

U.S. Open Championship 2023

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Los Angeles, California, USA

The Los Angeles Country Club

Brooks Koepka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming Brooks Koepka. How does it feel to be back at a U.S. Open?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it feels good. Excited for the week. Playing really well. Yeah, I've always liked U.S. Opens, so it will be a tough test this week.

THE MODERATOR: The course is a little different than other U.S. Open tracks. Talk about what you've seen so far.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I've only seen the front nine. I haven't seen the back. I'll go see that today. I was told the back nine the rough is a little bit deeper. Some long par-3s, I do know that.

It'll be interesting to see the whole golf course and then get back to you on that.

Q. Obviously last week's merger was a big deal. Do you feel like there was vindication for you? And also do you think there will be any animosity still out here between players this week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't think there's really been too much animosity between players in general. I think that's been a lot more constructed from the media side than the player side.

I haven't paid too much attention to it, honestly. I've been trying to prep for this week. I'm just trying to make sure I come into a major championship -- there's four weeks a year I really care about and this is one of them, and I want to play well.

So I wasn't going to waste any time on news that happened last week. I saw it. I was sitting at Grove at the bar there having breakfast and I saw it on TV. Watched a little bit of the interview, and that was it. Just went out and practiced.

Q. Do you feel vindicated in any way?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It didn't matter to me. Like I said, I'm

trying to focus on this week.

I think that's why I've been really good at majors, honestly, too.

Q. Do you recall the last time you felt healthy and stunk in a major? And secondly, would you have been surprised going into this year that you would have a 2-1 to start the year in majors?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, no, I feel like I've been playing well for a while. It happens every year. I feel like I'm playing pretty good. It's just the results aren't quite there from maybe January, February, March, and then it kind of kicks into gear and everything starts clicking for me.

But yeah, it's felt a lot more normal this year than it has maybe the last year before. That's for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

BROOKS KOEPKA: Back to how I normally play.

Q. When you've not been to a course, sounds like you're going to play nine each day and that'll be it. Is that an unusual situation for you at a major, or has that situation happened before where you've basically played every hole once?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I've played probably since 2014 nine holes every day at every major. It's the same routine. Keep it pretty simple and find out whatever side I think is a little more difficult, I'll play that side again.

Q. Did you do anything before you got here to learn about this place or Ricky or anything like that?

BROOKS KOEPKA: No. I mean, you can do all the prep you want, but it doesn't -- the wind direction might be different, where you hit your tee ball, pin location. There's so much that goes into it. You can do all the research you want, but it won't matter at the end of the day.

Q. The PGA TOUR guys expressed complete shock at the announcement. Were you guys as surprised on

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your side?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think there was. It was just kind of -- because we didn't hear anything about it. I think that's the one thing that shocked everybody the most.

I think I ran into Rickie and JT after watching the whole thing and I asked if they knew, and they said they didn't know, either. They were kind of learning about it. They were on the back of the range, so I probably saw them 30 minutes after the news broke.

Q. You've always been able to maintain your focus despite what's going on around you. What's the secret to doing that?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Like I've said, the more chaotic things get the easier it gets for me. Everything starts to slow down and I am able to focus on whatever I need to focus on while everybody else is dealing with distractions, worried about other things.

Q. Is that the key reason why you think you peak at these majors?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think there's a few of them, but I think it's definitely one of them. I enjoy the chaos.

Q. Your first major start was a U.S. Open, first top 5 in a major was a U.S. Open, first win in a major was a U.S. Open. What was it about this event that you found comfort or an embracing feeling about it?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I just love when I guess maybe somewhere closer to even par wins. If it's going to be a birdiefest where 20-, 21-under wins, that's really not the style. I really don't even think I've competed in many golf events over my career where that's happened.

But if you look at I would say maybe the majority of my wins, they're all pretty much 10-under and less, which is kind of suited to major championship golf.

I feel like -- I just feel like I can outlast everybody when it comes to having to par things to death or just kind of wearing guys out on the golf course and just mentally beating you and knowing when it's my time to kind of take that opportunity and go with it.

I think being patient is a big thing with that, as well, and just knowing when to go after a flag or when to play cautious.

Q. If you rejoined the PGA TOUR, would you be interested in bringing in the team golf concept?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, like I said, I'm not going to go into the future. I don't have a crystal ball with me. I'm just worried about the U.S. Open. If I can get to No. 6 pretty quick, that would be nice.

Q. Compared with when you were on your previous major tour, I just wonder going into the third major of the year having been runner-up at Augusta, winning at Oak Hill, do you feel fresher because of the regime that you're on with LIV compared to how it was on the PGA TOUR?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I have my own routine. That's it. It's plain and simple.

I'm pretty sure I know what it takes to compete in majors. I've won five of them and been second four times. And just over my track record how to prepare when you're here, how to prepare when you're home for it, I've got that, I guess, on lock.

Q. It's no different playing a LIV schedule going into these majors?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Just golf, man.

Q. We know one thing is there will be some kind of penalties or conditions or whatever for LIV Golfers coming back being reintroduced to the PGA TOUR. Are you okay with that, and do you think that will be okay?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Like I said, it's a lot of what-if games. I'm not going to play the what-if game. If it happens, it happens. If it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen.

Q. I appreciate we're dealing with a lot of unknowns at the moment, but in Augusta you touched upon the fact you may have made a different decision 12 months ago if you knew how your body was going to heal up. Would you be one player who would want to play PGA TOUR golf again?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean there's always -- you have your favorite events. I've always enjoyed Waste Management. I thought that was a fun event. But I think that kind of goes into the whole thing with like the chaos. There's a lot of people, a lot of things going on, where it's a lot of fun to play. I've enjoyed it. I've won there twice. That's one place I guess I miss playing.

But yeah, I'd have to go through the whole schedule. Memphis I've always played well. There's certain events you always liked. Even Dunhill, I've always liked Dunhill. I thought that was a fun event. St Andrews is my favorite

course in the whole world, so I'll take any chance I can to go play there.

Q. Aside from the courses are there things you miss about -- seeing pals of yours week in and week out?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, absolutely. We see some of the guys that just live in Jupiter and play the same courses. We see those guys, but there's certain guys like, for instance, Jon Rahm. He doesn't live down there, so I don't get to see him too much and get to hang with him.

Scottie, kind of same thing. It's those guys that aren't in Jupiter, you kind of miss seeing them and playing against them.

Q. At what point in your career did you decide that majors were the thing for you?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't know, probably growing up, right? At the end of the day, I think one thing that was always kind of harped on me was you knew how many majors Jack has, you knew how many Tiger has, you knew how many Arnold Palmer has, you knew how many Gary Player, Watson, all these legends, but I never knew how many PGA TOUR events or wins they had total.

I could tell you going down the list each of them had won, so that was kind of -- it's pretty obvious, right? That's what you're judged on. It's major championships. You look at basketball, you're judged on how many championships you've won, not how many games you've won.

Same thing in every sport.

Q. How gratifying is it to be able to say that you're on five and going to six?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, don't get me wrong, it's better than four, looking for five, so that's definitely a lot better.

Yeah, like I said, double digits, that's what I'm trying to get to. I don't think it's out of the question for me. I think the way I've prepared, the way I've kind of suited my game for these things is going to help me.

And like I said, I'm only 33, so I've definitely got quite a bit of time. I've just got to stay healthy and keep doing what I'm doing.

Q. It's been a crazy 12 months for all of professional golf, but it seems strikingly crazy for you. When you think about this tournament last year to where you are now, how different do you feel?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I feel like a new person, right? It was definitely more confused last year just trying to figure out why I was feeling the way I was feeling. I felt like I had enough time from surgery to that point. It's like anything, right? I tried to come back too soon and then it was like, well, if I can walk 18 holes, I can play golf.

Just kept playing through it and never let my body heal, and then from there I just created some bad habits. By the time you actually figure out that you're starting to get healthy, you've got to get rid of those bad habits and it's a whole new process. It takes a long time.

Any athlete that's ever been injured really knows what it's like. It's not fun. It's painful. But you've just got to suck it up and deal with it.

Q. If you could go back and do it again, is that the main thing you would change, just take a little more time off?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think I would. Yeah, I definitely would have taken probably four or five off, maybe the whole year off.

Q. From what you saw on the front nine, what did you make of the risk-reward that the course offers? And also, how do you see 6 and what's your approach to that hole?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Well, you can't see 6. There's a few blind tee shots. I'm not a huge fan of the blind tee shots or even blind shots going into the green. I've never been a real fan of it. I like to see where your golf ball goes.

But it's a tough golf course. These bunkers are incredibly soft, which I've found quite interesting. If you're in these fairway bunkers, it's extremely penalizing because you're not going to get a good lie, number one, and it's not like the ball is going to funnel to the middle of the bunker.

If it goes into the lip it's going to stay there. It could plug. Or if it gets in the back, the rough around these bunkers is quite difficult, too, so it's never going to quite chase in.

You can get some interesting lies. You've really got to pay attention to where your misses are. You can be a little aggressive off some of the tee lines, but I don't think on the front that it's too rewarding. You can kind of play it safe.

But 6 is going to be interesting. You could see anything from a 7 to possibly a 2. It'll be a fun hole to just stand on and watch. If I was watching, that's where I'd go stand.

Q. Appreciate where you stand on the majors. I think



we all know by now. But I'm curious, coming from your perspective of how you got here in the first place of not getting through second stage, Challenge Tour, working your way up to get a regular spot in the majors, when did you feel or experience what a big deal they are? Was it just playing in one, contending, actually winning? Can you go back to some of those moments?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think contending definitely makes you appreciate how big these things are.

Q. What was your first contention?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It felt like contention to me but it probably wasn't. It was at Pinehurst. Was that 2014? Kaymer won. He blew us all away, but I felt like I was in contention. We were all playing for second place really.

That was kind of the first taste of it.

But I also got a taste of it kind of early on. It was funny, I qualified as an Am for the U.S. Open in 2012, I believe. Played there -- I think I had the lead after nine holes and then saw my name on the leaderboard and just gagged it up on the back nine. It was like Augusta all over again.

Yeah, so I understood the magnitude kind of right away of what it was, but it was -- I think back to '13, I played the final round of the PGA with Tiger, too, so I got introduced a lot early.

I felt like that kind of really helped learn different things. Like I feel like I'm really good at learning from mistakes or what goes on, and I'll sit back and reflect for like two, three days, whether it be right after, give it a few days and be really truthful, honest with myself of why things happened the way they did. What was my thinking? What was my thought process? How -- did I execute how I wanted to? Was it just kind of unlucky? All that goes into it, but if you're truly honest with yourself, I think you'll figure out why.

Q. If you played not to lose at Augusta, is that the first time that ever happened?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I can't give away what I was doing, but yeah, it didn't work, clearly. But I'll be honest with you, I told you. I told everybody at PGA I was never going to let it happen again.

I know how to make adjustments and really figure out what goes on, and that's I think probably one of my biggest attributes that I think I have.

Q. I know you said you haven't played the back nine yet, but 15 obviously is a pretty unique hole and could be as short as 80 yards depending on the pin location. What do you hope to get out of it when you practice, and what do you want to learn about that hole?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I'll just tell you what I do every hole. I kind of figure out -- once I get to the fairway, just figure out what's the best spot to look, going for the green. With certain pin locations figure out what's the best side to miss. There's always one side that's better than the other.

Honestly I just stand in the middle of the green whenever I get back, when I get to the green and look back, and it's clear as day. I just play the hole backwards.

I think standing on the middle of the green looking back towards the tee or the fairway, whatever, depending on what you can see, it makes it very clear how to play the hole, what's the proper way to play it.

Then from there, it's just a matter of pin locations. Hey, if this pin location is here I am going to do this. If this pin location is here I am going to switch this up.

Maybe it might be a completely different side of the -- right rough might be way better than the left rough, but the left rough is good three times. Just different things like that.

Q. You used the term "chaos" to talk about majors, the U.S. Opens, and maybe how you like the chaos. What is an example of chaos or the visual of what chaos looks like to you?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Hmm. First one that popped in my head was maybe Shinnecock. Everybody was bitching, complaining. I just felt like it was -- they were all so focused on the golf course they kind of forgot about what was going on, that they were there to play a major championship instead of, okay, the greens are pretty fast.

But if you leave yourself with an uphill putt, it's not too bad.

Q. Of your five major victories, what's been your favorite and why?

BROOKS KOEPKA: This last one for sure. They all mean something different, but this last one, for all the stuff I had to deal with, all the pain, the tears, all the stuff that went into it, like I said, there's probably five, seven people in this whole world that really know what I went through and that were there kind of every step of the way. I think they enjoyed it maybe even more than I did.

