

**PRE-ROUND PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**TIGER WOODS**



**CHUAH CHOO CHIANG:** Good morning. We would like to welcome with us on stage 81-time PGA TOUR winner, Tiger Woods. Tiger, welcome to the inaugural ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP. Your first time back to Japan since 2006. Please share opening comments about being here for the PGA TOUR's first official tournament.

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I haven't played here in a very long time, a place that I've thoroughly enjoyed over the years. First came here in '96 or '97 and had a chance to play with Jumbo and been coming here ever since.

To be back here playing a tournament, it's going to be a lot of fun to be back here in front of fans that really understand and respect the game of golf. The game of golf is so strong here in Japan, and to have seen it grow like it has over 20-some odd years that I've been playing is very special and to be a part of it is even more special.

**Q. How's your knee and the stages that you went through to get your knee back to assuming 100 percent?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, I had it scoped, some cartilage issues. I was intending to actually get it done last year after the Hero World Challenge. Because I had played well in the Playoffs and I won the TOUR Championship, I figured I would keep rolling with it, and I wanted to play at Torrey at the beginning of the year. If I had the surgery, I wouldn't be ready for Torrey Pines, so I decided to not have a procedure done and tried to get through it the rest of the year and it progressively got worse and got to where it was affecting even reading putts. You could see it towards the end of the year I wasn't quite getting down on my putts well. Having it done was -- unfortunately, I've been down this road before with knee rehabs and knew the protocols.

**Q. Tiger, where are you with your game? When were you able to actually really go at it after that knee procedure and are you behind or on schedule or where you wanted to be?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I'm right on schedule. Unfortunately, I'm probably a week early. My season had ended a little bit earlier than I had expected it. Didn't quite make the TOUR Championship, so the procedure was scheduled for the Tuesday after the TOUR Championship and I had it the Tuesday of the TOUR Championship. So the whole idea was to be ready for this event and get ready for Hero and possibly Australia. I had it done and, as I said, it's been nice to be able to squat down and read putts and I started going at it full speed again.

**Q. Last two years Korea has wanted to see you in CJ Cup. How are you thinking about next year joining the CJ Cup?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Let's get through this event first. I haven't played that many tournaments in Korea. I've done some exhibitions there. I've been there on travel on business, but obviously I've been at Jeju before and did an event with Se-Ri. I think Colin and maybe KJ. So I had a good time there and from the guys who have played there, they've enjoyed it. It's the type of golf course that I would like to play.

**Q. You said your season ended a bit earlier than you expected and you had the procedure. You've got three tournaments coming up, probably three, hopefully three, this week, the Presidents Cup and the Hero World Challenge. Do you think it's a bit much or do you think you will be able to cope with that and how fit are you to do that?**

**TIGER WOODS:** No, that's -- as I said, I had the procedure a little bit early and got ahead of it. I thought that I had enough time to rehab it correctly and be ready for this event, be ready for Hero, and I'm going to Australia either way whether I'm playing or not.

So I want to be fit and ready for the end of the year and I've been kind of battling through this the entire year and trying to piece it together. It's been nice to finally get over the hump and start feeling good again and start going at it full speed.

**Q. Tiger, did the procedure give you any doubt whether you would be able to pick yourself for the Presidents Cup or has the recovery made you more hopeful?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Probably the latter. It made me more hopeful that I could do all of the above, play this week, play Hero and play Australia. The way I was feeling towards the middle part of the year, it was going to be a tall order to be able to do it all. Started to struggle with it, it started affecting my back and the way I was walking and trying to play, trying to read putts and all of the above.

So I'm excited about having this end-of-the-year run where I'm feeling much more fit and I don't have the achiness that I've been dealing with for the last couple years.

**Q. How much have you spent the last few weeks looking at potential picks? You mentioned yourself, but if you look at all four, how much of that is kind of consuming your time?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I've been pretty consumed by it. It's been a fun process to be a part of. I've been part of it the last couple years as a vice captain and now having three great vice captains and being able to communicate with all the eight guys who they want on the team and who they think that will fit on the team.

It's been a little bit easier I think this time around for me as a captain because of my vice captaincy roles. I was certainly -- the process was opened up to me quite a bit at Hazeltine

and at Liberty, how in depth the process is. As a player, you just want to play. I've been picked before, I've earned my way on. As a player, you just play. As a vice captain and captain, there's so many more roles and so many more responsibilities and I learned a lot the last couple years.

**Q. Tiger, in retrospect, how much did your knee play a role in your performances in the majors post Masters and how much of it was a psychological effect of having climbed such a huge mountain again?**

**TIGER WOODS:** You know, it just kind of deteriorated over the year. That's one of the reasons why we were planning on doing it last year, but I went and screwed that up, I won the TOUR Championship and thought I could keep it rolling.

So yeah, it affected the way my back was feeling and my practice schedule. As I said earlier, unfortunately I've been down this road with my knee before. I've had -- this is my, what, fifth operation on it, so I understand what it takes to come back from it. It's been nice to have it moving again and not having it catch and lock up like it has been. It's just wear and tear over the years. It's been stressed out for a very long time and it's nice to have it cleaned up.

**Q. As part of your captaincy, are you starting to think of contingency plans seeing that Brooks has a problem with his knee, DJ has a problem with his knee, you're getting over your knee? Are your contingency plans going through your head?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, Steve, there are so many different options and ways that we can go. That's part of why I've been lucky enough to have three great vice captains and two of the guys have won Cups before. I'm sure that Zach will be a future captain down the road. So to have those minds thinking through things, having great communication with my eight guys, open communication. I mean, what we say is what we say and it ends there. They've certainly voiced who they want on the team and that's been fantastic and that's what I want to have happen.

**Q. This is the very first PGA TOUR event in Japan. Do you think it's good timing to have this event or is it too late for Japan to have this kind of event?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, normally with the big events when I was growing up on Tour was Casio, Taiheiyo and DPT (Dunlop Phoenix Tournament) and those were all in October, November after kind of the Tour's end of our season, towards the end of Japan's tour and they kind of culminated in those three big events. So it's something that we're used to, having an event this late in the year over here. I think the timing fits perfectly with the whole new Asia swing with the PGA TOUR.

**Q. As far as the Olympics, do you have anything that your mind's on that you want to overcome that you're thinking about right now?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Well, I would love to play in an Olympic Games. My dad and I in '84, Long Beach was right down the street from our house and right next to Eldorado and we went to the archery games, so I got a chance to experience the Olympics at a very early age and didn't really understand it. But over the years, having friends compete in the Olympics, seeing golf be part of the Olympics, it would be an honor to represent my country in an Olympic Games. Right now I'm ninth in the world rankings and hopefully next year I can have a good year and qualify and represent my country.

**Q. We've essentially got three kinds of tournaments now, the majors, the Tour events, and then finally, the entertainment made-for-television / skins events. How stressful are these, one, and two, how useful are these for the game of golf?**

**TIGER WOODS:** Yeah, well, we used to have called towards the end of the year was the silly season, right? You had the Skins Game, Diners Cup, and a few other little events in there. It seemed like Freddie won all of them. So I've been a part of different formats over the years whether it was Showdown at Sherwood with Double D or it was playing my first Skins game in '96. It's part of growing the game, it's part of doing other things. I watched the big three early on in my career and got a chance to watch their matches and thought that was fantastic. They were able to grow the game of golf and showcase it in a different way. Being a part of it has been really cool, to do something under the lights, to grow the game in a different way. I mean, we have tournament golf already, but to do something different I think is entertaining and it's good for our sport.

**Q. How stressful is it to play so many?**

**TIGER WOODS:** I wouldn't say stressful. We're trying to beat each other, there's no doubt about that. There's a limited field, only a few guys, but I think the needling is definitely up. We don't really needle each other when we're playing tournament golf, we're trying to get in one another's heads and have a little bit of fun. We're trying to pull off things we normally wouldn't pull off in a regular event, hit shots and go after flags and do things we probably wouldn't normally do.

So it's been a lot of fun to do things like that because playing tournament golf, it's like being part of a marathon, four rounds, grind it out and try to be there towards the end. These events, it's just like go for broke.

**CHUAH CHOO CHIANG:** Thanks for your time. Good luck later this afternoon and good luck for the ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP.