

LIV Golf Houston

Sunday, 9 June, 2024

Houston, Texas, USA

Golf Club of Houston

Cleeks GC

Martin Kaymer

Adrian Meronk

Richard Bland

Kalle Samooja

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Martin, heading into the U.S. Open next week, going back to Pinehurst where you won 10 years ago, what does this mean to you, giving you that momentum, that excitement heading into next week?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, I think I need to separate a couple things. First, for me individually, I was somehow happy with this week, the way I performed. I know what I need to work on. So that feels good going into Pinehurst. Obviously with the memories from 10 years ago, I really look forward to going to a very positive place in my heart.

Then coming here knowing we were doing well, we were in good shape, and our form was trending in that direction that we want. To actually pull it off and win this thing, I mean, it made me super happy. It means a lot for us as a team and for me as a captain.

The last two years has been quite difficult. We've been so many times on the bottom of the leaderboard.

I was quite unhappy with the way I performed because I really couldn't help the team for several reasons. Obviously the injury was a big one.

Finally, my game is coming back slowly, and that helps the team. It feels good that you can be part of a team and not always dragging the team down.

We have a good team spirit. We all get along really well. I was very pleased for Adrian. I'm sure he would have liked to have made a couple more birdies coming down the last four or five holes, but in general we need to focus on the positive things.

He also goes into next week with good form. The other



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two guys, they go on vacation, to New York, play a little bit of golf on the side, I think.

I look forward to going to the U.S. Open next week with the positivity that we gained this week.

Q. Adrian, you and I were chatting in the golf cart, and you said to me, typically on a regular tour event, you'd be back in the clubhouse pouting right now and really pissed off because you came in second place, but you're happy and excited. Tell us about the team element and what makes LIV so special.

ADRIAN MERONK: Yeah, that's what's cool about LIV, to have three other guys with you on the team, and even if you don't win or you don't perform as you want individually, you still have that team standings.

It's great to have on Sunday four scores counting because anything can happen. Even though sometimes you don't play your best individually, you still want to have your team performing well, and you still keep grinding, and that's what's cool about the team environment and the team leaderboard.

Yeah, I'm super proud to be on the team with all these guys and super happy about the win.

Q. Richard, can you sum up this feeling for us right now?

RICHARD BLAND: Yeah, it's pretty cool. Like you say, I haven't experienced anything like that to do with golf, so yeah, as we came off the stage, I said to these guys, we are doing this again. That was just -- yeah, really, really special. We've had a rough kind of 18 months with it, but I was super positive about this team very early. I knew that Martin would be back to somewhere near the player we know he is this year, and when that happened, then with two other world-class players, as I said in Vegas, I think we're going to prove a lot of people wrong this year.

It's interesting, me and Martin, we sat in Singapore after finishing second, and we were -- if I can say it, we were pretty pissed off. I said to him, hey, isn't that great, that we're actually finishing second and we're disappointed about it.



Then to come out at the next event and win, for one, it just shows you the group of guys we've got, the team spirit, and what we're capable of.

We're going to do this again.

Q. Kalle, you came into this season obviously new to the Cleeks. I don't know if you knew heading in you guys were kind of the underdogs and kind of the dark horse, and here you are now only a couple events in taking home your first team victory. How does that feel knowing that you're such a big contributing factor to the success this team is having?

KALLE SAMOOJA: Yeah, I was following LIV already before I got here, and of course I know how Cleeks was doing last year. But this was a team where I wanted to join. Seeing Martin improve his form and health this year, we knew that it's going to boost the whole team.

The strength among the team has been awesome, and the caddies, we all get along well. Team managers out here, they're all good, take care of us well.

We have really a good group of people around us. We just got this week the pieces together. Like we said earlier -- at least I didn't play that well in my opinion, but we got the pieces together as a team to get the win, so it just shows I think the potential we have as a group of four good players.

I'm really looking forward for the last part of the season.

Q. Richard, we were all here in the media center watching everything go down, and I made the comment that I realized at one point you were in 30 something but you were over every shot grinding because every single putt mattered, every shot mattered for you guys to take home that W and it was really special to watch. Did you feel that pressure, and did you say I know I'm not contending for the individual, but it's so important that I have a great day for my team?

RICHARD BLAND: Yeah, yeah, very much so. I'm going out start of the day I think in 40th place or something like that, so yeah, my week as an individual is pretty much done. But I knew we had a chance.

I didn't show up the first two days. Whether that was a little bit of hangover from a couple of weeks ago, I don't know, but I just wanted to put a shift in for the team today. Fortunately I could do that.

But yeah, I think the camera came to me about the second

shot on 8, and I'm like, okay, I'm not doing anything really, so we must be pretty good as a team. So yeah, it put a little bit of pressure on the last few holes.

It was just purely for the team today, absolutely. I'm just glad I could help out.

Q. Martin, this is the first time you're touching the trophy. We sat here at the beginning of the week at our first press conference, and you said, all I want to do is touch a trophy. Here you are touching the trophy and you're with your best mates and celebrating as a team. Same question I had for Bland; can you sum up what this moment feels like for you?

MARTIN KAYMER: Obviously it's a very proud moment that we were all waiting for for a long time, but now it's important to keep pushing. The goal has changed all of a sudden. I would say if you would have asked me three, four weeks ago, is top 5 realistic going into Dallas, I would have said, yes, it's always realistic, but it's going to be a very, very difficult path to get there. Singapore we did well. This week we did well. Now the goal has changed to try to get to the top three spots because it doesn't really matter if you finished fourth or 13th. So top 3 is the new goal.

As I said, now is the time we need to keep pushing. We need to keep working hard because we only have two, two and a half months left of the year for the LIV events, so we need to keep grinding. We need to make a proper push to give ourselves a good chance to finish in the top 3. A win is nice, and we're going to celebrate tonight, but with all respect, that's my mentality. When Monday comes, it was last week, so we need to keep going.

Q. Martin, I think on TV you said you were the only player up here with experience with popping champagne bottles. How was that experience today?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, Richard asked me if I ever did that, and I said, yeah, at the Ryder Cup I did. Kalle, I think he's a dark horse. I think he has experience. I don't know what Adrian does in Poland. I think he threw a few parties there back in the day, as well, or in Dubai right now.

As I said earlier, it's such a great feeling to experience that for the first time. You watch the guys, 14 times last year, seven, eight times in 2022, and you watch it on YouTube when you're in the car back to the hotel, I mean, it feels shitty. We didn't even get close.

Now for the first time this year, we have good chances, and we could win this thing. It's not so much about the champagne. It's just it gives you a little bit more than what you usually experience. It's inspiring.



It's nice that we keep pushing each other, and I think hopefully for the next five, six events that we have to play, we can continue doing that, and then we can have a good winter. But until then, it feels good in the spot where we're at right now.

Q. Blandy, you've pretty much bled Cleeks blood ever since you've gotten here. Were you aware this team was the only team that had yet to celebrate a trophy, and did that weigh on your mind at all?

RICHARD BLAND: No, we're not the only -- I think other teams haven't won yet; is that right?

Q. Individual or team.

RICHARD BLAND: Oh, right. Oh, I see, right. I didn't realize that. So I thought you were talking just about the team. Yeah, as Martin just said, we're all professional golfers, and we want to win. That's what we're here for, first and foremost. So when you see other guys lifting trophies, of course, that's what you want to do.

It's easy to see that we were going in the right direction. We were. Today we were able to pull it off.

What a great feeling. It's very, very special.

Q. You seem to have a lot of energy in that champagne bottle --

RICHARD BLAND: I kind of think Adrian went earlier. Martin hadn't even got the trophy in the air and I was -- well, I think someone got me before the trophy even went in the air, so I thought, all right, if we're going, we're going.

But yeah, just great. We'll celebrate tonight. LIV kindly put a bottle of Dom Perrignon in my hotel room, so I think we'll be taking that to the restaurant tonight. I'm not sure what the corkage fee will be. Maybe the Cleeks will pick that one up. We're going to have a really good dinner tonight, and then Martin and Adrian will go off to Pinehurst, which I'm sure they're going to do really, really well. It wouldn't surprise me if they're both in it come Sunday. We'll certainly be watching.

But yeah, just can't wait for Nashville. LIV just keeps getting better.

Q. For all of you, I wanted to ask you about a couple of stretches. The first stretch came midway in the round. The score was really tight on the team leaderboard. Then you guys seemed to all find another gear at the same time, and all of a sudden you were leading by

six. Did you realize at that time, were you aware that everybody else was playing -- had hit a hot stretch during that time and maybe you see the leaderboard change quickly with you guys going up to the top?

ADRIAN MERONK: Yeah, to be honest, I saw the leaderboard on my 6th or 7th hole and we were like fourth, like eight behind or something. So I was like, okay.

Then I think on 12 or 13th hole, I looked at the leaderboard, and we were up by six or seven. I was like, oh, this is nice, this is looking good. The next time I saw a leaderboard it was on my 17th hole, we were leading by two, and I saw the guys on the 18th hole after my tee shot, and I realized we must be doing okay.

My second shot on 18, I knew it was kind of difficult. I mean, important and difficult at the same time.

But to see the guys on the fairway supporting me, that gave me extra confidence and extra belief in myself that I can do it, and yeah, I pulled it off.

Q. Kalle, were you looking at the team leaderboard?

KALLE SAMOOJA: Yeah, I was, actually. Well, the last time I saw that was on 18, and I saw we were eight, nine behind maybe. But then I was able to birdie a few holes, and we came -- well, after my bogey on 6, my caddie said that we were six ahead. I said, where did that come from? So it was a Big Sur prize, and I knew Smash is right behind us, so I was playing with Brooksy, so he hit a great approach shot on the par-3, 7, so he birdied 7 and 8, and I tried to somehow hole my putts, and I couldn't, but he holed his. I knew that I needed either one of those putts to make it count because I knew that it's going to be a tight battle in the end.

Fortunately we were two clear in the end, and it was fun to watch Adrian play 18. He had his individual win in his mind but also the team thing in his mind. Yeah, it was an interesting finish.

Q. Martin, were you watching the team leaderboard? There was a time where you guys were up by six, and all of a sudden it did appear there were three straight bogeys by you guys?

MARTIN KAYMER: I think it's one of those things, you don't really watch for it. You see your team. I saw the Cleeks always being fourth. I've never seen them anywhere else. I hit a great stretch. I birdied five holes within six holes, or five out of six, and I think Richard made a couple birdies. I don't know what Kalle and Adrian did, but then all of a sudden, as they said, we were six ahead,

and I had two holes to go. I said to my caddie, I mean, four scores are counting so a lot can happen, but a lot has to happen right now, and then I made bogey on the first hole, and I thought, you really don't want to screw it up for the team.

Obviously I was worried about my own score, but the team is -- this is why we are here. This is why we signed up for LIV, to play for the team. The individual is great, but to celebrate together and to do that together, this is why we came here, and this is why LIV exists, to have that team competition.

As I said earlier, I'm not really watching the leaderboard until maybe the last three or four holes, and then things get serious.

Q. Blandy, that last birdie in a you had gave you the two-shot cushion. Did you realize at the time that --

RICHARD BLAND: I had no idea at that point or at any point we were leading by six. I never saw like a -- obviously I was starting completely the wrong end of the course. I was with the guys not really doing much.

I never actually saw -- I saw that we were -- at one point we weren't even on the leaderboard. I just kind of kept going as best I could, and then I saw just through like my position that we were tied second, then first, and I managed to make three birdies around sort of 5, 6 and 8. Then I stuffed up 10.

I'm just like, oh, God, no, I can't do this. I gave myself such a talking-to to the 11th, and I said, you'd better birdie this hole. Fortunately I hit a great wedge shot to two feet and knocked it in. So I'm thinking, well, at least that's going to happen. I had no idea whether we were one ahead, five ahead. I never saw -- at that point I never knew we were six ahead. If I had known that I probably would have hit 5-iron off the 10th tee.

So yeah, I was kind of thinking maybe we were only one or two ahead. I never knew that we were six. I wouldn't have got so nervous.

Q. Adrian, at 15, obviously that was kind of the swing hole. Did you sense at that point that -- you were still two shots back with three holes left so you still had a chance, but did you think about the team, like I've got to really play well to get back into the team environment? What was your thinking coming off 15?

ADRIAN MERONK: Well, yeah, I was only two shots back individually, so I knew there's still a chance. I was doing my best to make some birdies. Unfortunately they didn't

drop. But yeah, 15 was the point where I lost a little bit of momentum.

But still, I gave myself a chance on 18. I didn't leave it short. That's all I can ask for.

Yeah, Carlos played great today, really solid. We kind of were battling all day, just me and him. But yeah, he played really great. He really deserved it. I hope I can get him next time.

Q. Is this the summer of Blandy?

RICHARD BLAND: Well, I think it'll be the summer of the Cleeks, definitely. But no. Obviously what happened a couple weeks ago, obviously I'm super proud of that, but I'm also super proud of these three guys here, as well. Like I said, there's definitely more to come from us.

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