

CELEBRITY FOURSOME
June 8, 2024



ANDY NORTH
MICHAEL PHELPS
MATT RYAN
PAT CONNAUGHTON

JAN KITTOE: Welcome to the news conference of the 2024 AmFam Celebrity Foursome hosted by Andy North. I'm Jan Kittoe, vice president of communications and community engagement at American Family Insurance. I'm honored to be here with this very tall celebrity foursome.

Host Andy North is a two-time U.S. Open champion, ESPN golf analyst, dedicated philanthropist, AmFam brand champion ambassador and host of this event since its beginning in 2016.

We're pleased to have back for a second consecutive year the most decorated Olympian in history with 28 medals, 23 of them in gold, Michael Phelps.

We're pleased to welcome two new players to this year's foursome, Matt Ryan, former Atlanta Falcons quarterback who earned honors as the NFL offensive player of the year, most valuable player and was a four-time Pro Bowler. He's now transitioned to a CBS sports analyst as an NFL analyst.

And then we have Pat Connaughton, a graduate of Notre Dame University where he excelled at both baseball and basketball. He was selected in the fourth round of the 2014 Major League Baseball draft. Since 2018 he's been a guard for the NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks.

Andy, Michael, Matt and Pat, thank you for joining us today, we appreciate you being here. your participation in this event helps us raise even more money for the American Family Children's Hospital and local charities in Wisconsin that focus on healthy youth, families and strong communities.

You'll be joining in a friendly competition, *friendly competition*, Michael and Matt versus Andy and Pat. The winning team will have a \$25,000 donation made in their names to the American Family Children's Hospital.

I have some questions before we open things up to the media.

So, Michael, this is your second time at the Champ. What are you looking most forward to this year?

MICHAEL PHELPS: Hopefully, winning. Andy and I did not get it done last year, so hopefully Matt and I can get it done out there.

MATT RYAN: There you go.

MICHAEL PHELPS: No, honestly, for me, being able to come back, last year was awesome. We had a great fan base out there that cheered us on and kind of helped us finish. We didn't make many putts, but we had a lot of fun out there and a lot of laughs. To be able to raise money for such a good cause, for the community and for kids where we can actually make a difference, it's so important. For me it's an honor to come back and hopefully have some dry weather out there. We're not in a swimming pool today, so I didn't bring my suit and goggles, so let's keep it dry.

JAN KITTOE: Well, we're excited to have you back --

MICHAEL PHELPS: Thank you.

JAN KITTOE: -- and we changed your partners so maybe --

MICHAEL PHELPS: I hope so, I hope so.

ANDY NORTH: He got an upgrade by the way.

JAN KITTOE: Matt, you're a new participant in this event, but you're certainly accomplished on the football field. How are you feeling about your golf game today?

MATT RYAN: I feel all right about my golf game. I feel like since retired, I've had the opportunity to play a little bit more, so it's one of the things I really enjoy doing. I think golf's such a great sport in that you're always trying to get better and you never really seem to be able to get there. So I like that part of it. It's one of the things I always loved about football, trying to get as good as you could get at something.

So looking forward to doing it with Michael today and having some fun. I think one of the best parts about golf is it brings people together, and there's such a charitable background to its history. So for me I've always enjoyed being a part of things like this.

JAN KITTOE: You're going to love our fans. I'm going to turn it over to Pat. You know our fans, you played in front of thousands of Wisconsin fans at home games. How are you feeling about getting in front of the local fans here today?

PAT CONNAUGHTON: Yeah, hopefully they stay away from me on the tee, I don't want to hit anybody, I don't want to lose any fans today.

No, the fan base here in Wisconsin's awesome. Andy and I have a friendly little Wisconsin versus Notre Dame rivalry at the collegiate level, but at the pro level we're all aligned with

obviously the Bucks and Packers and Brewers.

The fan base I think's one of the most underrated fan bases in the country. To be out here now in a different setting playing a different sport, we'll see how much they cheer me on pending my performance.

JAN KITTOE: They'll cheer you on. And Andy, this is clearly an event that everyone looks forward to every year. You've played with other professional golfers, musicians, athletes. How are you feeling about the action that's going to happen on the course?

ANDY NORTH: Finally we've got the right size group. This has been awesome. I'm not very often the smallest size when we show up and do these things.

It's really great to have Pat, Michael and Matt here, three great guys, great players, great sportsmen. We're going to raise some money, which it's all about, and have some fun at the same time.

And I suspect there will be some smack going on out there at some point in time, too. We can start it right now.

JAN KITTOE: Thank you so much. I'll turn it over to the media for any questions.

Q. Michael, if you had trained for one event, could you win a medal in Paris this summer?

MICHAEL PHELPS: No. I've gotten asked that question a lot, especially coming into L.A. There's no desire for me in my heart. There's just nothing else that I want to do.

But if there was some itch or some desire for me right now at my age and what I would have to go through, it would be a four- to five-year process for me to get back just for one or two events, one individual and one relay.

For me right now, I have four kids under 8 and that's a lot more important, keeps me a lot more busy. I'm very happy where I'm at.

And watching the new kids and these up-and-comers being able to have a chance to go after their goal and their dream is something that's so fun to watch, right? For most of my career it was USA versus Australia; now it's the rest of the world. You're hearing new national anthems played, right, so kids aren't afraid to go out there and try to achieve their goals and dreams. I think for me the sport's in a really cool spot.

Q. Pat, your exploits as baseball, football growing up kind of legendary. When did golf come into your life and when you did kind of figure out, oh, I can do this, too?

PAT CONNAUGHTON: Well, we'll see if I can do it. My dad golfed on Fridays with his

friends, his brothers, so if I did good in school, if I was a good child to my mom, a good kid, like he'd let me go out with him as I got to be junior high school and things like that.

I think the ability to play multiple sports is something I've always been passionate about. I've always tried to push the next generation to continue to try to excel in multiple sports.

To be a part of an event that is different than what people know me playing, basketball and baseball, I think is pretty cool because it just shows if you're into sports, if you love athletics, don't let a youth coach tell you you've got to specialize at a young age. Get your body exposure to different sports, it's healthier in the long run. Get your mind exposed to different levels of competition, get your social skills exposed to different people and different ways you've got to work as a team.

That's what I'm kind of hoping to do today is learn something from the three guys next to me in golf to try to get myself better and also show you can excel in multiple different sports.

I think that's what's awesome to hear Matt and Michael talk about their experiences in golf prior to this and how they've grown at the game of golf and how -- they won't say it because they're modest, but how good they are at golf after obviously having such incredible decorated careers in their day jobs, shall we say.

MICHAEL PHELPS: It helps when you're retired.

MATT RYAN: No doubt.

ANDY NORTH: Could we write that answer in capital letters for all parents out there? There's nothing more sickening than an 8-year-old specializing in soccer. They don't have any idea what they're doing or what they're going to be good at. Please, capital letters.

Q. Matt, Jordan Love will be here tomorrow. Obviously, you know, expectations in the state for Green Bay. Just what did you see from him last year and sort of what are your thoughts on him sort of -- I guess it's hard to say take a step after 4,000 yards and 30 touchdowns, but what's expected? What do you kind of see from Jordan and think he'll bring to the Packers this year?

MATT RYAN: Yeah, I thought he had a great first year. We called their game against the Bucks, so we had that loss. I mean, it was a tough loss for the Packers, but he made a couple throws during that game that reminded me so much of Aaron. The ability to move outside the pocket, to throw from kind of off platform situations and deliver it with the velocity and the accuracy that he did, I was really impressed.

I think the space where he takes the next steps, right, it's just cleaning up the little things, down in and down out. I think that's going to come with experience. Having all of that film to watch from last year, just cleaning up some of those simple things, being a little bit more consistent, I think if he can do that, the sky's the limit.

I'm high on this group of wide receivers that they have, the young group of wide receivers. As we were preparing to call the game against them or for them last year, they jumped off the tape in the speed and explosiveness that they've had. They've done a great job of putting pieces around them in order to be successful.

So I really think the north is going to be fun to watch. You've got Chicago and all that they've done. Minnesota's in a bit of transition. Detroit had such a great year last year, and I really see the Packers ascending. I think this division's going to be a blast to watch.

Q. Michael, I know you said you're looking forward to hopefully winning this time around. How do you feel like the two sides match up against each other?

MICHAEL PHELPS: I think it's good. Pat's got a baseball background, too, so he's got an advantage. Baseball players can hit the ball an absolute mile.

Yeah, I don't know. I mean, I think Andy said it best, we're going to have some smack out there, we're going to have some fun. I mean, we're four athletes, right? That's what we like to do, we like to be competitive and I think that's what the four of us will do.

MATT RYAN: Actually, one guy here has won golf tournaments, the other three of us have not.

ANDY NORTH: But you guys weren't born when that happened.

MATT RYAN: What do they say, your form is temporary but class is permanent? I think we'll see some shots out there today.

Q. Matt, I read a couple articles that are calling you the best NFL quarterback golfer, or one of the best. Would you agree with that take, and if not, who are some of the best NFL athletes you've played with?

MATT RYAN: There's some good players. Tony Romo's a good player. I actually played with Sam Bradford a couple of weeks ago, maybe a couple months ago. I know Sam's retired now, but Sam can really play. I mean, he is a very, very good golfer.

There's a bunch of guys that are talented and can play, but we also kind of know our limitations, too, right? We've been lucky, I've been lucky to play with a bunch of guys on the Tour and Champions Tour players. We're still hacks compared to them.

There's a bunch of good players. For some reason quarterbacks tend to gravitate towards golf and do all right in that space. I think we all just enjoy the challenge.

ANDY NORTH: Watch out for quarterbacks and kickers.

MATT RYAN: Kickers and punters.

ANDY NORTH: They've got a lot of time to spend on it.

MATT RYAN: Yeah, no doubt. They don't have to really work during the season all week, they just punt that thing and kick on the weekend.

Q. Michael, I am not an up-and-coming Olympian, but I would challenge you to a race, there's a pond on the 17th hole.

MICHAEL PHELPS: I almost hit it into there off the 15th tee or something.

ANDY NORTH: Exactly.

PAT CONNAUGHTON: I heard that's the angle to come in at.

MICHAEL PHELPS: Um-hmm.

Q. What would you tell an up-and-coming Olympian? What would you tell them?

MICHAEL PHELPS: Honestly, whenever I went to the Olympic Games, the Olympic Games is just another competition, it's just another event. For me, I was swimming against the same exact people, the temperature of the pool was the same exact temperature, the width of the lane lines was exactly the same, right? There was no difference in the pool, it was just there were more lights that were on.

So I think for me, I would just tell them to be you. They've done all the work to get to that point, they deserve to be there. Now it's just let go of everything else and let the training show.

For me, I was always like a dog in a cage like ready to just burst out of there for every Olympics because I knew what work I had done for those prior four years to get to that point. For me, that's what I'm rooting for. I have one chance every four years, that's it.

I think it's just trying to make sure you're mentally and physically ready as well. That whole week or two weeks whenever you're competing can be mentally and physically draining, so I think it's trying to conserve energy throughout it. Again, you've done the work, there's nothing else to overthink. For me, it was hop in the pool and swim.

Q. Pat, how much, if any, golf do you guys play during the season, and when you do play with your teammates, who tends to win the battles?

PAT CONNAUGHTON: Yeah, so I was telling these guys, Coach Bud loved to play golf, so it was awesome when we got to go on southern or west coast road trips. If there was a day off, if there was a back-to-back where you had to basically take a day off, a lot of us would

get to go out there and do active recovery, right, and play with him.

I think over the years there's been different guys that have been great. Kyle Korver's a tremendous golfer. Him and I, I was telling these buys in the bubble, had great competitions on the golf course. Still try to find time to play when we're in the same space.

And then Chris, Jrue Holiday, they love playing. I've been fortunate to play some really cool courses with them. They've continued to improve.

And I've played with Chris since the day I got here six years ago when he first took it up to where he's at now, it's night and day. He's got the itch.

I think for athletes in general it's something that, it's like Matt said, it's really hard and it can be frustrating to start, but once you start to have one good shot, two good shots, it keeps you coming back and that competitive juice comes out.

And it's a great way to step away from the sport that you're playing full time but still have that growth mentally that Michael was just alluding to when he was talking about up-and-coming Olympians, because I do think the general population sees all the physical things but the mental things I think are really underrated and I think golf really tests that and really helps you grow.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT CONNAUGHTON: I like all of them. I have a love-hate relationship with a few of them, but Erin Hills has been one of my favorite once. All the courses up in Kohler have been tremendous. Milwaukee Country Club I'm fortunate to play once or twice has been great. Ozaukee. There's been a bunch of courses out there that I've been fortunate to play.

And then there's been a bunch of muni courses that I find myself a little more comparable on.

Q. I know you don't play much anymore, Andy, and I heard you on Wilde & Tausch, and you got to golf with presidents and stuff but how much fun is it still for you to go out there and do this competition?

ANDY NORTH: What Michael kind of alluded to, the Thursday through Sunday out here is so much fun, but to get to those days is well past me. If someone said you, "Go tee it up at the U.S. Open next week on Thursday," I think that would be awesome. I mean, I would be terrible, but it would be fun to try to do that again.

I don't do this much anymore, T.he body doesn't work, brain's been fried multiple times, so it's just a pleasure to get out here. Every athlete loves to show off at whatever they do. COVID for professional golfers was really tough because there's nobody out there and the top players struggled during that period of time, they're so used to having everybody, the

energy around them the whole day. We still love that. Doesn't matter how old you are, it's still nice to hit a good shot and have somebody appreciate it or "Oooh, that was pretty good." You know, I don't get that much anymore, but once in a while maybe.

And we're going to go out there and see if we can beat these two guys. That's what it's all about. I'm going to ride Pat to the hilt and hopefully he plays great today.

PAT CONNAUGHTON: I'm going to build him up, I'm going to cheer for him every time.

JAN KITTOE: Thank you all very much.