

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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CHARLEY HOFFMAN

MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Charley Hoffman to the interview room here at the 2025 Farmers Insurance Open.

Charley, you're very familiar with this tournament obviously, coming from here and making your 27th start this week. That's pretty hard to believe, isn't it really?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: To answer that question, yeah. I know I was 16 when I first qualified for the event, I think I played it when I was 17.

I didn't do the math that it was my 27th appearance, but I think like 31 or 32 years that I've been playing this event, which is kind of nuts when you think about it.

If it wasn't because of this amateur qualifier back then, as I said, sit on the range 16, 17 years old playing against the best in the world and watching them play and sort of being out there sort of gave me the juices to want to play professional golf. It definitely was a steppingstone of what I wanted to be and what I wanted to do.

MODERATOR: Coming in here obviously off a really good performance last week, you were the 36-hole leader, co-leader and finished top-5. Just talk about your performance there and having that confidence coming in here, bringing it to somewhere that you're really familiar with.

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, this is the first offseason I've actually been able to in the last probably three to four years I've been able to work and practice and play and work out. In the past it was like, all right, how do I get ready to even tee it up on the PGA TOUR, back wasn't any good.

So end of last year was nice and then took some time off, was able to strengthen everything and was able to work on the game and obviously it showed. Played -- actually hit the ball really good in Hawaii, didn't putt very good. Then last week sort of put both of them together and had a chance coming down Sunday. Obviously Seth played amazing and he forced my hand late in that round. And I didn't take advantage of a par 3 that I sort of went after.

Obviously good memories there and won there in '07, my second year on Tour and obviously momentum coming to this event is great. Body feels good again. Short week of rest, but being home, that helps me more than anybody not having to pound practice rounds out here because I played 27 times. So I took nine holes at a time, but obviously going to ride that wave and ride that momentum and hopefully try to knock off a Farmers win out here. Obviously this is the one I'd love to win. Other than a major championship, I think this

one or Phoenix would probably be the two that I put on my list for a W.

Q. Charley, did the back get bad enough in those couple years where you wondered if you would even be out here?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: The answer is yes. I remember just like putting on shoes and doing stuff like that, like am I ever going to be able to play at what I know I need to be able to? Health wise, be able to play professional golf again?

There was a period of time where I was doing anything just to get a start out here, not even being able to put any reps in. How can I play four rounds of golf during a tournament, which I found very unproductive and not very competitive.

Now being able to put the reps in, I think it's mentally and physically you have to be in the right frame of mind to be able to compete against, I mean, last week 17-year-olds and young 20-year-olds, guys much better, much more prepared than I was at that age.

So the answer to that question is 100 percent I wasn't sure I would ever be competitive out here again. Obviously last year in Phoenix I was competitive. The rest of it wasn't up to my liking, but this year obviously starting off on the right foot, getting myself in contention.

Obviously I'm creeping up on 50 and the PGA Tour Champions and looking forward to it, but as long as I'm competing to win golf tournaments on the PGA TOUR, I want to be out here. I want to beat these young guys, I want to walk down the fairway. It's fun, it gives me energy. It's just I get a kick out of competing against these kids and as long as I'm still competing to win golf tournaments, I want to stay out here.

Q. How did you fix the back?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Just a lot of rehab. Put a good team together. Just trusted a lot of people. Did a lot of work in the gym. It's not a huge weight training you see in the college football or NFL, but it's just repetitive stuff just to strengthen the muscles around my back and glutes, just making everything stronger to give my -- reprieve my back a little bit. A few machines, lot of cold tubs, lots of infrared saunas and stuff like that.

Now I spend more time on recovery on my body now than I do practicing and banging it up. A lot of recovery. If it says recovery next to it, I probably own it because I'll try anything.

Q. Asking you about this tournament, no one in this tournament goes back as far as you do at this point. It's obviously changed a lot through the years. Are you a little bit concerned about where it now falls on the schedule amid all the Signature Events, the Wednesday start? It's incredibly difficult. Are you concerned that maybe the younger guys don't value the Torrey experience as much or the Tour players in general just aren't finding their way here as much as they did before?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Well, that's a very loaded question.

The answer is I think the community of San Diego took for granted that Tiger Woods virtually showed up every single year at this event, the best player in the world, and competed to win almost every time he played here. We took it for granted.

Now a lot of these tournaments, if you had Tiger Woods two or three times through the history of the event, they would be happy. We had Tiger Woods each and every year and we may have taken it for granted.

The field is fairly strong. Is it a bad date? I wouldn't say it's a bad date, it's just a tough date.

If I had a crystal ball, I may juggle up the whole schedule, not even play a West Coast Swing on the west coast, maybe play Florida first and maybe play the west coast maybe more in the summer when we all want to be in San Diego.

If I was commissioner for a day, I would take a look at the schedule and just jumble it all up and say where should we start the PGA TOUR season, where is the best time to play these events and do we have to play the whole west coast on the west coast right after each other?

Maybe, maybe not. I think that's stuff -- thank God I'm not on the board or do any of that stuff any longer. But I think that's something they're looking at right now is -- I don't know where this tournament could fall better, but does it have to be in January? I'd say no. You could have this tournament anytime of the year here in San Diego. And it's a better time of the year than it is now usually we all know in San Diego. This is the hardest month of all for -- we're going to get good weather this week it looks like, but in the past it's been a tough week.

I think the answer to the question is it is sort of a tough week for guys on the schedule coming off Hawaii, coming off -- American Express has turned into an amazing event again, which it was when I grew up watching the Bob Hope and that event. It was a premiere event and it's turned back into a premiere event again and it's having its effect on this week, especially with the Signature Event right after it.

Then not to mention now you have two out of three weeks pro-ams, which it takes a toll. Then Torrey's a short week. You nailed it, it is a tough date at as of right now. As we know, I think the football schedule changed next year, I think it's going to be a Sunday finish ideally next year, try to find a way to do that.

I don't think anything's off the table on the PGA TOUR when this event could fall and make it a better date.

Q. Do you think the difficulty, Charley, this early in the season, you go from pretty benign golf courses to this, do you think that that -- it doesn't scare guys off, but does

it turn 'em off a little bit that they don't want to necessarily compete on this type of golf course this early in the season?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: No, I don't. I just think you look at it strategically, the schedule, obviously you have Signature Events and major championships and those are at the top and you sort of schedule around that. How are you going to be prepared for those major championships, THE PLAYERS Championships and the Signature Events? How are you going to peak at that point in time because the points are so loaded in those events, and people are looking do I go play two golf courses, traditionally very hard golf courses and is that the best preparation for two Signature Events I have coming up?

Some people love the challenge and it may make those tournaments feel easier to them if they come out here and play well at Torrey Pines. It just matters what you're looking for and what you want. Tiger would always rise up to the challenge. He loved it here, he played here each and every year. He could pick any golf course to play and he chose here to play. It's just a matter of what you want.

But it is how are you going to peak and be ready for those big, big tournaments now. It's just a different way to look at it with the Signature Events, for sure.

Q. The feeling was different with Tiger here, right? And anywhere else, right?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: We took it for granted, there's not a question in my mind. As someone who's played here for over 30 years, you took it for granted that Tiger Woods was going to show up here and the city of San Diego was going to have the best player in the world each and every year at its event.

We're in reality now with what every other city has to deal with without Tiger Woods or the best player in the world playing here.

Unfortunately, Xander, one of the best players in the world, has injury. He's traditionally played here. Xander's trying to get ready to win more major championships, there's no reason to push it early in the year and hurt himself more. You're going to see guys taking this week off if it stays in this date, no question.

Q. Charley, nothing officially yet, but looks like the Genesis will be moving here. As a California kid and longtime California resident, do you think it's important that that tournament stays in California?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, obviously first and foremost, my head's wrapped around the Farmers this week and trying to prepare for this tournament and Farmers, what they've done for the community for so many years here and trying to put on a good show for that.

Genesis, obviously the platform that we're going to have to raise awareness for what happened in the Palisades is going to be a few weeks' time. I don't know when that's going

to be announced. I don't know where it's going to be played.

But obviously with the fondness, back to Tiger again, that he has for Torrey Pines, it seems like an easy fit. But right now each and every guy in this field's working to get into Genesis like myself if they're not in it. And obviously as a hometown kid, I'm wishing it comes here. If it's in Florida, Palm Springs or somewhere else, I'm still trying to work my way into that event to try to play against the best in the world.

But I think the platform here in San Diego would be a very logical place to put it. But there's so many logistics moving an event three or four weeks out. Hotels, volunteers, rebranding the site. There's so much the Tour has to do. That's a tough task and I know they're up for it, but no matter where they go it's going to be a tough task to get everything figured out.

It does make the most sense to go I think I read 123 miles south to go to San Diego, especially this is a major championship golf course. It's going to play like a major championship this week if we don't get any rain. It's firm, it's fast, the grass is long. You can keep that for another two weeks for sure. It does make sense.

But like I said, each and every one of these guys in this field are thinking about this week and Farmers and how we can put a great show on for them and support them how they supported us in the past.

MODERATOR: Before we take your questions, I just want to jump over to Charley again. You just mentioned Genesis and last year. You got into that tournament by the Aon Swing 5. You're currently in the Aon Swing 5 from your performance last week. I just wanted to get your perspective on that program. Obviously you're probably a strong advocate for it given the situation that you've experienced, but just what do you think of that program and how do you think it benefits a lot of these Tour members?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, the Aon Swing 5 is crucial to the signature, getting new blood I would say into the events. You have the 10 that qualify themselves in the fall, which I think's great, but now you have the 5 and then it goes back to the Swing 10 again.

The Aon Swing 5, I mean, it gave me a chance to play a Signature Event last year. It gives everybody hope to get into the events to play against the best in the world and compete against the best in the world.

So the Aon Swing 5, I don't know the exact number but we had over 30 different new people I think playing the events that weren't in them last year, which is what you want. We didn't want -- everybody thought it was going to be shut off. We had all different people from rookies to veterans to anybody getting in those events. It really did a great job last year getting new blood in those events and being able to tell storylines.

I remember sitting in the boardroom saying hey, we've got to make sure that this isn't a closed off tour and the Swing 5 and the 10 definitely made that happen I think better than we

actually predicted.

MODERATOR: And that standard's obviously pretty strong for you again being in the position you're in right now.

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, obviously west coast is key to my year getting off on a strong foot and being able to play hopefully next week at Pebble, in the Genesis if it does come down here or wherever it is.

I love that it rewards guys playing good golf. A rookie could finish fifth or a guy that took a career money list can earn their way into those events and it gives people hope that in that any golfer that tees up, you want to have hope to be able to play against the best in the world and you have the opportunity to do that and the Aon Swing 5 definitely does that.

Q. You had mentioned being 17 and being on the driving range. I'm just wondering when you were 17 and you walked on the driving range, was there anyone that you were starstruck by at that time or that you wanted to get advice from?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: I don't think -- I didn't know anything back then, to be honest with you. I obviously watched the guys on Tour. I remember sitting in the stall and Stadler was to my left and like Jacobsen to my right and I think Jacobsen maybe had won the week prior. I'm like a kid in a candy store, it's the best thing in the world.

My dad was caddying for me. I just didn't know any better, obviously young and dumb at 16 and 17. I thought I could do it and thought I could compete against these guys. I think I three-putted the first three holes. I obviously had some nerves. I was just having so much fun just watching 'em.

And I always learn from like watching guys. I don't think I ever really asked anybody at that point in time any advice, but I just watched them, what they did and how they prepared and what they did to be great.

The juices I got that week are what made me want to play professional golf, there's not a question in my mind.

MODERATOR: Speaking of 17-year-olds, there was one that played last week --

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, Blades.

MODERATOR: -- at the -- did you get to meet Blades Brown?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Blades was on my Junior Presidents Cup team in Montreal, so I knew Blades. Blades is a great kid. I said this last week, he's awesome. And obviously, as I said, if he would ask me for some advice, I don't know if I would have told him to turn pro at 17, especially with all this NIL money, if you could get NIL money in college.

I mean, college, college, they were some of the best times of all our lives, definitely myself. You sort of lose that turning pro at 17. As far as I know, the PGA TOUR's not going anywhere. I would have gave it a couple years even if he was a worldbeater, which he is a worldbeater obviously showing -- I think he shot 8 under the second round. Putting those numbers up at a PGA TOUR event's pretty remarkable.

It's tough sledding shredding out here on the PGA TOUR. It's not easy, nothing's given. You've got to put the numbers up no matter if you're 17 or 48. You have to post numbers. The ball doesn't know how old you are.

He's obviously tuned in and ready to play good golf and go low and I look forward to hopefully competing against Blades a few more years before I transition on.

MODERATOR: I don't know if you know, but you were this close to competing with him again this week. He was in a Monday qualifier playoff and missed.

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: I did see that. I'm sure he's going to get a few more sponsor invites and I'll see him out a few more times this year. He's -- I expect bright things in the future for him.

MODERATOR: Finally, you mentioned the Junior Presidents Cup. What was that experience like for you captaining that team?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, it's one of those I didn't know how involved I was going to be, how much I was going to get into it or let them just play golf.

I definitely had the juices going. Wanted to just teach 'em, they're so raw. Just teach them that you don't have to shoot at every pin, you don't have to birdie every hole, sort of stuff like that. They took it all in.

My caddie, Andy Mars, and I came out there and we just sort of mentored more than anything. Obviously once they got on the golf course, let 'em go play golf. But just sort of game plan strategy, how to map a golf course when you're walking around instead of just playing.

They were all great kids, and it was a great match, Graham DeLaet had a great team for the International Team. It was a ton of fun.

Then we took them over to the Presidents Cup after that, watched a practice round, got to go in the locker room with the real Presidents Cup team and those guys were obviously very gracious to the team. It was just a total blast.

MODERATOR: Do you feel like you came away from that with a little more incentive for your own game after being around those young kids?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: There's no question. I love feeding off the young kids and their energy, just the fearlessness they play with. That's something at an older age you sometimes get a little bit conservative out there, which I wouldn't say's always been my suit but sometimes you notice it and how fearless these young kids are playing the game of golf. Definitely it gave me a little bit of energy to want to play better.

Q. Charley, Poway's finest, when you come back home and play in front of family and friends and just get out here, whether you do good or bad, how cool is that for you just to be back home and just swinging the sticks in front of your family and friends?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, like I said, I did it when I was young out here and had a ton of family and friends and they're still out here supporting me. It's sort of crazy to think that -- I always look up -- Phil's no longer playing the PGA TOUR. He was the guy and I always looked up to him and he always supported the hometown event. Now I'm sort of the older guy and hopefully we get the town out here supporting me and put on a show for them.

But it's great to have the local fans. I think this community rallies around the Padres, rallies around the local San Diego people and I can't wait to see 'em hopefully late on Saturday.

Q. Charley, did you get any like "Uncle Charley" nicknames from those young guys or anything? Were they needling you about your age or anything, still being out? What was the interaction?

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: No, it's funny you say that. Some of the guys, I mean they're so young that they don't -- I wouldn't say they don't -- I haven't been that competitive in like three years, so I mean, they know who I was, but they don't really know who I am. Then I'll pick up a wedge and I'm like maybe you should hit a shot like that, and they're like, oh, you do know what you're doing.

It's sort of interesting that these kids are so raw that, I mean I played the majority of my career before they were born or some of it before they were born.

Go on a side note, Eric Weddles, a good friend of mine. Eric Weddles is coaching. Played safety for the Chargers, whoever doesn't know that, then Baltimore and then won the Super Bowl with the Rams.

But he was coaching RB High with his son as of late. I ran into him, he's like it's really weird, these kids never watched me play in the NFL because they're so young. Not that they don't respect 'em, but the pedigree of Eric Weddles teaching you, these young kids I think take it for granted almost what they have in front of them.

It's hard, it's hard sometimes because you've got to step back and go, I do know what I'm doing. I've always been an advocate of you have to learn from your mistakes and learn from that and you can teach them from those situations.

These kids are fearless and until they make mistakes, you've got nothing to say to 'em. They definitely -- I mean, to answer your question, total respect from all these young kids, they were awesome. International Team also.

It was a blast to be a part of it. And leave it at this: The future of our game of golf is very bright and they're very, very good kids. It's going nowhere. People are passionate, the young kids are passionate about the game, competing and doing it the right way.

MODERATOR: Charley, appreciate the time and good luck this week.

CHARLEY HOFFMAN: Yeah, appreciate it.