

# Genesis Scottish Open

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North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

## Tom Kim

### Press Conference

CHUAH CHOO CHIANG: Welcome Tom Kim into the interview room at the Genesis Scottish Open. How special is it for you to come back to the Renaissance Club?

TOM KIM: Yeah, this is where it kind of all started for me. I started making a run here in Scotland, and I had a chance last year, as well. It's just good vibes and the course is in different shape again from last year. Excited to get going.

CHUAH CHOO CHIANG: Rough finish at Travelers recently. Is your game where you want it to be?

TOM KIM: Yeah, obviously went on a big nine-week stretch, and to kind of just show myself a little bit about when things got hard, how I was able to perform, and those things coming together and my game, obviously had a slow start to the season. But picking up and coming over here, I'm happy with where my game is at.

#### Q. What did you learn from playing with Scottie?

TOM KIM: So here is the thing, I know Scottie so well. We played a lot at home. It was kind of like the first time I got to see him in action as just not being like, you know, smack-talking at home and having jokes. It was just sincere, trying to win a golf tournament. I got to really see that side of him.

Like just those little things I picked up where he's just -- he is where he's at because of just how good he is. You know, coming down the stretch, I had one bogey for the day. We both beat the field by two. He had to play good golf to win. Taking a loss, there's no shame losing to the No. 1 golfer in the world.

It was tough not to get the win but there were so many things I picked up personally. We had a nice conversation after. He beat me, and the words he said to me definitely meant a lot.

#### Q. What is it about playing with the best golfer in the world --



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TOM KIM: I don't know. Just for some reason, you know, this was kind of my first official time playing links golf. And two years ago, I wasn't really -- you know, I didn't really know what to expect because it's just so new. But for some reason, I think when the wind is up, and you have to be so precise with your landing spots and you have to be so smart, and you know so many things. It's just not a parkland where you hit driver far as you can and hit the ball as close as you can. You have to strategize and pick your spots and make sure you position the golf ball.

Those things are just so unique, and I think really test every aspect of your game. I think that's what I love about the next two.

#### Q. When you see conditions like this, do you have to change your approach to the game, and is it still a culture shock coming to something that's manicured to something very different?

TOM KIM: Yeah, there's certain adjustments that you need to make for sure. Because like with tee shots, you're definitely hitting it a little bit lower than you would actually normally do just because of wind and using the ground to your advantage. People think that being this first, you can't hit it high and stuff, and to a certain point, you're right. But that actually gives you an opportunity to hit a different club and use the ground to your advantage.

Culture shock-wise, I don't really think so because as I kid, I turned pro when I was 15, and I had to travel all around the world to get to the PGA TOUR. So adjusting to new places I'm very familiar with. If you want to be as good as you want to be in the world, you have to come out here and adjust. You can't just play well in the U.S. You have to come out here and prove that you can play. I feel like adjustment-wise I love playing out here and I love playing in the U.S. I think adjustment-wise, it's really cool.

#### Q. Do you feel you're somebody who plays his best golf when conditions are challenging?

TOM KIM: For sure. I think, again, it's just skill-wise, it gets to a certain point with the wind because mental toughness comes a lot into play when the conditions get



tough because you have to be okay with tough breaks. You might hit a perfect golf shot and because the wind gusts four miles an hour, you're going to have bad breaks; and to be okay with that and move on is all about just sucking it up and getting that mindset of, it happens. I think people who succeed out here in the wind definitely are good at that, and people who struggle, I think just have a hard time adjusting to that.

**Q. What was the logic, assuming there was logic, of playing nine consecutive weeks?**

TOM KIM: Obviously the biggest thing was just trying to find my game. It wasn't like a panic situation where I need to get my FedEx points up. It did play a little bit of a role. My thing was, man, I play good at home. Just when I go to tournaments, I'm not sharp. I sat down with my team and the big thing was, I've just got to play in a lot of events. I have to get my tournament sharpness again. I was in some bad spots with my swing earlier in the season.

So making adjustments after that, after THE PLAYERS, really, I really thought about, man, I'm playing good. My swing is in a good place. I just need my competitiveness to match up, and the nine weeks definitely I think was called for. I did everything I could to play nine weeks because I knew it was going to be a long stretch but the amount things I picked up from the nine-week stretch, I'd do that again next year if I had to. It was just -- definitely wasn't a panic. Just it was meant to be and it was the right call.

**Q. There's a difference -- I was thinking about this, Lucas just walked by, he was talking about the need to practise yourself out of a rut by practicing or playing and there's a difference. Have you found there to be a difference between being at home grinding, as opposed to working it out?**

TOM KIM: For sure. I think both are really important but I think to be honest, tournament golf is way more important than grinding at home. That's definitely something I picked up in the last few years where before, I thought you grind at home and certain people would definitely disagree with me.

But for me personally, I felt like if I'm sharp competitively, that I can just really focus and come out and play again because there's so many variants that comes in tournament golf, like wind and lies and pins. You just can't create that at home. And the pressure. No matter how much you play at home and you play money games, tournament golf is just very different. I think that was a big part of that nine-week stretch is because I wanted my tournament golf to get sharper.

**Q. Someone spoke on social media this morning about you being an invitation in the field. Can you tell us how that came about?**

TOM KIM: Yeah, obviously there was a mix-up on my team's end. I just with deadlines and stuff with two tours, it sometimes gets confusing. I only found out about it earlier the day before when I got a call from the team saying, hey, we messed up on our end. We are not trying to do anything weird but we missed up.

Obviously I love coming out here. I would never do anything remotely weird to just flirt with the tournaments. It was a complete mistake on the people who help me.

**Q. This is not an event you wanted to miss, clearly?**

TOM KIM: No, I don't. This is one of the events that I circle at the start of the year and I know I'm going to play. So definitely I would not try to do that on purpose.

**Q. When you're talking about your friendship with Scottie, you said about the way he laughs and jokes at home, does being a friend of him make you less serious about your own golf, perhaps, or not?**

TOM KIM: Could you be more specific? About my golf?

**Q. Just mentally. Because you had a hard time coming over to start with and found it to be tough. You met this light-hearted friend who is also good at golf and did it. What does that tell you?**

TOM KIM: Definitely adjusting early on like last year, because it was my really first official first season I got to play. And he was somebody that had won and had all these wins and all these experiences, and I was just starting out. So definitely having someone I could go to advice for was really big and was actually sincere has helped me. Even to this day, if I have something really sincerely to talk about, I can just go to him and talk about it.

To have a friend like that who always is in the spotlight all the time, you know, can definitely pick up a lot of things, and obviously he's nice enough to answer those questions. Definitely helps a lot I think. It's not just me. He's the type of guy who wants to help a lot of the young guys out here and if they go ask, there's no ego at all. He's taking his time and answering those questions.

**Q. Curious, looking ahead, not so much for next week but what are your thoughts and what are you going to do the week between The Open and the Olympics?**

TOM KIM: I'm going to stay over here. I just think it's too

much to go back home. To be home for four days and go back, there's no point. After the British, I'll be over here and I'll be excited to go to the Olympics. I never really had the opportunity as a kid because -- and to represent my country as an amateur, as well. To be on the world stage in France -- I got to play the French Open last year. So I know the course pretty well, and hopefully I'll have a chance.

**Q. You never would have played in the Asian games?**

TOM KIM: Yeah, exactly. I turned pro at 15 really young and never grew up in Korea. So I just had ever, like h an opportunity. Like my amateur ranking was really terrible. It was like a thousand-something in the world. It's still a long road for me to be able to represent my country.

CHUAH CHOO CHIANG: Thanks for your time and good luck this week.

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