

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
**September 13, 2023**

**MAX HOMA**



---

**HALEY PETERSEN:** We would like to welcome the two-time defending champion, Max Homa, to the Fortinet Championship.

Max, welcome back. We would like to just start off with some opening comments on what it's like to be back here in Napa going for the third title.

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, it's always fun being back here. Bay area, I obviously went to college up here. This was my first start albeit at a different golf course, but my first start to my professional career, which is pretty cool to have had the success I've had the last couple years. But it's exciting.

This is a great family event, I've got my family up here. It's always -- all the events we came to last year where my wife, Lacey, was pregnant and now Cam's actually crawling around the grounds is always kind of funny just picturing how different it is.

Yeah, warms my heart to be back. Obviously my partnership with Fortinet makes that better, too, just because I know a lot of the people who put on this event and who have put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into this event. So it's great to come up here and see it looking like it does and everything running smoothly.

**HALEY PETERSEN:** Came down to the final stretch last year with the finish. Kind of walk us through 18 and what you remember capturing the win.

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, I remember Danny made an amazing putt on 17 for par. I thought we were probably going to be tied. He had a really tricky 12-footer and made it. Going to 18, he missed the fairway and I thought if I hit the fairway I'd have a very good chance to make birdie, and I did. So I thought all of a sudden I was kind of back in a great spot to get into a playoff.

But with the rain and how cold it was, we were struggling to even get it to the green. I thought I hit a good 3-wood; it was going to be left of the green, but I thought it was going to be OK. It was in the bunker, which was -- that just was a testament to how long it was playing, I guess, because I thought it was over by a mile. And then Danny hit it to four feet and I thought to myself I need a miracle, and I got one.

It was hectic and chaotic and not something I could ever really imagine happening, but I was fortunate to be on the good side of that one.

**Q. Max, welcome back to Napa and congratulations on securing the spot on the**



## **Ryder Cup.**

**How do you go about managing your energy level, your strategy and having just returned from Rome, and now playing here and in a week or so returning to Rome and playing for this great United States team? What are your thoughts on that?**

**MAX HOMA:** I think once we get to Rome it will be easy, the adrenaline's going to be at a million, so I'm not so worried about that.

This week has been a bit of a grind, felt like I was a zombie the last two days, today I finally feel a little bit better energy-wise.

But yeah, I mean, I'm very much excited to go play in Rome, but I have a week to get my energy back. I'm not so worried about that. I'd like to make sure that I expend enough energy this week to make sure I get as ready as I can to play well, and then yeah, I'll reassess that at the end of the week. It is just golf at the end of the day. Once I caught up on sleep, I felt a lot better.

**Q. Max, I know your experience at the Presidents Cup, I think you called it one of the best weeks of your life. You're going to go represent your country again. Do you have a feeling it's going to be up there again as one of those weeks that you're going to remember for a long time?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah. Just standing on the first tee when we went out there last weekend with zero people there was insane just how big the stands are. All the stories all the boys were telling me just about what it's like, whether home or away, looking at the infrastructure, now starting to get kind of into the nitty gritty of people dissecting our team and their team, and people talking about just how much it means, and you could tell by the other team side just how much that means to them.

We obviously haven't won there in 30 years, so we have a lot we're trying to accomplish and a bit of a chip on everyone's shoulder. So it just feels bigger. The Presidents Cup was so exciting and there was -- it was so raucous and it was so wild. I had a few people tell me that it's just nothing compared to what the Ryder Cup will be, and I really had a hard time believing that until I saw the stands on the first tee. We had a tunnel out at Quail Hollow and it was nuts, but this is like quadruple the size. Just that alone, you could already tell how different it is and how amplified it will be.

**Q. Max, when you were on video here for the media day, the schedule for next season and the new format hadn't been announced yet. Could you address your thoughts on next season? I know you've got Ryder Cup and this week and other things on the horizon, but what about next week and some of the super events, what are your thoughts on that, like the AT&T, for example?**

**MAX HOMA:** I think it's great. It's more along the lines of this season we're in was always

going to have to be a hybrid into next season. It was too hard to do everything so fast, but I think it's great.

Keep getting the top players playing together more often, that's the theme, and that's I think the name of the game for interest. And then the events where they're not signature events, you're still going to have these great storylines. There's still going to be great ways to get into the signature events. The split with the points will make some players who are in the signature events play some other ones other the ones that they love.

I'll play Phoenix considering that's where I live now. You're going to see a bit of a different, a bit of new names. Using AT&T, Jordan plays there every year, I've played there a few times. You get some guys who love going up there and some guys who have stayed away because the weather can be spotty, and now you're going to get a bunch of guys getting to play Pebble Beach and Spyglass, two of the best golf courses on the planet. I think that's exciting.

Yeah, obviously it's new and different and will take some getting used to, but I do think that this is a good step in the right direction to drive interest again not just in the signature events, but the other events as well. I think you'll start to see that -- the Honda Classic was a very good example of that this year. You had some guys who were looking to make a name for themselves and some guys who were looking to get back into the winner's circle, and it was a very different type of excitement but the same idea. There was storylines to it more so than just Scottie and Rahm going against each other. I think both things are important and great, and I think that this coming season will show that.

**Q. Max, you won this tournament twice, two years in a row. Is that in the forefront of your mind, you know, seeking to -- how much pressure do you carry into this tournament trying to become the first player since Steve Stricker to do something like this, to win three in a row?**

**MAX HOMA:** I wouldn't call it pressure, but it's the only thing on my mind honestly. I have nowhere to advance from FedExCup going into next year, I'm lucky in that.

However I play this week means almost nothing other than my world rank, but I would love to win this thing three times in a row. I told Stricks as we left Rome that I look to shake his hand in two weeks' time and tell him we're the last two people to have won three times in a row here. I'd probably have to shake Tiger's hand like 40 times, that's how many times he's done it.

So it's kind of fun up here in a way freewheeling. I get to go play for my country in two weeks. Using this obviously to get ready and to hopefully go do it again. It's the opposite of pressure, it's a very comforting place to be like truly playing with one thing on my mind, which is nice, and that's to try to hopefully not have as much chaos as last year but hopefully have the same outcome.

**Q. Max, given your position in the FedExCup the way you finished, you don't have to play here this week. Are you here out of loyalty, defending champ, ambassador for Fortinet, or is this the best way for you to prep for the Ryder Cup?**

**MAX HOMA:** I think mostly all of it. You know, obviously the Fortinet partnership, they told me this year if I made the Ryder Cup team I did not have to be here, which I thought was very nice of them because we don't get much of a break. It was a quick turnaround. I would have liked to hang the clubs up for a little bit longer. In a way it's nice because it gave me something to work towards. Took a few days off at home and then got back after it.

I'd be lying if I said the biggest thing on my mind is trying to do some -- this three times in a row. I don't think -- you don't really ever get that many opportunities to do that. I hope I get another chance at some point, but if it's just this chance, that's fine, too. So I think that's really been a big motivating factor being up here.

But again, I love this golf tournament, I love being in Napa, I love the golf course. My wife loves being up here. It's a very family friendly and great event to be at.

So yeah, it's all those things combined. It's just a special -- this has always just been a special week for us. I think so many people would have the same sentiment, that it's just a nice event to come to. The golf course is always in great shape and for me on the west coast it's very easy travel in and out. I get to see some friends here. Yeah, it's just a lot of those things combined.

**Q. What did you gain from the experience of going over and having that scouting trip in Rome?**

**MAX HOMA:** It was very nice to see the golf course. I would say those weeks are so busy, you don't really get -- you almost feel like you're rushing, at least that's what I felt at the Presidents Cup. You're rushing to get to know things about the golf course, you're rushing to get some extra practice in, whatever it may be. At Quail Hollow we all played it a billion times and this one we had never been to.

So just between the first day that we played it and then the second day completely changed my view of how we play the golf course. So basically looking back now, that saved me a day over there. I can tell Joe now what clubs we're going to hit on certain tees, he can adjust off that.

There were a couple where I hit 3-wood on the third hole the first day and the second day I was either going to hit a 3-iron, a 4-iron, I could have even hit a 5-iron, things of that nature I feel like were a big bonus.

Plus being around all the guys and seeing how tightknit the group is, it almost gave me a bunch of confidence that not only is it going to be a fun week, but I do think we have that camaraderie to get things done and break that 30-year drought.

**Q. And one more from me. If I had told you at last year's Fortinet, your defending champ media day, that Justin Thomas a year from now would be 71st in the FedExCup, what would you have said?**

**MAX HOMA:** I think it would be weird if you just came up and told me that, I guess, would be the first thing.

I don't know. Golf's really hard, and I think 71st isn't awful I don't think. I think it's a testament to how great of a golfer he is. Like 71st we can all be oohing and aahing like it's the worst thing ever, like how could you possibly be 71st? That's a testament to how great he is.

A lot of people struggled to make the playoffs. Look at stellar, stellar players, I think two years ago Tommy Fleetwood maybe didn't make it, this year Shane Lowry and Adam Scott didn't make it. I mean, they're tremendous, tremendous golfers. Golf's very difficult.

This was an interesting year with the schedule change. There was no point differential, so I did feel like Justin played a lot of these events where the Scotties and the Rahms and the Rorys were all there and he played all right, had to kind of pick up speed at the end.

I know Justin wants to play better obviously, and he obviously is very capable of it, but I don't think 71st is this awful season that we can raise our nose up to and say how could you ever play so poorly. I thought he played just fine.

Again, I don't -- I think it's just been overblown, but I think that should be a confidence builder for Justin that we expect so much from him because he is such a talented golfer.

**Q. A couple of Cal type questions. One, how often, if ever, did you get up here and play when you were at Cal, and two, what do you think of the breakup of the PAC 12, because you played in tournaments?**

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, I had never been up here before until the event a few years ago, whatever it may be.

And the breakup, it's wild. It's kind of sad and then it's also funny because in a way it doesn't affect me at all anymore, I'm an ACC'er now. I don't know. It's hard to wrap my mind around. It's just brutal for the not football sports, the travel, and Cal doesn't have this massive budget, we don't fly around on private planes. That's going to be a shame. I'm going to be curious to see how they figure that out.

Yeah, it's just going to be kind of one of those nostalgia things in 20 years to say I know the PAC 12 is probably maybe nonexistent, or I don't know. Explaining that to the young generation, my son in particular, will be very funny and make me feel quite old at the time because it's going to sound impossible. So it has been sad, but I guess it is what it is.

**Q. Max, obviously well acquainted with the course and the event. They changed the routing up this year a little bit. Just wondering if that changes anything for you, if you had a chance to see it, and does your strategy or anything change throughout the tournament?**

**MAX HOMA:** Actually, yeah, it does a little bit. That now 10th hole before was between driver and then -- and other times it would be something more like a 250-yard shot. We played there yesterday morning and I realized that if that's where you're starting, it might be a little tricky to start with driver, you're not fully warm. It's an awkward enough tee shot, so I think it changes that maybe a little bit.

You've got to get a shuttle and you've got to leave a little bit earlier. But when you play the golf course, today we teed off 1 and when you play the golf course starting at 1, it makes a ton of sense that it works like that. The only different part is having to get to 10 tee is a shade tricky.

Other than that, I actually like -- I like it better now, and yeah, it makes total sense. When they first explained it to me, it was hard to wrap my mind around what we were doing, but that little loop around 5 and 6, it actually -- it is probably how it should be just for the tournament.

Starting on 10 is the only part that will be a little bit awkward, but you only have to do that once. It's not a big deal. Just something that you've got to wrap your mind around.

Everybody was talking about going off 10 yesterday for our practice round and I realized we were going to have to get a ride out there instead of just pop over from the putting green. But it will be cool. Once Sunday, watching the lead, I just feel it makes a lot of sense if you're out here. For the fans, you could almost stay parked on one tee box and see quite a few golf shots and see the leaders come back around.

**HALEY PETERSEN:** I'll finish up for one last one from me. Aaron Baddeley is making his 500th start here. His family spoke very highly of you. I was wondering if there were any stories you had of him either as a competitor or a person.

**MAX HOMA:** Yeah, 500 starts is tremendous. I remember watching him win at Riviera. Hair was shorter, putting stroke was the same. He's always been a lovely guy to look up to and want to emulate your golf game towards.

His kids are so cute, and they're awesome, and they go to the golf course all the time, and they love golf, and they're nice. It's just the nicest family.

I see Aaron a lot at home at TPC Scottsdale, he's always friendly. Like I said, he always has at least one of his boys there hitting balls, and it's really fun to watch. He's just a guy that you watch all these players growing up and then you get to meet them and almost -- you're almost nervous to meet these people and Aaron exceeds expectations. He's so

tremendously nice and soft spoken, but when you watch him play golf, you see why he's had so much success. So it's pretty cool to see that this is his 500th, that's amazing.

**HALEY PETERSEN:** That's all we have, Max. We wish you the best of luck as you go for three.

**MAX HOMA:** Thank you, guys.