

# U.S. Open Championship 2023

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The Los Angeles Country Club

## Max Homa

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Join me in welcoming Max Homa, Southern California native and course record holder. It's been 10 years since Pac-12, but talk about a few memories since that.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I was playing with Michael Kim today and we were talking about that. I felt real, real old. It does not feel like 10 years. It's cool to be back here. I've only played twice since the Pac-12s back then. Just a really cool place.

I took my mom to the Walker Cup here, so we watched Collin. Yeah, I have some cool memories of that. It feels kind of like the same place. They added some tees, but nothing crazy. It's just a really great golf course in my favorite city in the world, so it's nice to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about U.S. Open in your hometown.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, it's special. I've just been thinking about how -- I don't know, when you grow up and we all have that cliché joke, putt to win the U.S. Open, putt to win the Masters, you don't picture the golf course except for if it's at Augusta.

I've done it with Riviera, putt to win at the time LA Open or whatever, now the Genesis.

To have a major in my hometown, 18-ish miles from where I grew up, I think that's a dream come true. It's already been fun with the fans out there.

On a regular basis I get people yelling my college if they went there, but getting people yelling my high school is different, so that's been awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Jon Rahm was up there today and said he doesn't see another 61 out there this week, but talk about what you're seeing out of the golf course.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I don't know. It's definitely -- when I got here Sunday and Monday wasn't too firm, and I played with JT yesterday and he probably could have shot 61 if we



had played 18 holes, so it's firmed up a lot since then, the nine holes we just played. It's going to be pretty hard.

Yeah, I think the sun being out is real helpful. A little bit of wind is going to make it spicy. I hope it's carnage. I hope it's a typical U.S. Open. This golf course lends itself to that. It's generous enough off the tee, and it's kind of a second-shot golf course in a way.

You can get around here probably hitting a lot of shots from the fairway, but you're going to have to hit really quality shots. The greens are severe, and if they keep getting firmer and faster I think it'll be a really good test. I think it will be really fair.

We had, I guess, the only -- one of the more severe U.S. Opens I've been to was Winged Foot, but it's so penal off the tee that once you mess that up, everyone is doing the same thing.

This course will be a lot different. I think it'll be a great test of all areas of your golf, and it will really show a quality shot will go to a good spot, and one that's not great is going to go to a bad spot and you're going to see a lot of silliness go on.

This venue is awesome for a U.S. Open.

**Q. How do you manage the distractions that come with the Open being in your home city? Do you throw your phone away for the week? Do you not respond to people until later? Or is this not even that distracting compared to normal tournaments?**

MAX HOMA: I guess it's a little more. I'm fortunate that my friends texted me weeks ago about wanting to come out. I think if you're texting me now to try to get a ticket, probably won't get a response.

I did try and at least plan a month or two ago like how I go about it. If I didn't respond to you this week and you're somehow watching this, I'm sorry, but it's a lot. But it's been a lot for a month leading up to it, all the excitement and this, that and whatever.



I just looked at it as it's really cool. It's really cool that last night I got to have dinner with two of my best friends. All that, like being somewhere I'm comfortable, having -- you know, my dad was out there walking the practice round today, stuff like that never gets to happen, so I'm just trying to look at all the great stuff.

It's hard for me to say no to people. It's hard for me not to be as helpful as I can, but this week is -- I want this to go smoothly. I don't want to feel overwhelmed. Riviera can get overwhelming even. So I'm trying to take a step back and be maybe a little less helpful at times.

But I also have a pretty cool crowd here. My agent, Matt, has been very helpful dealing out tickets to my buddies. They've just been texting him instead of me, so that's been nice.

**Q. You mentioned the interaction with the fans thus far. Is there a balance between appreciating that this is a national championship and the fans are pulling for you versus there is still a competition and work to be done?**

MAX HOMA: I guess. Every week is kind of the same. It's just still kind of cool to have people know your name and root for you. So I just find that awesome. To have maybe a few more this week, just because I'm from the area, is also great.

But yeah, I don't find it as anything other than that. It's just kind of fun. You go to sporting events and you root for your team, and in this little -- well, in this big city, we have a big championship, so to have maybe a few more of those people I think is more of a -- again, that's why it's so special to have a major here for me, just because this event means a lot to all of us.

All four majors mean a ton, but this event to the Americans, this is our championship.

To have just -- if it was anywhere it would be special, but just an added bit of excitement being here, I think it's all positive. There's nothing really negative I could say about that.

I can't wait for the event to start to hear all the noise, because like I said, at Riviera this year was wild. I can't imagine if something like that were to happen here.

**Q. You're from So Cal; do you feel you have a bit of a leg up compared to other players who have grown up playing elsewhere? This is a home course advantage; you're familiar with the weather and the home course conditions.**

MAX HOMA: Probably not on the weather. I feel like everyone is quite pleased with the weather here. Just little things. I always say it, but knowing where my hotel is, knowing where the locker room is here, knowing what the golf course looks like having played it before so that the practice rounds don't feel like we're re-learning a golf course, we're not just seeing it for the first time, that can always be a little difficult.

I know a lot of people hate poa annua and there's some poa annua here, so that's always nice being in Southern California.

But any leg up is valuable with how great these golfers are. I do look at that as a bit of a boost. All the guys who played the Pac-12s here, anybody who played here prior, it's definitely a bit of an advantage.

**Q. This is a notoriously difficult course and they have done some renovations. What do you keep in mind as you're playing with these challenges that are presented?**

MAX HOMA: Bogeys are okay. I'm going to remind myself of that because I don't do that so well. I'm going to do a better job of that this week. Bogeys are hard. It's a hard golf course. You're going to hit some good shots that go in some really weird spots, but if you keep hitting good shots, you're going to make some birdies and make up some ground.

**Q. Max, 15, I think the likelihood is on Saturday it plays 78 yards. What's the thought process and your strategy for that hole at that short a length?**

MAX HOMA: Make it, I think. Yeah, it's different. You're going to have to spin the life out of it and hit your number. Quite thankful Mark Blackburn has been hard on me getting my wedges good because that little shot is awkward.

But there's a couple ways to play it. You can go long left and try to spin it off the bank. You can kind of go a little bit more at it or try to miss almost right of it so that you're putting or chipping uphill.

It is amazing. I'm not going to sit up here and say I'm not some architect buff by any means, but it's amazing when you look at this golf course. They have two of the longest par-3s that we'll play, hopefully, and the coolest hole is 78 yards.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to that. It'll be great to watch on TV. When I came here for the Walker Cup my mom and I



sat behind 15 green because you could see 14 and 16 and 11, and it was so fun watching everybody kind of make a mess of this little dinky hole. I'm looking forward to the fans getting to enjoy that this week.

**Q. You mentioned spin; Collin said he almost tees up like a lob wedge just to get that extra spin. Is that something you would think of doing?**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I did it at Pac-12s. That was the thing all the kids did. I grew up on a par-3 course, and if you tee a lob wedge up like three inches you can spin the life out of it, so I did that on Sunday at the Pac-12s. I'm planning on probably doing that again this year.

You're going to need to -- you just want that thing to stop, and with how firm they can get at this place - and that hole was playing downwind the other day - you're going to need it to be coming in soft with as much spin as you can, even if you do play the long left route.

It'll be cool. You're going to watch professional golfers use some creativity, and that's definitely one trick that is quite useful.

**Q. Whenever there's a local angle in sports or something like this they say the danger for the person like yourself is they might try too hard. How does that look in golf?**

MAX HOMA: You just look at how I played every other major trying way too hard, so I'm quite good at that. This has been almost a welcome change because I've been so prepared to try too hard at this event in particular, so I've been more keen to avoid doing that.

In an odd way, it's almost worked its way out positively because I've been thinking about this event for like a year, about how I can't try too hard, can't try too hard.

Forgot about all those other majors you also shouldn't do that at. Fortunately I'm coming off a PGA Championship that I tried too hard at and it's right on the tip of my brain not to do that this week, so I am a little bit more easy on myself.

**Q. Is there a specific moment you can point to that you can look back and say, that was a moment I did that? Can you get it more granular?**

MAX HOMA: There's a lot of them, but yeah, I think I seen examples in -- just generally just trying to be too perfect. When you're trying too hard you care too much about where the ball goes. You're going to hit fairways; you're going to miss fairways. You're going to hit greens; you're

going to miss greens. You're going to hit putts that go in and some that miss.

I think it just comes down to stacking those up over the course of a week and seeing where that takes you. Like I said, I've done a very poor job of that in a lot of big golf tournaments, but especially the majors. I've done a good job of that in some other events, so I'm just trying to find whatever is in those moments where it's been great and take that to a championship like this.

**Q. There was some news announced last week involving the PGA TOUR and LIV and the Public Investment Fund. I was wondering if you've been able to make sense of it and if you know where the future of pro golf is now headed.**

MAX HOMA: I know as much if not less than you. I'm probably not able to make a real opinion. It's a lot to take in. It obviously took all of us by surprise. At this moment it is what it is. I look forward to maybe learning some more about it and then what exactly the deal is.

I was on the phone quite a bit that Tuesday with players in a couple meetings, PAC meeting, whatever, and felt like I learned a ton, and then everybody -- was in every article in the world, so I don't think I am any more knowledgeable about this.

My opinion is, I guess, ever-changing. It's actually nice to be as confused as I am here because I'm not really thinking about it anymore. I'm ready to just go play golf.

**Q. Did you try to learn more about it after that initial day, or have you just kind of now shut it off?**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I tried, but then I guess I realized it's so complex, I'd need a lot more time than I was willing to give to learn every in and out of it.

I think we're all curious and we're all, I guess, skeptical of things or whatever, but I trust the guys at the top doing what they're doing.

But I guess I'm just a lowly golfer here; I'm not a businessman; I don't really get how all of it works. The more I've tried to learn, the more I've just gone in circles. At some point I just have to leave it up to them and wait for more information, I guess, to come out.

**Q. What do you remember from shooting that 61 here?**

MAX HOMA: This is why golf is so bad. I remember not getting up-and-down from the front bunker on 6 for birdie, and I remember three-putting 8, so I could have shot 59, so

that bothers me.

But I remember I didn't really make a lot of long putts, but I made a few good-sized mid-range putts, and I just felt like I was putting uphill all day. I did everything great, but I just remember putting uphill all day.

I birdied 14 through 17, which was awesome.

We've all had those days in golf where as professionals where just everything is clicking. It was just really cool that it happened during the Pac-12 championship on this golf course. It's nice when those things line up and when they really matter and not when I'm playing my friends who I'm giving six shots to at home and it doesn't really matter.

I just remember it all clicking, but it just felt so easy. Then we had to play 18 holes right after that because we had a 36-hole day, and the golf course was not nearly as easy as I remembered it one hour prior, and I just hung on for dear life for three more rounds.

**Q. Your record at the majors probably not up to where you want it to be. Anything you're going to do this week to try to change that?**

MAX HOMA: Play better. I really do believe that my golf game is plenty good enough to contend in these things. I think I've shown that in other PGA TOUR events. I've won six times, a lot of them recently. I've done it on some pretty great golf courses, some hard golf courses. I just think I get here and I try too hard.

Some parts of me that I really like is I'm a perfectionist and it makes me work really, really hard. I'm very diligent. But that same part, it's like a double-edged sword. I get in these things and I can't seem to separate -- I can't seem to understand that it's okay to make bogeys and it's okay to mess up. It's okay, you're going to get on runs and do all these great things if you just let yourself, and I've done a poor job of that.

Oak Hill was a great example. Thursday morning I had the greatest warmup I have ever had. Joe, my coach, and me, we were just -- and in my head I'm thinking finally, I have it. I didn't have it at Augusta. My game felt terrible, which was almost helpful because I went around that place just playing the golf course.

Didn't have a good result but after two days I was at least somewhere in the middle to top of the pack, 20th place or whatever. I felt like, oh, okay, now -- then I got hard on myself again on the weekend.

Oak Hill I have this great warmup and I came out and hit a

perfect drive down the middle of the fairway and missed the green and immediately went into fight or flight, and that's just something I need to get over.

I'm learning and I'm trying my best, but what's nice is I come into this event, got good work in with my coach, Mark last week, come in here, things feel the same. It's a nice short flight for us, and the game feels great. Just got to control what's between my ears.

I don't know, I'm waiting for one of these weeks to -- I think I've been waiting for the weeks to click with my golf game and realizing that it's not the golf game. This week will be a mental test for me, which is good.

**Q. I'm curious how often you talk to Coach Des, and I guess the second part of that is how do you feel he's shaped you as a golfer and a person?**

MAX HOMA: A little bit. It's usually him sending me like a novel so it takes quite a while to read, and I can just picture him typing it because I know his letters are quadruple the size of the ones I use in text messages, so I imagine how long that takes him.

But, yeah, he did such a great job. It's really interesting. Peter Tomasulo, who I saw today, he was kind of like my mentor while I was at school; Des set me up with meeting him I think after my freshman year. When I turned pro we would travel around a lot together, hanging out a lot.

It's always -- especially in golf, your head coaches are -- you butt heads so much. It's such an individual sport. You're not used to somebody telling you what to do, where to be all the time. He told me, as you get older you're going to appreciate so much of it so much more, and I really have. He was really hard on me, but I appreciate when people are hard on me. He pushed me, and he really cares about me and all the players he's had.

So much of what Des did I think we didn't -- we were too young and dumb to recognize that, and as I've gotten older I have grown to be very appreciative of all the hard work he's done for not only myself, but for the program.

We were a club team when he got there 50 years ago, whatever it was, and turned into -- won a national championship in '04. Our team has so much success, and then he gets Collin Morikawa after. That stuff is pretty awesome.

I'm really appreciative of what he's done for the Cal golf team and hope that continues going forward.

**Q. How about the pairing the USGA gave there with**

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**Collin the first two days? Are you excited about that?**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I'm going to keep this joke that I used last year, but I know the U.S. Open does themes, the USGA does themes for the -- for their first and second round pairings, so it's nice they put the three good looking guys together yet again.

But it's great. I was joking with Collin. I tried to play with him I guess our round would have been today and he had his media at a time he didn't know about or he mistook, so he had to bail.

Then we got our tee times yesterday, and I told him he can't really hide from me. I'll find you at some point. So I am glad I get to go walk around with him for 36 holes. It's always cool playing with Scottie. Obviously just a tremendous golfer, really nice dude. It's a very fun pairing.

I mean, U.S. Opens, like I said, are always exciting and big, but getting to play with those two guys who have had such great success in majors and so young and just make golf look so easy, it's fun to get to go walk around with them.

**Q. You mentioned when it comes to majors it's not necessarily the golf game, it's something else that's not working. Do you find that fun to try to figure out what that answer could be, or is it more vexing?**

MAX HOMA: I think if I start to find the fun in that, that's when it'll start to click. That's been a goal. Mark told me -- we had a long talk Saturday night at the house at PGA and he asked me what I found fun about golf, and unfortunately what I find fun about golf is playing good golf, and that doesn't happen all the time.

He's kind of tasked me with finding what can be fun that's not -- that's more under your control, so I've been kind of workshopping that.

I do believe that once I start to see the joy controlling your own mind, what that can bring you, I think I'm going to start to make that more of a priority or at least be more in tune with it.

It's a work in progress. It's hard to practice it other than when the bell goes off Thursday, but it's been on the very tip of my mind since the PGA, and I'm really excited that in two days I get to go work that out.

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