

U.S. Open Championship 2020

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Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

Collin Morikawa

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. We are pleased to welcome Collin Morikawa to the 2020 U.S. Open Championship interview area. Collin, a member of the 2017 Walker Cup team who last month won the PGA Championship at Harding Park, is playing in his second U.S. Open and is currently ranked No. 5 in the world. Collin, just talk a little bit about your first impressions of Winged Foot here.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, so I saw nine holes yesterday. What a course. You've got to golf your ball out here. You've got to really know how to control your shots and keep it in the fairway, obviously, but a lot of people had said a lot of things before this week and I obviously saw it and saw what the rough was going to be like, but I couldn't have a mindset of saying, okay, it's going to be tough and try and make pars.

Pars are obviously going to be really good this week, but I think if I let myself into already being a hard golf course, I would have had myself one step behind everyone else. So I'm kind of having an open mind, just showing up this week.

It is tough. You know, the first few holes definitely opened my eyes. But it's playable. It's not like it's not playable. Obviously you've just got to hit really good shots. It's going to test every part of your game this week. Overall, Winged Foot is amazing. The golf around here, I haven't played here much, but it's good to be here this week.

Q. First major since you became a major champion. Does it feel any different or do you approach it any different?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't think I approach it any different. I think I do some really good prep, and I'm sure that'll kind of adjust as time goes on. This is my third major, so figuring out how to -- guys know how to prep for majors, especially the ones that have won, and know the secret to doing that.

But I think I do a really good job Monday through Wednesday of figuring out a course, figuring out what I

need to do, so I'm doing the same thing.

But I think walking here as a major champion, you have a sense of knowing how to get things done. Yes, I've only done it once, but I've done it. You just want more. You get that little taste of what it's like, and you know why guys mark in their calendars the major championships for the year.

So it's not like I'm showing up not knowing what a major championship feels like. You still have that feeling here even without the fans. You can tell how guys are prepping, how guys are getting ready, but for me it's just, okay, let's come out here, I see all these guys every week, and let's have some fun playing golf.

Q. I'm sure there's no similarities between the two golf courses, but from off the tee is there anything to be said for the fact that you have to be able to play from the short grass if you're going to do anything?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I love that. We saw all of us tested a couple weeks ago at Olympia Fields, and you can see what scores does like that. I love playing courses like that because, yes, guys can make birdies, but you also have to know how to make pars and you have to be able to know when to take a bogey if you have to or when you hit it in the rough and really take your medicine.

As a young player, we necessarily might not have that mindset as some guys, but I think if you look back, the four years I spent in college, college coaches loved telling you hit to the middle of the green, and this week might not necessarily be hit to the middle of the green, but it's hit to your spots.

You look at hole 1, and I only played it once yesterday, but you can be pin high and not have a putt at the hole. That's just how tough this course is. You have to know where to hit it. Just getting to know the course is going to be really beneficial for everyone.

Q. Collin, when there was a Tour stop in Westchester, guys would come over, play here, go play Quaker Ridge. Your generation hasn't had a chance to do that. So how new is the Winged Foot experience for you



guys? Do you know many guys who have played here?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: My caddie played in the U.S. Am here in 2004, so he's bringing a lot of knowledge. I think he was here in '06.

Yeah, that's just part of what I've been doing, playing only a year and a half in, is figuring out these courses Monday through Wednesday and that's kind of all you get. It's nice to go to courses that I've played before, but it's nothing new.

So I come out here yesterday and start figuring out what I need to do, what is going to be the important factors. Obviously off the tee is going to be important, but you can't let up on any part of your game out here. You're going to see every shot. You're going to see some really good shots, really bad shots from every part of in golf course. It's just the way it's set up.

It'll be fun, yeah.

Q. And when you're not on Tour, when you get a week down, do you ever go visit some of the historical places, or is that ever part of your routine?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Not really. I'll go eat. No, I'd rather relax and get away from the golf course as much as I can.

I know you've talked to other people, I'm sure, and asked them what courses they want to play. To be honest, I really don't have many because I just don't want to keep playing golf on those off weeks. Our off-season -- you look at our off-season this year, right, Tuesday through Sunday. It's not a lot of time. It's not like any other sport, and I've talked to other guys about it. It's just the way we go.

But it's really cool we get to travel to so many cities, give back, and help out as much as we can.

Q. How does the course suit your eye and shot shape, and how many drivers will you hit in each round?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I've only seen the front nine, so I hit a lot of drivers yesterday. It fits my eye pretty good. I think there's a couple holes on the front where they were kind of dogleg lefts and the fairway was sloping to the right, and I think 12 -- 12 might be the par-5. I think that's really similar to that.

Those tee shots I really just got to hit the most neutral ball flight I can. But I've kind of tweaked my driver here and there and just on every other fairway, especially with the narrow fairways, I've been able just to aim down the left

side and have it peel back to the middle, and that's all I can ask for.

That pretty much makes my fairway as wide as it can be, knowing that my ball is going to fall right. It's going to be a lot of drivers. It's cold this morning, so if we get some cold mornings throughout the tournament, the course is going to play very long. It's going to play a little tougher, especially this first stretch of golf.

Q. Where is the line between extremely difficult and unfair?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. I really don't know because I would love to see it as tough as it can get.

I think when it starts getting unfair is when it's more on our approach shots and more on the we can't stop a ball in a certain part of the green. I realize it's Tuesday now and the greens are going to get firmer, they're going to dry them out, they're going to roll them, cut them, but off the tee, if you look at it, it's just penalizing bad tee shots. And it's not something we see all the time because sometimes we can just hit it as hard as we want and get away with it. That's just how different golf courses work.

But this is a golf course this week where you've got to hit it in the fairway, and if you're not in the fairway, you've got to play smart.

The good thing about this course is that a lot of the front of the parts of the greens are shaved and you can almost run them up if you have -- if you get a decent lie, I guess. That's not going to be the case all week. But you have some flexibility in some shots if you miss it off the tee.

Q. What's the hardest course you've played?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: This one probably. (Laughter.)

Q. Number of guys, young guys, whether it's Rahm or Xander or maybe even Bryson, who the next step is the major, is this the week they win the major, is there any part of you that's considered what it's like to not have to get that question for the rest of your career, having knocked it out at age 23?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's nice, I guess, I won't get that question asked. But now it's going to be what's next and what are you going to win next. But that's the thing; I'm not waking up every day realizing, yeah, I'm a major champion. I'm realizing we're at the U.S. Open, let's go win another tournament.

So for me it's always what's next, like what can I put my



head forward, what is going to be the next test of golf, and obviously it's this week. I've got to focus on every week. I can't get ahead of myself, can't start thinking about this long season that we have, what tournaments I'm going to play. It's just let's get focused for this week.

To be honest, the game, swing feels really good, and it should be really fun Thursday through Sunday.

Q. Especially after the PGA Championship, you talk to a lot of the older players, veteran players about you, they said that you have a lot of courage. They use a lot of terms I can't say right here, but they'd say hutzpah. Talking about in terms of your golf. You seem poised in all these moments; where does that come from do you think?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. My parents raised me really well, and they've been a huge impact on my life. But I think that's just who I am. I've always had kind of a mature head on my back, and that's just the way I think. I kind of think through things a lot.

Q. Some people in pressure moments shrink, especially the first time they might be in them. You had a little trouble on the green early in the year, but it doesn't seem to be affecting you, you seem to be able to handle those moments.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, I think you learn from moments like that. You learn from tough breaks. You learn from losses, and you learn from -- like the two missed cuts I've had, I've learned, seriously, some of the most things I could have learned from just two days of golf. That's where I've learned the most.

So I think that's where I've done a really good job is reflecting back. And I need to do a better job of reflecting back on the good weeks, as well. It's not just, okay, we're good and we're going to go win every week. That's not how golf works. You wake up every day, and you don't know how your body is going to feel, you don't know how you're going to hit it. But it's about being as consistent as possible.

Yeah, I think I've learned a lot, and I go back and I do reflect on what I need to get better, what I've been doing well. So I think that's why, yes, I've had a tough break, but it's okay, like what is next. How do we improve, how do we not do that in the next situation.

Q. Is there such a thing as a clutch player, people that are able to do that and people that aren't?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, there's Tiger Woods and

there's the rest of us.

But yeah, you look at guys like -- there are definitely guys that are clutch in moments, and every PGA TOUR player wouldn't be here -- they wouldn't be on the PGA TOUR, they wouldn't be at the U.S. Open if they weren't clutch.

It's just who is going to step up to the next moment. We're on a different stage now. It's not just another amateur event or another college event or whatever it is. This is the big time. This is the major.

So yeah, you've got to step up, and you can't be scared of taking another step because that puts you in another level of golf.

Q. Has being a major champion and having the success in such a short period of time put pressure on your time demands for interviews and things off the course, and how do you manage that time?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I've definitely been busier, especially that week after. I couldn't tell you how much sleepy got. But for me it was actually a lot of fun, and it's weird to say that.

Now, I'm not going to take like every interview you guys ask, but for me, it was not just golf interviews, there were interviews on like all networks, on like different topics. So it was cool to talk to those people because it wasn't just golf related and it's not like they knew golf that well so I could have said a lot of things and it would have passed on their end.

But yeah, I think if we talk about managing time, being efficient is I think what I do. Going through college, finishing it in four years, getting my degree, my business degree, I had to be efficient. I couldn't just show up and get things done and have time pass by and realize, okay, I'm in my fourth year. I had to know what was going to be done and when.

I think that's just kind of who I am, so I've brought that here. I bring that to how I practice. If you look at me, I'm not pounding balls on the range until sunset. I just get things done when I need to.

Adding in media, a little more media, yeah, maybe I've got to get here an hour earlier, but other than that, it hasn't been too overwhelming I'd say.

Q. What's the worst lie you've found so far at Winged Foot?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, I only hit one ball in the rough

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

yesterday, but that was only nine holes, and we've got par-3s, so let's not make a big deal out of that. So 9. But I did see some, I threw some balls in just walking down the fairways. There's lies that you know you're just going to have to wedge it out, and that's why I say you've got to take your medicine.

You're going to hear that all week. Guys that are going to play well are going to take their medicine and scramble really well. That's just the way this course is going to play out.

Q. I don't know what made me think of this, but there's been stories over the years of what guys put in the Claret Jug or where they take the green jacket with them. The Wanamaker weighs like 35 pounds. What are you supposed to do with that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: There's a lot of things you can do with it. There's a lot of things.

Q. Do you take it anywhere?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, I haven't taken it anywhere, but there's things you can do. It's pretty big.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Collin. Good luck this week.

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