

# Men's Olympic Golf Competition

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Le Golf National

## Byeonghun An

## Tom Kim

### Press Conference

TEAM KOREA

MARK WILLIAMS: Thank you for joining us for the first interview of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

We are here with Team Korea, and we have Tom Kim and Ben An with us.

Just like to welcome you guys, congratulations on making the team, and maybe just start with, Tom. You were just saying you played yesterday. What was your first impression of the golf course?

TOM KIM: Yeah, the course is actually looking really, really good. I was expecting a lot more rough than I would imagine because of the Ryder Cup, and I played here last year at The French Open.

But the course is actually looking in really good shape. I think it's going to be a really good test of golf for everyone. You really can't fake it around here. You have to play some really good golf around here to win medals and I think it's going to be a great test.

MARK WILLIAMS: What's been your buildup to this week?

BYEONGHUN AN: I just got here a couple hours ago. I played here in 2016, I believe in, in The French Open. I remember because of the time I played, and then The Ryder Cup a few years ago, I remember it being a beautiful golf course.

So I'm looking forward to seeing it again this week. Hopefully the course will be in great shape.

MARK WILLIAMS: Ben, you have some history with Olympics in your family, your parents have both won medals. How meaningful is it for you to be here and competing now?



BYEONGHUN AN: It means I think more than other golfers, I guess. It's always been my dream to win a medal in the Olympics, and I've probably watched the Olympics more than any other golfers than anybody else growing up I guess, my parents being Olympians.

Hopefully I'll get some kind of a medal this year but I know they only played it once. So me being here a second time has a little upper hand on them but still no medal yet. Hopefully I get some kind of medal, hopefully Gold because they never had a Gold, so yeah, we'll see.

**Q. For both of you, an awkward break between The Open, and even The Scottish Open, and then coming here. How did you spend the last week between maybe trying to take a couple days off or also stay in form?**

TOM KIM: I stayed over here in the U.K. For me, just there's no reason to go back home because it's going to be so short.

So I stayed over here with my family and I stayed like an hour and a half away from London and got some good breaks and played some golf.

BYEONGHUN AN: I went back home. I had family back home in Orlando. So after Scottish and The Open, I decided to go back for five days, I think, and just flew here. I think four weeks away from home was a little too much without family.

All I did was try to stay in the same time zone, slept really early, woke up really early so I don't have to adjust to the time difference again. So that's probably the only thing I did is sleep a little early and wake up a little early.

**Q. Did you play anywhere in particular?**

TOM KIM: I actually was at a test facility. It was easy for me and obviously the team was nice, and I could get some club work done because I needed some work on that. Nothing too crazy. I practiced at Woburn, which that's where the facility is, and they took care of me really well

stayed low and just chilled.

**Q. You said watching the Olympics, you probably watched more of the Olympics than maybe Tom or someone else on Tour. Was it this anticipatory thing with the Olympics in your household? What was the experience watching it when you were a child?**

BYEONGHUN AN: Yeah, I think I first watched it, first Olympics that I watched was 2000 I think in Sydney I think, and golf wasn't in it back then.

I think I just heard a news it was in -- when I was like 15, I can't remember how old I was but golf, I never thought about golf being played in the Olympics and then after 2016, I'm like, that would be cool to get a medal in the Olympics.

Probably starting 2014 is where I thought, I really want to play in the Olympics and try to get a medal in golf but like I said, growing up, waxing a lot of Olympics over the years, this feels a little more special for me.

**Q. What was the one sport you watched the most?**

BYEONGHUN AN: Table tennis, obviously.

**Q. What medal did they win?**

BYEONGHUN AN: My mom won a Silver Medal and a Bronze.

**Q. Are the medals at your house?**

BYEONGHUN AN: I've seen it once in my life, I think. I was 11 years old I think. It was in the States, so I think I remember seeing it once or twice, and then I haven't seen it since.

**Q. The question for you, Ben, actually for both of you. Was it pretty tight with you and Sungjae going to the end of qualifying, and how much did that weigh on you?**

BYEONGHUN AN: It was very tight. There for four or five of us, Sungjae, me, Tom. Just before the U.S. Open, everyone was playing decent golf. Could have been anybody but at the end it was me and Tom. It was really close.

It was a good competition, I guess, for Team Korea. Obviously Sungjae has been playing really well since the U.S. Open as well, and you know, he's technically ranked higher than both of us, but yeah, we are here and hopefully we can get some kind of medal and walk away.

**Q. Leading to questions for both, is the -- I mean, so many other sports have national qualifying trials and what have you. Why does the OWGR work for determining who gets to the Olympics, and is there a different way than that?**

TOM KIM: I think the World Ranking provides you the status of who has played the best golf, and I think that's why it works so well because you see the top 10 players in the world, you don't just see them -- obviously the divisor plays a role but the majority, the 90 percent, there's a reason why they are inside the top 20 in the world. You look at their performance over the past few years, it's always been consistent.

You don't have a guy who is 200th in the world suddenly within two weeks reach 50th in the world. It's years and years of consistent performance. And I think that's why it's so good to consistently have, when you do qualify for the Olympics, it's actually because you've played the best for your country and you're leading and you deserve to be on top. That's why I think this system is so consistent and good for us players.

When we do step up, we have a lot of confidence in us saying that, I deserve to be here and I deserve to represent my country.

BYEONGHUN AN: I agree. There are zero players in LIV Golf. So it doesn't matter the World Ranking or not. There's a lot of controversies right now whether it's there or not, but for us, there's no Koreans on LIV Golf.

So everybody, all the Korean golfers, are playing Official World Golf Ranking system. It's going to be hard for us to try like U.S., other sports, because a lot of good players live in U.S., mostly and it's not fair to have qualifier in the U.S. for Korean golfers and for us to fly over to Korea and find the time to go and qualify.

As of now, for Korean golfers, I guess the world golf ranking is the only way kind of to tell who goes to the Olympics. Maybe the cutoff date could be a little later. I don't know, two, three weeks before.

But we have to get ready in the uniforms and everything. It's really hard to tell. But like I said, Sungjae has been in great form. Maybe he could have been here instead of one us, but the cutoff was the U.S. Open, it was me and Tom.

I'm not a clever guy; so I can't think of another way than just using the World Golf Ranking as of now. That kind of tells you who is a good golfer or not.

**Q. Can you talk about the contrast between how big the event is for you and how big it might be for your country, how big it might be for golf in general that Olympics is an attractive venue for golf?**

BYEONGHUN AN: Yeah. So golf -- I think golf, being back at home, because of our history with medals, we've never had a Korean golfer win a medal. So I think it would be very big to putt one of our names on that history as part of it.

You know, just we were so good in different sports, like in our tree we just win a Gold Medal. We are so good in other sports; that if one of us can have a Gold Medal and put ourselves up there on the podium it would be good for our country and show fortunate good chance back in Asia golf is really big.

I think it would be important for us to step up and be able to secure a medal. It would be huge for not only our country but golf in Asia, I think if we can somehow do something like that would be very big.

**Q. You've both played Presidents Cup. What can you tell Tom about the emotions he's going to experience teeing off as a member of Team Korea this week?**

BYEONGHUN AN: It's his first time playing Olympics, but he's won a few times on the PGA TOUR, so he knows what to do. He might have some nerves on the first tee. But there's not much I can tell; he knows already. He's been on tour for a long time. He may look like a kid but he's not.

I still learn quite a bit from him when I play with him on the golf course. There's not much I want to tell him. He doesn't need much of advice. He's a great player and he probably has a better mindset than I do maybe.

Might give him a little bit more of pressure wearing this Korean uniform but just got to play his game. As long as he plays his game, he'll with a great chance of medal. Just got to treat this as another tournament. The top three matters the most. Other events, top 10 is decent, top 15 is not bad but this week is kind of top three or nothing almost.

I hope we both of us have a great time and try to play our best and we'll see what kind of medal we get. If not, then it is what it is and we'll just try our best.

**Q. Does it feel different as a team event, though? Because it's an individual competition compared to Presidents Cup. What was the difference for you between representing Internationals and then representing Korea?**

BYEONGHUN AN: This week is more of an individual event. There's no team format or anything. I wish they had -- it would be more fun to have individual and team so both of our scores matter or something like that.

But Presidents Cup is a little different. You play for the points, the 12 1/2 or 13 1/2, whatever points you set up to. You kind of want to play well and contribute to the points.

But this week is more trying to shoot the lowest score possible for, I guess, for the Team Korea but also for yourself as an individual event.

I think there's a little difference between the Olympics and Presidents Cup. Presidents Cup feel like it's more of a strategy into it a little bit with the best score and foursomes, but this week, not much strategy. Just try to play as best as you can.

**Q. I think I know the reason for this but why did you play The French Open last year?**

TOM KIM: The main reason was I was in Europe. I played Wentworth the week before. It only an hour flight from London. I just thought it would be cool to experience it, and for sure, it plays a role where I knew I was going to be here next year at that time.

So it was perfect timing that I could see the course firsthand, and I'm right there, so why wouldn't I come and play.

**Q. You play so many courses around the globe annually. Is it hard to keep track of how this place played last year? Do you have a great memory with when it comes to those things?**

TOM KIM: I have been fortunate with memories where I don't really forget golf courses that I play. Before I got here this week, I can definitely remember all the holes that I played, the condition that I played in.

It is different. We played later in the year. It was raining. It was softer. It seems to be firming out. It's going to be hot this week; so I'm really interested to see because I heard the Ryder Cup was really firm. This place would be really, really cool and really, really challenging if it actually firmed up.

**Q. This came up in Tokyo and probably every Olympics with Sungjae and See Woo last year, but a Gold Medal makes Korean players exempt from military service. I wonder what your status is as it**

**relates to required military service.**

TOM KIM: I think the easiest answer for us is here we're to play good this week. We are not focused on that. We are here to represent our country and I want -- to be honest, I want me and Ben to be standing in that stadium not for exemption but for our country. That's the most important part. That's the pride of being a South Korean, we have our services and it is what it is. We are going to go throughout and we are going to play our best and I really hope he and I are standing on that podium.

**Q. You turned pro at 15?**

TOM KIM: Yeah.

**Q. Or thereabouts. What does it take to be eligible for the Asian Games?**

TOM KIM: I have no clue. They changed a couple of criteria, so I don't know. I heard some rumours they might go back to amateurs only. There's no really -- it changes every other year. So we have no -- I have no idea.

MARK WILLIAMS: Probably all golf for you guys this week but do you think you'll get a chance to attend any other events, and if you could, what would you like to see?

BYEONGHUN AN: I don't know. I don't know, whichever Korean is playing in it for a medal. I think sports when I watch, I like to have someone I root for, and obviously this week being Olympics, I'm definitely rooting for the Koreans.

Maybe -- I don't know. I want to say track and field, the 100 meters, but it finishes too quick, that's the thing, only after nine seconds. Maybe archery. I watched it on TV yesterday, the woman's team archery, and the Koreans got a medal for ten Olympics in a row.

I want to see how, like -- because on TV, I see the target and where they shoot, it's really close, right. But I heard they are pretty far away. So I would like to see it in person and what it feels like and sounds like. Maybe archery is a sport I really wanted to watch if I had to pick one.

TOM KIM: To be honest, I don't really know. But again, it would probably be just whatever sport it is, just one of our countrymen contending for a medal, I think that would be really, really cool. It would be really inspiring. As players, when you see other players achieve something really, really cool for their country it almost inspires you. Hopefully before the weekend, we would be able to experience that.

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