

WM Phoenix Open

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Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Max Homa

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We will get started here with Max Homa at the WM Phoenix Open. Max, I know you only got five holes into your pro-am today and it's been a crazy transition from Pebble. How are you feeling headed into the week and thoughts on the game so far?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, last week was not very good. It was nice to get some work in with my coach yesterday. Feels a lot better. Sometimes you just need to get out of the city you're in and your golf game gets a little bit better. So looking forward to it.

Would have liked to play some more holes today. However, it was nice to go get to take the stuff I worked on and play nine yesterday and some today. It feels good. I always love playing this golf tournament. It's one of the most fun ones we play, one of the most well-manicured golf courses, so it's hard not to feel pretty good going into this week.

Q. Are you feeling okay? You're a little hoarse.

MAX HOMA: Well, last week was freezing and then this week is freezing, so I'm sure everyone has probably got some kind of cold. I feel fine, I'm just losing my voice.

Q. You were on Twitter talking about how your hope is that the Strategic Sports Group can come in and change some things to make it better for the fans. Do you get the sense that's what they're going to do, or do you think the TOUR is going to look pretty similar going forward?

MAX HOMA: If you think I'm in the meetings with the SSG, then you've pegged me wrong. I don't think so. I would hope so. My general point is I feel like that the communication or the things being taken from news in golf now always highlights the money that we're making, and I can guarantee that SSG didn't come in to give us a bunch of money just for fun.

I would imagine they want to make their money back and then some, and if you just keep trickling down that rabbit

hole, how would that happen, I would say one avenue would be to entertain the fans so that we have more fans while keeping the ones that we've got at the moment and making money that way. That's just how I see it.

I don't have a beat on it, but I know that the management of the PGA TOUR wants the PGA TOUR to succeed, and success is having a larger fan base.

I don't know enough about the business, but I don't see how you could do all that by not improving the product and tailoring it to people watching. That's just how I see most sports going. I would assume that that would be the case, but it would be hard for me to know 100 percent for sure, but that feels like a fair assumption.

Q. I'm assuming you're staying at home this week, right?

MAX HOMA: Yeah.

Q. What are some of the perks of that compared to other weeks? Do you have any recommendations of where people should be going?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, one major perk is my son can sleep in his room, and we know where everything is. Last week with the power going out, for example, at Pebble, we were in a house with the Morikawas and we don't have all of his toys, and now you're just full-blown entertaining a one-year-old in a house that's not baby proofed, and it's chaotic. So we have at least that going for us this week.

Recommendations, I do not go outside of my house other than to the golf tournament this week. It's a little bit busy.

But there's a lot of great food options here. It depends on your price point. But there's a lot of great options down by me in Old Town Scottsdale. Favorite restaurant in Scottsdale is called Ocean 44 if you're looking to spend a little bit of money, and if not, there's a great place called Eat Up right by my house that I think is fantastic. Quick, healthy, fast food.

Q. My kids enjoy playing in the rain; does that joy of



goofing off and being in the rain, does that translate at this level, or is it so serious and so locked in that this is more of an annoyance? What's it like to play in the rain?

MAX HOMA: I guess I'd be lying if I said it wasn't annoying, but I don't think that that means it isn't fun. I've always enjoyed playing the Open Championship, and I think a big part of it is because you assume the weather is going to be terrible.

I also think the golf courses are tailored to bad weather a little bit more than in America.

I enjoy it. I actually like when it rains. I like when it's windy. I like when it's miserable because I do think a lot of the players or a handful of players are just going to be over it.

I'm from Los Angeles where it also doesn't rain a whole lot, and I enjoyed as a kid, same as yours, when it rained because I got excited to go to the golf course and practice hitting golf balls when it was wet.

I think I still have a lot of that joy, but it's also annoying. The umbrella back and forth and all that gets old. But I've done pretty well in the rain for a kid from southern California. I would say I must enjoy it somewhere deep down.

Q. What's the craziest thing you've seen out here at this tournament?

MAX HOMA: At this tournament? Oh, that's a good question. Man, I might have already told this story. I don't know if this is the craziest thing I've seen, but it was like my indoctrination into the WM Phoenix Open.

My first year playing here I think was in '19. I teed off the 10th hole and walk off the tee box and there's a massive already like congregation of people walking to 16. As everyone knows at this tournament there's a handful of golf fans and then a handful of people who like to party around a golf tournament. There were two women in front of me, and it was kind of blocked off with all the people across the cart path to the fairway, and I said, "excuse me," and they looked at me and basically gave me the I-have-a-boyfriend look, and I said "excuse me" again, and then they kind of looked at me again and I started to laugh because I was like, I guess what this event is. I said, "I'm playing. I will not be jumping your line; I just need to go over here."

It's just I guess the general theme of this event is when you want to take a break from eating and drinking and laughing and having fun with your friends, you might see some golf

shots. I think it's awesome. I think it's great. I've probably seen crazier. I've seen a lot more inappropriate. That always seems to be the safest story I can tell.

I am looking forward to seeing how much heart these people have this week with the cold and the rain. I know a fairly foolproof way to warm yourself up, and I feel like they're going to take full advantage of that this week.

Q. On 16, people will say it's kind of like white noise, the crowd, and it's actually worse if you were standing there hitting balls silently and someone made one particular noise. Do you feel like you just tune it out because there's so many people there? How does it work in your head?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, it's definitely unique, but I do agree with that. I remember one time we were the last group coming in on Friday, and there was only probably 100 people in there left, which typically would be a lot, but for that it feels not very big. That was hard because they were out for blood at that point. They waited around all day for this moment. You could actually hear what they were saying, and they're yelling while you're hitting, trying to make an impression. That was difficult.

Now I guess when I go back, it does feel a lot more -- it's like a calming chaos.

I don't know, it's fun. I think if you embrace that you're going to get booed -- I've gotten booed for missing a 20-foot putt. I think it's funny and it's fun. You just have to, I think, have the right attitude. It's definitely not -- first year here is very intimidating. It does feel very loud.

As I get a little bit more experience, it does become a little bit more just white noise, rumbling.

Q. I know you don't want to go back to SSG, but you talked about maximizing their profits as a group, and this is a group that has completely figured that out in terms of the folks that are here, the way they built up 16, the entertainment at night. If it is the route that the TOUR takes under SSG, does that make it not quite as fun any longer, going from hey, this is a cool party we do outside the other golf tournaments to this is the norm and now we're in this kind of bubble all the time, or would you relish that and make it more fun every week?

MAX HOMA: I think in a vacuum, that would work. I don't think people recognize that this city, this is like a part of the culture. I don't know if you've spent much time at ASU, but it's kind of unique to that.

I think that we've had events try to do similar types of things. The Rocket Mortgage does a great job at the end of their tournament. 15 has a semi-enclosed area and it's a party hole. I've seen the LIV Tour does a similar thing. Adelaide does a great job. You can try, but you do need the culture of the city to be behind it to make it that great.

I think that this city, it's like a part of -- living here all the time, people just call this the Open: Are you going to the Open? Are you going to the Open? It's a massive ordeal here.

I think that you could try and do that, and I don't think it would be successful. If they were to venture down that and it did work, I think I would like it. It's fun. I just think it is unique to Scottsdale.

Q. Do you think that the clientele that it brings in -- this is a young group. You see a lot of young folks here, 20-somethings that are here all day long. Will that change the demographic of who comes to these tournaments if it does become more that style?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, for sure. I definitely think it would. I think making golf younger is a big goal.

It's tough in cities where -- if we go to LA next week, it's a completely -- there's not a ton of young people that live in the Pacific Palisades unless you're lucky enough for your parents to be very successful. It's a pretty tough area to get real estate.

I just think that it would be great to keep doing something like this. I just don't think it would always land -- I'm sure this costs a lot of money to do, but they're going to get a great return. I'm just not sure it would be something that people would want to venture down. But it is fun to at least have this event with this demographic that at the very least is bringing eyeballs to younger people that this is at least something, and maybe if just a couple people grab on to that and say, I really like golf now, that's a success to me.

Q. What's the best way to keep your focus and composure on hole 15 knowing you're headed to No. 16 and the stadium right after?

MAX HOMA: I don't know, I've been wildly unsuccessful on the 15th hole, so maybe ask Scottie Scheffler that one. There's definitely like a cool anticipation.

In an odd way, it's similar to walking to 17 at Sawgrass. You kind of do think about it throughout the back nine. Obviously as you get to 16, as you've heard in the commercial a million times, it's the longest walk in golf. I don't think it's quite that. But it's fun.

The hardest shot I think -- the two hardest shots are the tee shot on 11 and the tee shot on 17. 15 is not nearly as bad. You almost have to wait for somebody to hit because there could be something, a massive roar, and 11 is the hardest tee shot out here. In that case, I would maybe pay some attention to just the timing of when you can tell someone has already hit and when your window would be to hit if you have that luxury.

15 is not as bad. I think you're just excited to get into 16. It is really cool. I've now played this a handful of times, and I'm still always excited to go into that arena.

But I wouldn't say it's, I guess, focus. It's more just the ruckus that you'll have. You just don't want it to startle you, and I don't think you really get that as much on 15 because you obviously already hit the tee shot and the second shot, so it's hard to really startle somebody when they're putting as much as it is when you're hitting the tee ball on 11.

Q. Thinking about just having lived here a while and seeing this evolve, what's your best explanation of how this happened in terms of 16 and this city being the right place for this to just blow up into what it is?

MAX HOMA: I mean, as most things in professional golf, Tiger Woods's hole-in-one on 16 feels like it's a pretty good jumping-off point. It was already crazy, but I feel like everybody wanted to be in that.

I know I have a buddy Brian. He went to U of A. I got him a ticket once to come here, the year Molinari made a hole-in-one, and he was on 16, and he talks about it.

I just think that there's just been such great moments. It's a hole that's pretty benign, minus the arena, so you see a lot of amazing things. It just gets -- I think every year, you just see more excitement around the event, and like I said before, this is like a massive week for the city. People talk about it all year long.

I just think it's because people realize they can come to an event, have fun, it's a lot less quiet. It feels like a lot less rules. Because of all that, it's attracted a lot of people to come out.

I think we as golfers who continue to come to this event, I guess, because I know some guys don't love it, but the guys who do I think embrace it more, and it's a lot easier for us this week. I feel like you don't hear as many people say, hey, can you be quiet, please. It's just go about your business and we'll deal with it.

I do think that going forward in golf would be a nice thing,



not telling people to stop moving, not telling people to stop whispering. We can get over those types of things, and this week seems like it's a pretty good blend because we know it's going to happen, so I feel like the players are a lot more tolerant to it, and I think that helps the fan experience.

Q. Did you ever come here as a fan?

MAX HOMA: I did not, no. I will say that the year I retire you will find me here. I will be having a great time.

Q. Where will you sit or where will you go?

MAX HOMA: That's a really good question. Wherever the liquid takes me, I think.

Q. When was the last time you were out at Papago?

MAX HOMA: I have not gone out since I played The Skins Game there after I won Torrey last year. I really enjoy that event, and I had a few people tell me that I was taking money from players that -- I guess they said needed it more. It left a sour taste in my mouth.

I love Papago, but I really enjoyed that Monday game. Have not been back, but I would always tell anybody who's in town when they ask where they should play for the week, if they're on a boys' trip or something, I tell them to go there because I think it's a tremendous golf course. It's a really cool little community there. What ASU has done to their practice facility is fantastic, so I really love it over there, but I haven't ventured back yet.

Q. Did you feel guilty?

MAX HOMA: No.

Q. Did you buy rounds for everybody?

MAX HOMA: I left all the money I made for the next skin. Never accepted it.

I do not feel bad about beating people. I'll never feel bad about that one. But I don't want to do it anymore.

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