

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**MAX HOMA**

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**MARK WILLIAMS:** We would like to welcome Max Homa to the interview room here at the 2024 Farmers Insurance Open.

Max, coming back as the defending champion, it's got to be a pretty neat feeling coming back to a tournament obviously as the defending champion, but where you have some roots here. Just talk about coming back here to defend.

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, it's cool. I enjoy any time I get to come to this golf course. I remember we skipped school on a Friday once and came down and was kind of sleepy out here so we got to watch Tiger play the back nine on South, which is cool.

So I've always enjoyed coming back here and just thinking about how awesome it is to play a golf course I watched so much growing up.

Yeah, I've had some success here and then last year obviously hit the jackpot and won. Now it holds an even more special place in my heart.

My sister lives here in Del Mar, so I think that's really cool just to have a golf tournament now that she was here last year that we got to bond over. I think that makes this place extra special.

**MARK WILLIAMS:** When we sat here a year ago you were the first player I think to do like a walk-and-talk with CBS, it was a pretty historic moment. When you reflect on that, when you see how that's progressed and what that's been like, what's your perspective of that?

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, I think it went really well with all the guys who went and did it. I contend that when we were kind of first talking about doing it, it wasn't necessarily that this was the end all be all, but I think we as players need to make it as a tour was to start to realize that we're entertainers, we're not just necessarily great golfers. So we need to entertain people and I think maybe getting out of your comfort zone here and there and doing something to give back to the viewership so that it gives them, one, a reason to watch and two, to keep watching.

I think that the walk-and-talk at least was kind of something risky and different, but I think it turned out quite good. I'm sure there's other variations that we could do, but just in general I think that's kind of the direction at least, I'll just speak for myself, I'd like to see golf go do. It's not too crazy, it's not too unbelievable to have people do something like that. I thought that it was nice. I mean, it's nice to do it and then win and then look at people who said it might be distracting and then at least have that to say.



**MARK WILLIAMS:** You had a chance to play in the pro-am today, nine holes. Obviously it's been pretty wet. Just your impressions of the golf course, I think you played nine holes on the South, and just your form, how you feel your game's rounding into shape.

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, the course is wet. The fairways here do a great job of not holding too much of that, so it's been good. The rough is extra thick, so it's always hard here but that's going to be extra difficult.

Yeah, sun's back out, I would imagine by Friday the courses will dry out quite a bit and get back to how we normally see them.

Tomorrow I'm playing South so it's not going to be too different. Yeah, the greens are just a little slower, but still a hard golf course. It's playing a little longer, but a little more receptive. Usually when we have receptive here or on Tour, the scores are low. I do think that South will do a pretty good job defending itself.

Kind of one of those things you'll have to just wait and see because it's still a bear. It's not like it's going to be a pitch-and-putt all of a sudden.

**Q. Obviously your connection to California and how well you play here has become pretty well known. I'm just wondering, it's got to be more than just like vibes of coming back as a California kid. What do you think it has been that maybe is the through line for some of those California victories?**

**MAX HOMA:** Well, I'd say between here and L.A. they're pretty similar in what they demand. You need to hit the ball really well. I think I see Riviera as a golf course, I know where to leave it. It feels like every once in a while you hear a guy say this course fits my eye. I think that's kind of what they're alluding to. I just have always known kind of how to play that golf course.

Then here, here I think everybody knows how to play it, but it lends itself to things that I'm good at, so I'd say that.

Plus, a lot of guys seem to struggle on poa annua. I know a lot of guys complain about it. I don't know, I've just had a lot of success putting on poa annua. It's not every time. I played the U.S. Open here and putted awful, but I just think I've had a lot of really great putting weeks on poa. I'm not sure why, but I'm not really going to keep -- I'm not going to worry about the why, I just know that it suits me. I grew up putting on it. It's just one of those things I probably have a bit more comfort in it around the whole state. Especially, like I said, those two courses, Riv and here, they just kind of suit what I do well in golf.

**Q. You had 13 top-10s last year, I think you had 14 in the previous three years combined, so consistency-wise and top results it really kind of rounded into form last year. How much do you value consistency as you think about looking back on a**



## **season and how you want to play moving forward?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, it's definitely like it's always hard to put it. I mean, wins, you leave a legacy with wins so I'm never going to discount them or discredit them, but when you're talking about the best players, they're around the lead a lot. There's a lot that has to go right for you to win a golf tournament. Obviously when you put yourself in position enough you should knock off a few, but yeah, I think when you watch guys consistently in the top-10, consistently in the top-20, you can always look at those people and just marvel at how great they are at golf.

I know there's a couple guys like Tommy and Tyrrell and Tony that seem to get a lot of flack for maybe not winning as much as people think they should win, but like I said, there's so much that goes into it, luck and just little things that I marvel at how amazing people are that are just around it.

It's cool to see people win, but I do think that -- I was incredibly proud of last season not as much because of two wins, but I was really pumped about the top-10s. I just want to put myself in position as much as possible. I know there's going to be weeks that I get it done and weeks that I don't, but being around it I think shows the, I guess, skill and talent of a golfer.

**Q. Max, you said you like the walk-and-talk and it was kind of progress for the Tour. Do you see something beyond the walk-and-talk that you think fans would enjoy that you guys have maybe talked about behind the scenes? Is there a next better walk-and-talk?**

**MAX HOMA:** I mean, I have my ideas. I don't know how -- if they would -- if they would do it, but I have my ideas.

I just think that the main point is like Adam Silver, Rob Manfred this year did two things in their sports that I thought were insane. In-season basketball tournament I thought was a terrible idea, courts looked weird. And the pitch clock was crazy, I thought that was never going to work and wasn't going to make enough of a difference. They seemed really extreme.

And those are my two favorite sports and I absolutely loved what they did in baseball. It was from day one you were getting a strike called on you if you weren't in the box ready to hit. I was watching baseball games in 90 minutes sometimes and it was fascinating. Yeah, it was a jump and it was a stretch, but it worked.

And then the in-season tournament, I would turn on a game and see these crazy courts and immediately know this was an important basketball game.

So as crazy as those things sounded, I as a fan of those sports was like really pleased with what I saw. So I think whether it's my, you know, thought in my head of what we could do



after this walk-and-talk. I would imagine something different as I'm not the smartest. I just think trying stuff to entertain is really what the point of this all is, just kind of evolving and being creative and things of that nature.

**Q. I want to ask you about obviously the win last year. When you come into Torrey Pines, one, you're a California guy so you probably -- it's always an automatic on your list I would think, but also can you understand why other people might not want this kind of test this early in the season?**

**MAX HOMA:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, when you just look at the last two weeks, some people are starting their season in the desert and some are starting it here.

I get why people want to start at the desert, even if you missed the cut you probably shot 11 under par. It's a good, nice, easy way to feel good about yourself and kind of I would say knock some rust off because you're going to make a lot of birdies and probably learn about your game.

You start here and you're going to get punched in the mouth immediately.

When I'm setting up a schedule, I like to go to the golf courses that I feel like fit me the best. I don't typically do well when the winning score's in the 20 unders, I do better when it's closer to 10 or 15 under. As much as I would have liked to have played last week, I like this whole run of events on the West Coast. I just figured I would always probably start with this one and skip that one. It's always kind of a coin flip, but I just feel like this one suits me better than last week did. But I totally get not wanting to make a bunch of bogeys here right after having a bit of an offseason.

**Q. If I can just ask you one more, are you concerned at all about Farmers is probably going away in a couple years as a sponsor? Torrey's kind of in this weird spot now between some designated things. Do you have any concern about this tournament particularly losing some stature at all?**

**MAX HOMA:** No, I don't think that's the place for me to have concern or not personally. It's been amazing having Farmers here for as long as they have been, but they are a business, they have other things going on. You just have to look back and appreciate the time that they've spent and the money they put into this event.

Yeah, I mean, of course if this or any of the events we play ever were to go away it would be a shame, but you understand this is a business and you've got to do what's right for that.

You can always play Torrey Pines. I have a good feeling that this golf course will have a longstanding relationship with professional golf. It's just it's too good, it's beautiful and it's one of those stout tests of golf that I feel like stands up to where technology's gone. You still show up here and you still need to play some amazing golf.



**Q. Whenever you look at weeks like this week with an earlier start on Wednesday and then you have almost three inches of rain since Saturday, does it give you a leg up do you think with your experiences here, your success here?**

**MAX HOMA:** Probably not just because this is a very straightforward golf course. Both are. You know where you've got to hit it. It's actually one of the beauties of this place is it's staring right at you. The 12th hole is a great example. It's one of the hardest holes we'll play all year and I mean, the fairway's very obvious where you can and cannot hit it. It's just hard, you just need to go execute.

I do have a leg up, I feel very bad for the Monday qualifiers and now Tuesday qualifiers because they probably won't get to see an inch of the golf course. That's a shame. So I have a leg up on four people I would assume in the experience side of things.

Other than that, I think this is one of the reasons I love this place is I didn't think I really needed to play any holes; maybe to get the firmness of the greens and the speed, but other than that, it's telling you exactly where to hit it and where to leave it. It's just you have to go do that. It feels very clear there.

So no, the only advantages I feel like I have out here, like I said, people just hate poa annua and I just don't mind it. That's something I always try to remind myself.

**Q. Max, earlier Michael Kim was in here talking about how a round with you a couple years ago kind of opened him up to you were very active on social media and he saw what a following can do. He kind of used you as the catalyst for why he's been so elevated. What do you think of his social media game and what he's done the last couple years?**

**MAX HOMA:** Ours are different. He's nice, I'm not very nice.

I've gotten along with Michael since the first day I met him at the Western Am back when he was about to be a freshman at Cal. I love that kid.

I think it's easy on this tour for good reason, I mean we're out there just golfing, there's hundreds of us doing it, it's easy to just blend in. He clearly wants to kind of be himself and show who he is and I feel like he's doing a great job of that. He's a smart kid, he's funny, he's witty. He's got all those great things I think most people out here have, it's just how willing are you to put yourself out there.

I'm happy for him to take the reins on Twitter because it's not for the faint of heart. I'm personally sick of it. So he'll go through the same ebb and flow that I saw. Like I said, I just like to see how now other people can see how like great of a dude he is and how interesting he is and unique.

**Q. When people think about Tiger Woods being here, you mentioned coming out and**



**seeing him play, what shots do you remember from him specifically, whether it be at the Farmers or U.S. Open? Are there any that stand out?**

**MAX HOMA:** One hole, 15, another bear of a hole, I remember he hit a massive drive and it looked like he hit a 9-iron and spun it back to like two feet. That's the hole that I just remember sticks out so much to me. It's graceful and it's powerful, something you have to almost see up close.

That's what I say about Rory. If you're going to come to a golf tournament, I suggest at least watching him hit one or two drivers because it doesn't do it justice on TV, you kind of need to see it. I remember that.

Even when I got out here as a professional, just the vibe around him. One year there was a fog delay and we were all stuck on the putting green and he's playing with two very popular and amazing golfers, Billy Horschel and Rickie.

The first day there was a thousand people on the putting green and the next day he had withdrawn that afternoon, the next day there was the same fog delay and there were like 22 people around us. It was like dang, this guy really controls the world. Just stuff like that I always thought was fascinating about him.

**Q. One more quick one, The Match was confirmed with you, Rory, Lexi and Rose. Do you have any trash talk you want to start now?**

**MAX HOMA:** I need to save my bullets because they're all phenomenal golfers and I have a feeling if things get going sideways, I'm only going to have one bit of value left and it will be my mouth. I'm going to save those for when I need them.

**Q. Max, I wanted to get back to Michael real quick. He also talked about the ups and downs of his last decade out here. You guys were obviously, you said, close from the time he got to Cal.**

**Did you talk to him at all during that? Obviously you saw what was happening. Did you feel for him? What was it like for him do you think during that time? What did you see and what did you think, and what do you think now about the way that he's rallied? He has his highest ranking ever.**

**MAX HOMA:** No, I did not talk to him. I will never insert myself in that way. I did talk to probably two people from his, I don't know if you want to call it team, but people that know him had asked me questions because I keep an eye on the people that I know the best out here.

Of course I felt for him. I mean, it's awful to see people struggle at something they love. I think what people don't quite grasp about the difficulties of that struggle is, I think for all of us but I'll just speak for myself, like this is our safe haven. I've gone to golf courses on some of



my worst days to clear my head. When it's going bad, it's a shame when you go to the golf course and it's no longer your happy place, it's kind of the opposite. So I felt for him there.

But I think it teaches you a lot about yourself and it can kind of show the world what you're made of. And I think he's done an amazing job. He hasn't given in, he's just looked for answers and tried to get better.

I contend that you can go through it and a lot of people probably don't make it to the other side, but when you do, I think you learn more about yourself and you're more ready to handle professional golf and all of the trials and tribulations that will come with it after that.

It's been really fun to watch Michael play such great golf as of late. I know that he is now a better golfer because of it.

**Q. You've had such a great year last year. What are you looking forward to achieve and what are your goals for this year?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, great question.

I think last year showed me that the stuff I'm working on is right, so I'm going to keep hammering on those things.

My goals are obviously to win and to continue to work my way up the World Ranking, but to do that you have to do all the little things right. So it's just to make sure that I'm keeping on myself of all that I did last year and get incrementally better.

I haven't to play well in majors so I'd be lying if I said that wasn't a massive goal, but you've got to play here first and then Pebble next and then Waste Management and so on.

I'm looking forward to just continuing to chase down better and do what I've kind of always done, but from now I'm a little bit on -- I'm ahead of where I used to be and I would like to just keep getting ahead of -- I'd like to have this conversation next year and be further along and have people keep asking you played well, how do you keep getting better.

That's my goal is to keep doing all the little things really well and see where that adds up to at the end. Hopefully it's in a bunch of Tour wins this year and being in the mix in majors. And if not, I'll go back to the drawing board. I think last year was a really good sign that my team and myself have the right -- their finger on the pulse of what needs to be done to improve.

**Q. What would be more important, the Olympics or a major?**

**MAX HOMA:** I mean, a major probably. It's just one of those things, I never played in the Olympics. I think the Olympics are incredible, it just wasn't something when I was a kid that I grew up watching for golf. I watched it for swimming and diving and the races and all the



other -- basketball, all these things that had nothing to do with what I did.

Now that it's a part of it, I do think it's amazing. I mean, not to take anything away from golf in the Olympics, but as a kid I dreamt of winning majors. It's hard to just now get more excited about that than the other.

But I will say that given the chance that I could potentially make it to it is definitely way up there on my list of things. If you're splitting hairs, I just have to go with what I've kind of dreamt of my whole life.

**Q. I believe after you won you referenced the Mamba mentality and I wonder how much you lean into that kind of narrative going into this, trying to be the first guy to back-to-back this since Tiger Woods?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, I feel like I just try to live my life with it. I'm a humungous fan of what Kobe I Bryant taught athletes. I read a ton of his stuff and seek out all the interviews and things that he's said because I do think that when it comes to preparation, he was the GOAT. As far as work ethic goes, he was the GOAT. He was never going to leave a stone unturned, he was always going to try to get better no matter how difficult that may be.

When he got on the basketball court, I felt like he did a great job of letting himself be himself. I try to keep that mindset every day. Yeah, it would be great to put that to use this week.

**Q. Max, you referred earlier to Michael Kim, you said "I love that kid." Can you put a little more meat on the bone in terms of what it is about him that you love?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, I'll tell you the first thing I ever heard him say, I immediately loved him and I think about it all the time.

We were playing a practice round. Some of the guys on our team had already met him. I was not there for his recruiting trip. They told me he's a small kid, doesn't hit it anywhere. He's grown a lot, now he hits it quite far, but at the time he hit it absolutely nowhere. He was like 130 pounds soaking wet.

So I get introduced to him on the first hole. We don't talk a lot on the first hole. We get to maybe the second or third, it's a par-3. My other teammate, Michael Weaver, who hits it very far, asked Michael Kim what he's hitting. Michael Kim says, I'm hitting 5-iron. Weaver asked me what are you hitting, I had an 8-iron. Weaver had 8-iron and he starts laughing. He says, Michael, you're hitting 5-iron, I'm hitting 8-iron. He's kind of getting him grief.

Michael, he's got to be 17, maybe 18, hasn't even been on the team yet, he just stone-cold looked him in the face and said, "I'm going to hit this 5-iron inside your 8-iron."

I was like, I like this kid. That's my best way to explain why I love that dude.





**Q. Lastly, the other golfers have spoken about what Nick Dunlap did. Can you speak to that?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, I would be lying if I said I wasn't a bit envious, made that look real easy.

Clearly he is just a professional in a college kid's body at the moment. The "A" next to his name is just for looks. That was pretty special.

It's incredible to me. I've seen a lot of college golfers come out here and you see their talent and you would never be surprised for them to shoot a 60 or 61 or 62, they're so good. I usually just reference Collin Morikawa. I watched him in college and he played professional golf tournaments when he was in college. He lost in a playoff like in a Korn Ferry event and I just couldn't believe that these kids like Nick and him and others obviously cannot only have that talent, but already know how to use it and how to play and how to prepare like a professional. That stuff is amazing.

I was quite the opposite. I played my first pro event and I got ninth in a Tour event and I thought, oh, I'm doing all the things right, and golf just kind of slaps you across the face.

And these guys just seem to just not have that. They know what they're doing. They're not looking around, they're not worried about what I'm doing or anybody else. They just know if they play their games, they're going to do just fine.

Just watching Nick, I guess we didn't really get to watch until the last hole but just seeing him hang in there, just felt like he was comfortable. That's something that I just can't -- I'm just so impressed by because I just don't think people get how uncomfortable you are in new settings, in new situations. He just made that look -- just looked like he was ready for it and it was awesome.

**Q. Back to one question about the majors for you, we've heard with like Rory when he was trying to get this Masters now, some years he's trying not to think about it much at all, not putting a ton of pressure on himself; other years he's really focused, really serious. Like he's kind of taking a different mindset to figure out what works.**

**As you enter a year where you're trying to find more success in majors, how do you strike that balance of trying to care a lot but not care too much? How are you going about how you approach those majors?**

**MAX HOMA:** I think I've always cared the right amount prior. I care a lot prior, like everybody, and I work my tail off prior and I think I do all the right things before the event.

I think my goal for this year when I get there is to stop caring as much once I arrive. I've done the work, I don't need to be perfect. I think that's why I've had success in Tour events is because I believe that my preparation and my work ethic is my best skill and when I get here I feel comfy and I just let myself go be me.



I think when I showed up at majors I want it to be just as good as it was maybe the Sunday before I left. Instead, I think I need to trust that everything that I'm doing in preparation is going to let me just go play by Thursday. It's actually probably just being more of myself and less thought when I'm on the grounds just the same when I'm off because, you know, I wouldn't ever tell myself to work less hard to do something. But I think I tried to bottle it too much when I actually played the event. Yeah, looking forward to that.

I was happy to see that work at The Open Championship, albeit I wasn't in contention on the -- by halfway through Saturday, but at least I kind of had a sniff of it and I started to feel what all that meant. And I was just playing golf and I was playing well. I think I understand the simplicity of it now and I was just overcomplicating it prior.

**MARK WILLIAMS:** Very insightful. Appreciate the time, Max. Enjoy the week and maybe we'll see you again.

