

Charles Schwab Challenge

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Max Homa

Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: Max Homa, here at the Charles Schwab Challenge, second start at this event, you missed the cut in 2015 but if we can talk about being back at Colonial this week.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I'm really excited. I loved being here the first time. We got kind of a weird weather week. I think it rained this whole weekend through the Nelson, so it wasn't I guess ideal for the golf course, because I've heard a ton of great things, so I was excited to be able to qualify and get back here this year because I wanted to kind of get a better memory of it. It was all blurry in the rain last time.

So I'm really excited. I know Fort Worth is a great city. Yeah, I've been pumped to be able to put this on the schedule.

JOHN BUSH: And how your life has changed here of late, first PGA TOUR victory here at the Wells Fargo? Talk about that win and coming into the week No. 40 in the FedExCup standings and your goals for the rest of the year.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, it's obviously been a bit of a whirlwind. Winning was fun. It obviously is a big game changer. I mean, to be quite honest, the week going into Quail Hollow or Wells Fargo, I was trying to plan to play here. I didn't what I needed to do but I thought with my FedEx number, I might get in here and hopefully get into the Memorial next week, as well.

So that was like the main goal at the time, and then all of the sudden you get into the PGA last week, and now I'm in here and Memorial.

So it worked out perfectly for me because I really wanted to play these three events, and yeah, my goals have been kind of the same all season. You know, regardless of winning, my main goal this year was to, or my only goal was to make THE TOUR Championship, so obviously being No. 40 on the FedExCup list gives me a lot better chance at that. You know, that's kind of where my head's been at, and that's kind of I always thought a pretty good goal because whether you win five times or one time, it's a nice long-term thing to look into.



Q. Can you talk about how different you are as a player and golfer compared to when you were here four years ago?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, a lot. I think everybody as they get older, in this game, gets sharper at most aspects of it. I think I kind of had gone through a part where I had like lost something pretty -- you know, I had lost my golf swing for the most part. So I became much worse there but I did become sharper in other areas and my biggest one was kind of the mental side of golf.

I think I became very good at course management but personally, like "Max Management," figuring out how I was going to keep my emotions in check, how I was going to be mentally prepared for adversity and all these things that go along with every round of golf, I don't care how great you play.

So I've definitely grown up a lot in four years, and kind of developed in areas, not just, you know, around the greens and on the greens and swinging a golf club. A little bit more of the stuff that I would assume the top five, ten players in the world are much more advanced than the rest.

Q. I know you're a big baseball fan, and you had the opportunity to throw out the first pitch at the Dodgers game. Why don't you talk about that experience, and how good was the pitch?

MAX HOMA: It was not good. But I threw it high right, so I know a lot of the big analysts are going to say that it was a terrible pitch and it was if you don't look at it as -- I looked at it as a setup pitch because usually get a few pitches. I was just trying to brush them back so the next couple I could go away, so he wouldn't be able to hit it.

But in general it was frightening. It's way less scary to hit a drive. It's crazy how much less nervous I was on the 18th hole at Quail Hollow than for the pitch. I had a mini-blackout and just said Chuck it and I didn't do a good job. It didn't bounce -- Cody and Kershaw told me, do not bounce it and throw it from the mound, and I did, and I accomplished those little goals, but that is a scary, scary proposition up there. I was way out of my league.

Q. If you could just reminisce back in 2013 with playing at Cal, winning the NCAA individual title,

what do you remember about that win and that victory?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I remember Jon Rahm shooting 61 the first day and I couldn't really believe it. The golf course was very hard. We had played there in the fall as a preview and the course was completely opposite. Had very thick rough, and then when we played there in the spring, it was short of rough but a lot firmer.

I just remember I played very, very well the second day and kind of finished terribly, but I knew my game was good and I had gotten I think within two or three of -- I think Jon was still winning, so I got within two or three and I went out Sunday or the final round and got off to a really good start, and I just remember making a long par putt on 8 and game just felt good, and kind of clicked. But it's so different. People don't -- it's so funny. It's such a big event but there's no -- like there's no leaderboards for the most part. At least I don't remember seeing one. I had no idea where I stood. I think Steve Bartkowski came up to me and said you're winning by three and there's one more person on the course or something like that, I think it was Daniel Berger. It was such a weird experience. Now that I think about it there was a leaderboard on 18 but there wasn't for so long.

In a PGA TOUR event, whether there's a leaderboard or not, I remember walking up on one of the holes at Quail Hollow a guy is telling me where I'm at and I'm trying not to think about it, and he's like, you're up by two and I'm just like, dude, stop, I really didn't want to know this.

It's such a different world. College golf is so great, but it is definitely more innocent than out here, you know, there's a lot less production and kind of distractions, I guess.

Q. Second part of the question, just with obviously winning that, you won at every level, also at the Web.com Tour. How did those wins prepare you for being in the heat of battle at Wells Fargo to be able to pull off the victory?

MAX HOMA: Obviously the Web tour is unbelievable prep for this. I was even thinking about it last week, so last week was my first major as a pro but I had played one as an amateur and I was, again, out of my league just in the sense of this whole thing is such a production. But the reason I was less kind of unprepared last week, I felt very ready for it, is because most tour events are run like a majors. There's not that big a difference. There's a ton of people and grandstands, but it's the same idea.

So when you go from college to the Web tour it's completely different but you go from the Web tour to

the PGA TOUR, it's the same thing. That's where I think the Web tour does such a good job; winning on the Web tour, sure, I don't know if I would have won the PGA TOUR event that week but I do know I would have had the exact same experience the Sunday morning going to the course, doing range balls and all of that.

I had done it before, not against Rory and Jason Dufner and Pat Perez and all these people, but I had done it before. So it didn't feel completely foreign, but yeah, it is different. You're still a little bit dear in headlights I guess, but in general, you've still got to golf your ball. Same thing in the Web events on Sundays when I played well and the same thing that happened at Quail Hollow, everybody talks about, I don't care how good you are, you can't play defense in golf.

So if I'm playing great, I guess I can keep letting it roll and make my birdies and it's going to be hard for somebody to stop me from doing that.

Q. You talked about Max Management. What advice or tips would you have for your casual golfer out there and not letting a round or a hole get away when the game can be so pressured?

MAX HOMA: Well, yeah, most of the times, I tell people that I get mad, which I have, and my dad has or whatever. It's like, I put in a lot more hours than the average, you know, Sunday golfer. If I'm not getting mad, you can't get mad. There's no reason to. It would be like if I miss a couple shots in a basketball game and I'm playing with LeBron James and getting upset and he would laugh at me because I don't put in the time. So most people need to understand that just play like a fun round of golf that first of all it should be fun. You're out there with your buddies and second of all, getting mad very rarely helps. There's a difference, this is the thing I learned the most with myself was I used to be able to tell myself a lie to myself and say that because I was mad it would make me determined and then my determination would help me finish with a birdie.

I seem to skip in all that the three holes previous, or prior, where I would make three bogeys. That would just make me more and more and more bad and all of a sudden I make a birdie and I'm like, see, you just have to be determined and I get upset and that wasn't true. You waste time and energy doing that. You're a lot less tired at the end of a round of golf than when you're at level. There's no point in getting upset at yourself, keep a level head, make the right decision, the right shot, and whether you hit it well or not, I mean, that's something to work on later. But you're probably going to hit more bad shots than good if you're upset the whole time you're standing over it.

JOHN BUSH: You brought it up, back to LeBron, how

would that one-on-one go with the two of you?

MAX HOMA: Poorly. But it would be cool, man. I would remember it all -- he wouldn't, but it would be awesome for me and probably miserable for him. But yeah, I mean, he'd beat me pretty good.

Q. After Wells Fargo, how did you celebrate?

MAX HOMA: I went back to my caddie, Joe Greiner. He was staying at a host's house. We went back to their house and drank stuff, woke up. We slept in bunk beds that night. And then I had an early flight home, and then when I got home, I didn't do a big celebration or anything. We had my fiancée, Lacey, made a pretty cool dinner. That was fun. We just made dinner at home. And yeah, I guess the celebration was taking a few days off and breathing. You know, it was cool, like I said, being able to plan to go to the PGA Championship and come here. That was awesome.

But yeah, the celebration, it's funny, I was at a golf course for two hours after, so I had a bunch of my friends, Joel Damon and Brandon and a bunch of people ask me, where do you want to go and what do you want to do. I was done at 9:30 and I was like, guys, I'm pooped, man. I'm not ready to go out and have a bunch of fun.

You know it was actually kind of cool that we got to just lay low in the house. I did miss Game of Thrones. That was the only bummer. Other than that, it was a pretty good night.

Q. In terms of your confidence that week, how do you compare it to the highs you've had throughout your career?

MAX HOMA: This is obviously the most confident I've been. Any level of -- any Web event or any Canadian Tour event or Latino Tour event or college event you win, of course, you leave that event and go to the next event thinking, "I'm the man" in some form or fashion. I'm the best one here or I can be the best one here.

At some point, though, your brain should click on and think, well, I didn't beat Rory and I didn't beat Rickie and I didn't beat Sergio and Justin Rose. Like obviously you cannot say that you would have. It's speculation.

For the first time, I did do that. I played with Rory on Saturday and hung in there and ended up winning the golf tournament. The confidence level in that -- I'm a very realistic person. I try not to lie to myself about where I'm at in my game and stuff, so it's hard for me at times to be able to say, oh, because I won the Rust-Oleum Championship in 20, whatever, 16, I'm clearly good enough to win on the PGA TOUR.

Like I can't trick my brain into thinking that. I can say that I'm playing well, but I can't actually sit there and say that I could compete with the best in the world.

So this time, I could. It was actually a lot easier going to the PGA and looking at the field. Obviously it's a bit better or more full than the top hundred in the world. I was able to know that at least there's some guys that I did actually beat before. That's where the confidence has gotten so much greater, and I'll be able to lean on that a little bit more.

In general, I think most golfers are confident when they are playing well. I was confident when I won the Wells Fargo, which most people would think is crazy, but I had been playing really, really well. Just wasn't getting the ball in the hole very fast and obviously this is more tangible confidence, but before I was actually pretty confident. So I think that's where maybe it is a little different when you're watching somebody from the outside rather than actually, you know, seeing the ins and outs of 30th place. Winning, obviously you're going to be more confident.

Q. I imagine you would be able to keep your foot on the gas pedal instead of playing some weeks more defensively; you can be more aggressive?

MAX HOMA: Yeah, that's a great point. That's the biggest difference. Bethpage Black last week was very hard and Friday I was kind of struggling. For the first time ever, you know, thinking your brain kind of goes -- you're thinking, man, I missed the cut, blah, blah, blah, but it's like, dude, chill out. What's the worst thing that can happen this week.

Fortunately that helps you kind of relax and chill out and make a cut and play some golf on the weekend and keep progressing.

So yeah, it's definitely, I wouldn't say my goals have changed. I have always wanted to win golf tournaments but it is a lot easier to come out this week for instance, and my goal is now to just win. Like it's not -- there's no reason to not think that because if it blows up in my face, I mean, who cares. I don't think it's going to, and I don't want it to, but I can at least say, you know, there are going to be weeks that obviously I'm not going to make the cut every week or play great every week, but I can much easier go back and logically look through what went wrong and not look at it and think, gosh, the world is over and I'm going to Q-School or the Web tour again next season.

JOHN BUSH: Max Homa, thanks for your time and best of luck this week.