

PGA Championship

Thursday, May 20, 2021

Kiawah Island, South Carolina, USA

The Ocean Course at Kiawah Island

Brooks Koepka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined by Brooks Koepka, opened with a 3-under 69 today. Your start today, a little gut-check after the first hole and kind of cranking from there? What happened at 1, and how did you get it going starting at 2?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Probably a poor club choice off 10. I thought 3-wood would have carried, but it didn't. I also didn't find the face, barely hit the face. The first rule is, if you're in trouble, get the hell out. I couldn't reach the green. It was a bad lie. Didn't know what I was going. Just tried to hit a pull sand wedge up by the green instead of just chopping it out. So mental mistake there. Deserved every bit of that double bogey.

It kind of helped refocus. I can't play with any mistakes, maybe one a day, and that was my one, and I got it out of the way the 1st hole. Just had to be real careful and watch what I was doing.

Q. Brooks, are you still having trouble reading putts because you can't get down low enough? Walk me through the putt on 9 that it looked like you thought you had made?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I thought it was a good putt. You make good putts, and they don't go in sometimes. It was 25, 30 feet. You don't expect to make those all the time. Good putt, can't complain. I can get down low enough. My right leg just kicks out a bit. It is what it is.

Q. Are you feeling any better health-wise compared to earlier in the week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: The same. Every day gets a little bit better, but I don't notice it. I notice it kind of more over weeks. Week to week, I'll notice it gets a lot better. I mean, it feels fine right now.

Q. Brooks, the challenge of those holes into the wind for you, starting with 14. When you get there and all of a sudden the wind just shifts, what's that challenge like for you?

BROOKS KOEPKA: You play like nine straight holes into the breeze. The way the wind direction is coming from today, it's so difficult because it almost feels straight in, and then you've really got to pay attention. It comes from like 1:00 but then it shifts to 11:00 a little bit. You're never directly into it. It's always just slightly at an angle.

If you just don't hit the correct shot or know which way the wind is actually blowing, you can miss it pretty bad. So just trying to make sure we had the wind direction, the understanding of where it was, and make sure you miss it on the right side.

Q. You talk about feeling better day by day. I'm assuming this is the best you've felt this round since you've come back. That coupled with it being a major --

BROOKS KOEPKA: You just said it. It's a major. I'm going to show up. I'm ready to play. I've been itching to do this since Augusta. I mean, I feel so much better now. I don't need to be a hundred percent to be able to play good.

Q. Given how little you've been able to play tournament-wise given the last couple two, three months, what is your confidence level like when you come to a place? Does it make it more difficult when it's a test like this?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I love it when it's difficult. I think that's why I do so well in the majors. I just know mentally I can grind it out. Like when it's windy like this, it's not so much putting, it's more about ball striking, and I felt like I struck it really well today. I feel like that's why I've done really well.

You've got to understand that sometimes par is a good score. You've got to understand that 30, 35 feet is a great shot sometimes, and you've just got to accept it and move on.

Q. When you talk about getting one mistake out of the way early and refocusing after 10, how much of a sharper refocus is it knowing what you have in terms



of the loops and nine straight into the wind and a tough closing stretch, et cetera?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It wasn't ideal, the start, and knowing you've got that coming out. It was nice to get it back to even before I turned back into the wind. At the same time, you can't do that stuff if you want to win. You've just got to be more focused. I don't know if that's just the decision I made on 10th. I don't know if that's a lack of not playing or what. I don't know, it was just stupid. I was able to recover, I guess.

Q. What kind of lie did you have on the other side of that dune on 15 where you had nothing? I couldn't see it. Was it buried under dune, vegetation?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I wouldn't hit it in the dunes. I wouldn't do that. It's not very good. It was a little trampled down. I guess all the people walking. I could put the club on the back of the ball, but it wasn't going to go much further than it did.

Q. Brooks, you've been dealing with injury and grinding through rehab; what does a round like this do for your confidence here at a major?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I felt like I already had confidence. So in my mind, it's just a major week. Just show up. That's all you've got to do.

Q. Brooks, six birdies. I doubt there's anybody else out here that's going to have six birdies today. What do you take from that in regards to the fact that what you're doing is working? You said sometimes you're not really sure what you're going to get with your body; you're better than you were. But six birdies out here, most people say it would be hard to do in any round this week.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Six birdies in any round is pretty good, but if I drive in the fairway, I give myself a lot of opportunities. I drove it so poorly today. I made a little adjustment on 18, after hitting it into the hospitality stuff. Ricky told me the ball position got back, and I had to move it up. It happens when you start playing into the wind. It just creeps back and back, and you've just got to -- I mean, we've done three days of this.

It's just with the driver, though, it just sneaks back. I moved it up and started to hit the ball with the driver a little better. I've got to figure it out because, if I don't figure it out, I won't be there Sunday or have a chance.

Q. Obviously, that's something that obviously because you and Ricky are tight enough that he could

say something to you. Some guys would not want anybody to say anything to them.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, we have a great relationship. He can say just about anything to me. Nothing anybody says is going to hurt my feelings. He'll give it to me straight up. That's how I want it, and that's why he's on the bag.

Q. Do you feel like you've somehow come into this week like flying under the radar again, even though you've won four majors in the last four years?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Honestly, I haven't paid attention. I'm more focused on my knee than I am anything that anybody else is doing. I mean, I've been in my own little world, to be honest with you.

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