

U.S. Open Championship 2023

Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Los Angeles, California, USA

The Los Angeles Country Club

Collin Morikawa

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming to the interview area Collin Morikawa, Southern California native. Does it feel like coming home?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It does. Stayed at my parents' house on Saturday night. Every time I come back to LA, it's my favorite spot in the world. It's always going to be home for me no matter where I live, no matter where I move to.

Yeah, there's just that extra added touch, specialness when you're playing at home, when you're playing in the state of California for me.

Hopefully put together four really good rounds out here and see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about your familiarity with LACC and how the course is looking this week.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I don't think I ever saw LACC until 2016 when I knew the Walker Cup was going to be out here. Obviously I knew I had chances to make that team. We had some alumni out here that were members at LACC, so obviously playing the Walker Cup in 2017, we're doing a project with the SCGA, LACC, members at LACC, the USGA, this FORE Youth project that is amazing helping restore Maggie Hathaway, a nine-hole short course.

I have been able to come out here, see it a few times this year, but finally seeing it yesterday for the first time, completely different, in a good way. It still has the structure of what it is, but the rough being up, the course playing a little firmer, being in tournament conditions, it obviously plays a little different.

Q. What's your lasting memory from the Walker Cup or something that kind of puts a smile on your face or something you recall about that week that always comes to mind?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think we got credited down for the first match, me and Norman. We got credited I think

for like 8 & 7, but I'm pretty sure we won the last hole and we won it 9 & 7.

That entire week was amazing. It was a full week of just us hanging out as boys and realizing that it's only two days. And that was the craziest thing, is it doesn't hit you until you play two days are you're done with the Walker Cup.

But all the activities, all the dinners right before, we're having a great time, playing great golf courses. Those are some of the best you can ask for. Those team events when you're hanging out with those guys aside from the golf course, it's some of the best memories I've had.

Obviously really good memories here, playing well with the guys, obviously a dominating win, going on from there. I have good memories, good shots out here, which is going to be nice to kind of go back on hopefully and hit some of those.

Q. You're probably the only guy to have played 15 at 78 yards. I guess that was Saturday singles of the Walker Cup. What do you remember about the hole that short, and what are some challenges or some things that stand out in how you play that hole?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I played DJ and Gary yesterday from 16 to 18, and they asked me about it because yesterday I think it was like 120 and they played from that tee.

I remember like you almost had to practicing teeing up with a 60-degree lob wedge like an inch off the ground, which you never do, and just trying to try and hit it perfect, because you had to with height, with spin. It's only going to be that much more important this week if they do move it up. I'm sure they will.

So, yeah, you have like a yard and a half to land it if you want to hit a good shot. If not, you've got to play left and hopefully hit a good putt. Yeah, it's frustrating because you can hit an okay shot and not get rewarded at all. Especially out here you can't land it in the rough. It's not going to bounce out. You've got to land it in the right spot.



I just remember it was a very tough shot, I pulled it off, and I think I still had like 20 feet for birdie.

Q. Is it possible that this golf course can be a complete examination and also be as difficult as any major championship venue you've seen?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, what's different is that a lot of the major championships I've been to, I've never played -- I've never had a lot of history. I've never played there. Harding Park was one of the few ones; Pebble I had played before.

But a course like this when I've seen it for the Walker Cup, when I've seen it in practice rounds coming earlier this year, there's a sense of I almost get desensitized to it being a major championship course.

Not in a bad way, but I think it helps me just knowing that I can go out and just play it how I've been used to. Yes, I'm going to change some lines out here. Tee boxes are going to be moved all over the place. But it helps.

Sometimes when you show up to a major championship you're so focused in on how everyone else is playing it. I think Augusta is a great example where we show up there every single year, you hear what guys need to do, but then you forget how to play it your own way.

I think when you play it as an amateur golfer, when you play it for fun, you learn courses and you learn it based on how you like to see courses, fitting that shot shape, doing what you do best, and playing to your strengths.

I think when you start coming to major championships and you listen to other guys and how they're playing it, sometimes you get kind of clouded in your judgment on saying, maybe this is how I should play it.

It's been great to see it as a course at a major championship. Yes, I do think the scores are going to be -- there's going to be a lot of variance to the scores. There are still birdie holes out here, no doubt about that. The par-5s are very gettable, but you have to keep it in the fairway.

I think we've all seen it this week, just like a lot of U.S. Opens, you throw a ball in the rough, it's kind of hit or miss, roll the dice. Are we going to get a good lie or a bad lie?

It's going to be on us to hopefully find out certain spots can we get lucky in the rough, is it a little thinner than some other places.

Q. With everything going on off the course, all the

distractions, all the noise, how do you stay focused with your golf game this week?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. I've been pretty good about just taking myself out of everything that's going on. I mean, it is what it is. I can't control what's going to happen. None of us can, no matter what we write up or what we say.

This is a major that I cared about when I was like in college and I knew about LACC hosting a U.S. Open. I didn't know where my path was going to be. I didn't know if I was going to be on TOUR, if I was going to have to qualify for this, and, right, four years, pretty much four years since I've been pro.

I didn't know where I was going to be, but this is the one that I wanted to make it and be at just because it is home for me. This week means so much. It always will be. It'll always be really special.

But that's just the added bonus and added fuel for me to just go out there and put everything I have and not waste my energy on anything else.

Q. For those not here and who will be seeing LACC for the first time on TV, just a brief glimpse into what the course is like.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's a big golf course. I think yesterday I played the front nine, played a few holds on the back, and I hit a lot of 4 and 5-irons into par-4s.

There's a drastic change of short holes to long holes that I think the par-3s are some of the most challenging. Yes, some of them are very long. I think the USGA is going to be great about moving tee boxes around to where we're not hitting 5-woods.

I hit 3-wood into hole 7 yesterday, so there's going to be that variance of what you need to do.

But it's just a big-boy golf course. It really is. You've got to hit good shots, especially with how penal the rough is. You've got to hit it in the fairways. It's what you want for a major championship.

Q. Are you in contact with Tiger Woods since his surgery?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Not personally, no.

Q. Since this event is in Southern California, do you think he's especially missed, not being here?



COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think he's missed all over the place, but I think his presence in the game of golf is always known. He's impacted this game in ways that only some of us could dream of and some of us want to do in this game and just impact the lives of many people.

I think a lot of us here today in the field and a lot of us even in this room owe a lot to Tiger, why we got involved in the game. Maybe not the sole reason, but for me growing up that's all I cared about.

It's been amazing to get to know guys like Rory and Jordan and JT and all these guys, but I didn't care about them when I was growing up. I really didn't. People ask me about the history of Rory winning this or Rory -- certain guys winning this. I didn't really care. I only cared about Tiger.

Yeah, I think he's always missed, but he's always going to impact this game in ways that we can't even describe, in ways that we don't even know.

Yeah, look, I think for him, it's just to be healthy at this point. Who knows when we're going to see him or not. I don't think any of us take that for granted anymore.

But it was amazing at least my first couple years getting to play with him a few times, getting some pairings with him. That's the coolest thing you can dream of.

Q. You mentioned the challenges that the par-3s present here. What's special about the 11th in particular, and can you kind of describe some of the challenges of that hole in particular?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, special, I wouldn't really use that word. I would just characterize it as long. It's just a long downhill par-3. If I walk out of there with four 3s this week and put it in the middle of the green I'm going to be thrilled.

I think on that hole you're not trying to hit it close to the hole. There's a few holes out here where you're not trying to hit it close to any hole. You hit it in the middle of the green, give yourself a 30-footer, walk out very happy, because you can't really get too aggressive to any of those pins.

That's where I think hole 15 is a very special hole. There's a lot of character to hole 15 because you can move pins, you can move tees. It's a wedge shot, it could be a 9-iron, it could be an 8-iron depending on wind. That's a special hole.

11 is just a long, long par-3.

Q. Can you explain what happened at the Memorial, and what were you able to get back to playing golf, and anything lingering still?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it was weird. I've had I wouldn't say back problems, but I've had a little back pain here and there. Nothing has been crazy, and it's not been because of golf and this wasn't because of golf, it was just bad movement. We were in the gym warming up doing some reactive exercises. I went after with my back.

It sucked, because I felt like I was grinding for three days to put myself in contention. We figured some things out Saturday afternoon. That's when you're excited to wake up and you're like, man, we can put together a few birdies early on and you're right there tied for the lead.

Who knows who could have happened, but it's very unfortunate. It sucked. It's a course that I loved. I took a few days off, got some rest, got some rehab, talked with my team, we got started hitting balls late last week, and we're swinging fine.

There's no pain swinging right now, which is great. I might be teeing up kind of weirdly this week, so don't take too much into that, but it's just precautionary.

Look, I think we do so much leaning with our back, bending over, that I've just built in bad movement patterns, and forme it's being able to just make sure I bend properly from the hip rather than putting too much stress.

It's just going to be precautionary with how I'm moving this week, but swing-wise there's no pain, which is great. I've hit out of rough, I've hit out of bunkers, no pain, nothing lingering anywhere else in the body either, so that's good.

So yeah, we put together the team. It's been great. It was just terrible, terrible timing.

Q. What are some of the things during the practice rounds specifically you guys are looking at? And on hole 6 it seems like guys are spending a little bit extra time there compared to some of the other holes here on the course.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, before this week I hadn't talked to my caddie and I thought I was going to lay up. He convinced me in like two minutes that we might be going for it.

Look, I think there's going to be a lot of different strategies there. Some guys are going to feel comfortable going for it and taking what they got with any lie, and some guys are

going to lay up knowing that they're going to have a wedge in their hand.

There's a lot of different strategies. We're going to see a lot of different numbers, I think. You might see some eagles; you might see some doubles; you just don't know what you're going to get there.

That's what's so difficult. My caddie made a great correlation to Riv at 10. It's not quite that, but we don't really know. We don't have the history here. If I go and play Riviera and I play 10 even par, I'm happy. I'm not thrilled, but I'm not mad because I didn't give any shots away.

I don't really know how it's going to play out this week. If I do have four pars I think I'm going to be 3-, 4-under par for the week and they're going to play it different ways. I think one guy might go for it, one guy might lay up, and you're still going to have guys that are 4-under.

But this week I think it's taking away the big numbers. Big numbers can add up really quickly out here with back-to-back long holes, long par-3s. You've just got to really take advantage and be smart when you're trying to make those birdies.

Q. I'm curious, in the times you've played here, have you heard any strange stories or heard any strange noises near the area near the 14th tee?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, I haven't. Have you?

Q. I have not yet.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I have not.

Q. After your tweet the morning of the merger, you've had a few days to process it and talk to people. Can you share what your thoughts are at this point?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I don't know anything. So I'll talk about my FORE Youth Project that we're doing. It's this Maggie Hathaway project. It's amazing. It's in a community that is for underprivileged kids, kids that don't have an opportunity to play.

There's many great organizations coming on board with this, and it's something that means a lot to me.

I think LA has a big divide. We get to play Riviera every year, we play LACC this year. There's a huge divide between private golf and public golf out here in Los Angeles. It's not the case for everyone, but there really is, and lots of people are playing public municipal golf courses,

and the change of this golf course is going to be great.

It's going to give opportunities I think that I've learned from golf that are able to just teach kids just the real world. School teaches a lot of things, but the real world is you can learn a lot from golf. That's my answer.

Q. Did you play that course growing up?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, I did not. It was just something that I was honored to be an honorary chairman of this project and something that I wanted to give back to this community.

I was curious how LA was going to accept the U.S. Open. To me, I play in these majors and they're just normal to me at this point, which is great, but it is a big deal for the city, and I think it is. And I think to leave an impact like that is pretty awesome.

Q. You mentioned you were teeing the ball up slightly differently as like a precautionary thing. Are there any other precautionary changes you're making to your practice or your wind down, your range routine, anything like that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, same warmup, same routine, doing everything the same, just teeing it up weirdly.

Q. How exactly? I haven't seen you tee it up this week.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I pretty much squat down and tee it up. Pretty much like that.

Q. How far away is this course from where you grew up?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No traffic on Sunday it took us like 40, 45 minutes.

Q. What was it that your caddie said that convinced you maybe you're going to go driver on 6?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, we hit two irons off the tee and I hit one in the rough, and I was never going to hit the green from the rough.

But whatever they call it, the barranca down below, below where the bunker is down there, it is very bad. You can get a very bad lie, but you can also get a lie that's all right to where you can hack it out to the middle of the green.

Like I said, if I can make four pars there and maybe give myself one birdie shot inside 10 feet, I think I'll be all right

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

for the week.

I assume the greens are going to get a little firmer throughout the week if we start seeing some sun. The wedge shot, look, we're the best players in the world and we can hit a 60-yard wedge shot, 70-yard.

We can hit our numbers, but I'm just trying to kind of play the odds like okay, if I have a little chip shot maybe I can chip it out to 25 feet and get away with a 4.

It's not set in stone yet. Maybe depending on certain pin locations we move it around, but right now I am kind of leaning towards going for it, which I definitely was not. I was probably set 90 percent I was going to lay up before we saw yesterday.

Q. You said you don't really know anything about the partnership that's been discussed. What is the one thing you most want to know?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: That's hard because I think for a lot of different parties there's a lot of different reasons of why it's happening. So we all want to know the why. We're so interested in the why.

For us, for me right now, it's just like what's going to happen, I don't know. But we always want to know that why answer. Like what's the purpose behind it.

But I think there's so many different parties involved that there's too many answers to really put it into one underlying umbrella of the why, because I think what you've seen from the players versus what you've seen from maybe our commissioner versus the board versus Yasir versus LIV versus -- there's a lot of parties involved. Everyone has had a kind of different answer and different reaction to all this.

So the why is -- I think that's going to be very opinionated, and I don't think we'll ever really get an answer. But we don't even know what's going to happen. Or maybe you do.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.