. It was so much fun. We're trying hard to get back on the podium.

But look, there's been a lot of change in the golf system since 2022 and where we are today. It's come a long way, what LIV has achieved in that time frame. It's pretty

remarkable.

But look, that was a great week. I remember it only like it was yesterday, but it was four years ago. We had a pretty enjoyable week that week.

LEE WESTWOOD: I'm just happy to be up here not fielding questions on Vladimir Putin and Russia. That's how it's changed, right?

IAN POULTER: I did play the Russian Open in 19 --

LEE WESTWOOD: That was on the European Tour, right?

Yeah, I think there was a lot of trepidation that first event, wasn't there. When it was kind of balls in the air and we hit our first shots, it was like, right, we're off now, this thing is real and it's going to get going.

A lot has happened in the last five seasons, and we've shaken it up a bit, I'd say. It needed it. Golf needed it.

Q. Sam, how would you describe these past four years since that Centurion event?

SAM HORSFIELD: It's been amazing, right? Going off what Laurie said earlier, obviously growing up, role models and having the opportunity 14 weeks a year to be around Ryder Cup legends and legends of the game has been amazing. Things I've learnt on the golf course from them but more importantly off the golf course, how to become more professional and how to handle life situations and stuff.

I was 25 back then. Not many 25-year-olds get that opportunity. I can't thank them enough. They've been amazing to me. Looking forward to the future.

Q. Ian, you've won 17 pro events in 12 different countries but none in England. I'm wondering when you look at your career, how do you process that? Is that a big deal, or is it, whatever, it doesn't really matter?

IAN POULTER: I remember when Lee beat me at the Belfry, which is probably the reason I haven't won in the UK, and Justin managed to beat me around Woburn Golf Club and I finished second. Thanks for reminding me I've never won on home soil.

SAM HORSFIELD: That's pretty crazy, actually.

IAN POULTER: Yeah, I was pretty frustrated with Lee's performance that week and Justin's, I have to say, when I was looking him barbecues every night and letting him stay

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

at my house. That was a bit uncalled for.

Yeah, look, it would be nice to tick that box. I think I've been very lucky to win in as many countries as I have but not as many as this great man sitting next to me. I don't know how many continents --

LEE WESTWOOD: 21 different countries.

IAN POULTER: Listen, I've won in a couple, he's won in most. I'd love to tick this box if I can. That would be a huge honour to be able to do that, especially in front of home fans and having the all the support that we have. That would be pretty magical.

LEE WESTWOOD: You give me one in Italy and I'll give you one in England; how's that?

IAN POULTER: Okay, sounds good. Let's do it.

Q. For Ian and Lee, obviously the league has been on a break for seven weeks, and there's been a lot of time to take stock and look at the future ahead. How involved have you two been as co-captains with the meetings, the discussions with the leadership and sort of what is your perspective on the look ahead for next year?

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, there's obviously meetings going on at a higher level than what we're privy to. We've been kept well informed of what's going on whenever there's information to pass on and relay down to us.

I feel like I know enough about what's going on, and I'm optimistic for the future, yeah.

Q. Do you feel more optimistic now than you did say at Valderrama or Mexico City?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I think so. I think I do, yeah. We've been informed of a lot of what's going on. Obviously there's some stuff that is still to be -- there's stuff in the works. There's a process going on. Maybe nobody knows how that's going to turn out at this very moment, so there's nothing to relay on about that. But yeah, I don't feel like I'm being kept in the dark or anything like that. It's very transparent.

Q. You've both made a lot of contacts over your long career. There's been talk of other guys bringing forward potential investors. Have you pitched any prospective investors from this part of the big, businessman or companies that you think would like to get involved with the project?

IAN POULTER: I have, yeah. I certainly have, of the people that I've known. We've been playing golf around the world for now 27, 28 years and Lee a bit longer, so we have met a lot of people, and we know a lot of people in private equity. Obviously putting their names forward to look at this as the bigger picture. I think everyone is trying incredibly hard, the amount of hours that the team are actually putting in to have a 2.0 version is pretty impressive. I think they're doing everything they possibly can.

Q. Obviously you'll be hoping for the best, but if it doesn't come off, how would you sum up the scale of the league has had on the game for better or worse?

IAN POULTER: I think the league has done an amazing job. Globally, I think we can -- if there's no forward, as you say, you'd be pretty proud of what this business has been able to achieve in a short period of time. Selfishly, from a Majesticks point of view, when we look at how we've impacted kids in the UK in as many schools and as many kids as we've put golf clubs in hands, that would be my biggest takeaway, that we've definitely made a difference.

Q. It's the first time we've had the chance to speak to you since you guys have settled the fines with the European Tour. I wondered why now felt like the right time to do that and what are your plans for playing the European Tour in the future?

IAN POULTER: Look, the fines were always going to be paid at some point, and that was down to myself and Lee to choose when that time was right.

Look, the European Tour and LIV Golf and the acceptance of it all, it's all in a very different position today than what it was four years ago when we were being fined the way we were. There are no fines in place today for guys that are playing on LIV Golf, and that's a massive change. When you look certainly how Jon and Tyrrell were treated back in the day, to still be able to play European Tour golf and play in Ryder Cups.

Look, things are moving forward in the right direction. What does it mean for me playing-wise on the European Tour? I'm not sure yet, to be honest with you. I'm still hopeful that things work out in the right way for me to play a number of different tournaments at different times.

My exemptions are being burnt year in, year out right now which is unfortunate because they took the opportunity in November, if you didn't rejoin they would reduce your exemption years year on, year out. It's a shame they did that. It's a shame they devalued the legends category from 5A to 11A, which isn't helpful to get in some certain

tournaments.

We'll see; if some of the tournaments directors would really like me to go and play in their tournament and it doesn't compete, they know my number. I've played those tournaments before. If they want to give me a call, then let's have a chat.

Q. For Lee, I know the fines weren't something you guys initially agreed with in the first place. Was it a difficult decision to make to eventually say, yes, I'm going to do this to play in Europe in the future?

LEE WESTWOOD: Just to follow on from what Ian said, what it does is gives us options having them paid. When the current financial backers of the tour are talking about pulling out and we're being indemnified, it just makes sense to get them paid straight away before they do pull out. That's really why we had them paid when we did.

But I still don't agree with the fines because we are being completely treated differently to the people playing on this tour. I think the fines were excessive, as well, when you consider what other people did and how much they got fined historically.

Q. On that, I know people like Laurie and Tyrrell have sort of come to some sort of agreement to allow them to play. Would you be willing to meet with the DP World Tour on a deal that would be similar?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yes, there are conversations being had, but I'm not sure that the DP World Tour know what position they're currently in. So negotiations from their side are sort of -- it's tough for them to make a decision.

Q. Ian, are you in the same boat?

IAN POULTER: Look, I reached out a long time ago to have a conversation. I'm still waiting for a day and a time for them to actually get back to me.

But look, I live in America. How many events could I ever see me playing moving forward? Not that many. But listen, I would still play a few if I wanted to. To be honest with you, for me it's more about if the promoter wants me to play. I don't need to play. I've played a lot of tournaments in 28 years.

But if it's good for the promoter, if it's good for the tournament, if it's good for the fans, if it's good for my schedule and it works, then of course. I would always be happy to play. It was a tour I grew up on. It was a tour I first got my card on to go and play. We've played so many Ryder Cups. We've done so many great things globally

around the world. The same way that tour travelled a lot in the early days, Lee and I have won a lot of tournaments around the world, certainly, on that tour.

I'm still waiting for my phone to ring, but unfortunately that call is not incoming apparently.

Q. Just to avoid any ambiguity, you said the DP World Tour doesn't know what position they're in. Talk about what you meant when you said that.

LEE WESTWOOD: I think they're spinning a lot of plates at the moment, right, with funding from the PGA TOUR and things like that, and it's clear to me that their fields improve when LIV players are allowed to play.

But LIV players aren't allowed to play on the PGA TOUR at the moment, are they, yet the PGA TOUR gets a certain amount of say. They have a board member on the European Tour, and they fund it a lot. So they probably have a certain amount of say down at Wentworth, right? That's what I'm trying to say.

Q. Leading off from that, one of the massive talking points out of that whole relationship is the 10 cards and sort of the talent drain that is put on the DP World Tour. Do you think that's been a misstep from the DP World Tour to tie in that closely with the PGA TOUR and have the likes of Ryan Fox, who he's just won a major championship, but he was, I think, a player that was Order of Merit that then become a full-time PGA TOUR and is now not competing so often on the DP World Tour?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, it's going to certainly suit certain players for going over there whose ambitions are to play the PGA TOUR. But from a business point of view, it can't be good for the European Tour to give your 10 best players every year, 10 of your best assets, away to what is a rival tour when you're looking at the schedule and where tournaments are played from January around to August, which is what the PGA TOUR seem to be focused on, even though those 10 cards aren't getting in the biggest events over there. They're getting in a few of the events. They'll probably be called tier 2, isn't it, for next year.

I'm not a huge fan of it. You don't build up a -- the fans don't get to build up a relationship with the top players coming through on the European Tour because they don't see them often enough for long enough now. What one -- we'll call it a good year, but sometimes it's just a decent year. One decent year and you're off to the other side, right? Those 10 players that might have played with legends of the European Tour for another couple of years and been in those TV groups where the fans can build up a



relationship with them and see them often now don't play in those TV groups. It's kind of one year, and then they're off.

It's a short-term view, I think. The winners in it are the PGA TOUR because for 10 players going over there, they're maybe going to pick up one future star. But that's not great for the European Tour.

Q. When the DP World Tour punished you as extremely as they did back in 2022, considering how much you'd given to the tour at that stage, how did that feel?

LEE WESTWOOD: I wasn't impressed, really, about that.

Q. Do you have the same sort of love for the European Tour and European golf now that you've had?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yes. That's my home tour. It's where I grew up playing golf. When you look historically at my career, it's a 34-season career. I've been a PGA TOUR member for about six of those years. I've won twice over there, '98, 2010. Didn't take my PGA TOUR card up for those years when I could have done.

So I think that states that my commitment has always been to the European Tour. Through the COVID years, the PGA TOUR -- when we came out of it, the PGA TOUR started up straight away. A lot of people went and played on the PGA TOUR, kind of said screw it to the European Tour, but there was one person that stood by the European Tour and backed up all those tournaments at Hanbury Manor and places like that when we came out, Close House, who hosted the British Masters a couple of times. You don't need me to sit here and tell you how much of a stalwart and a supporter of the European Tour I've been. I've done it with actions.

That seems to all have been forgotten.

Q. I asked the Legion guys this question. I wanted to get your thoughts on they've changed the 6th hole to a par-5 --

IAN POULTER: Thank God.

LEE WESTWOOD: They should have kept the up tee as well, though.

SAM HORSFIELD: Normally it's a par-5 minus four days for the tournament. It's designed as a par-5. The green is a par-5 green.

LEE WESTWOOD: The fairway is better as a par-5 as well. When it's off the front tee, you're coming too much

across the angle. There's a huge advantage to being able to carry the traps on the left --

IAN POULTER: For the longer hitters.

LEE WESTWOOD: And it just plays better from that back tee. (Inaudible) the course designer intended you to hit it into.

IAN POULTER: I played it yesterday, and I went out and Richard, my caddie, hasn't caddied on this golf course before. I said, dude, wait until you see this par-4. It's unbelievably tough. So I've hit it in the middle of the fairway, we're going in with 5-wood, knowledge it just up by the edge of the green, chipped it on tough, and I'm look, look at this green, look how hard this hole is as a par-4. Last night we're sitting at dinner in the clubhouse, and they're like, no, we've changed it back to a par-5. So it's not so bad after all. It's one of those.

I think the difficulty on that hole is the green is a par-5 green, so generally it can be a bit slopier and a bit smaller. There's tiny little pockets on that green.

But the issue is if you miss that fairway, there is nowhere to lay up because you've got the cross bunkers. It's very hard to carry them. It's a very, very, very tough par-4 when it plays at 490. It's an easier par-5 clearly playing it whatever it is right now, 5 --

SAM HORSFIELD: It's like 510 but it plays up 20-something yards.

IAN POULTER: It's a better par-5. It will feel less damaging and less stressful playing it as a par-5 than a par-4.

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