

Sony Open in Hawaii

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Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Kevin Na

Press Conference



RACHEL NOBLE: We'd like to welcome defending champion Kevin Na to the interview room here at the Sony Open in Hawai'i. Kevin, just some opening comments on what it's like to be back here and defending your title.

KEVIN NA: It's great to be back. You know, you want to come to Hawai'i all the time but to be defending, it's even more special. I know last year we didn't have the fans. It was nice to win, but without the fans, it's not the same and it's nice to have the fans back. I'm looking forward to having a good shot at defending my title.

RACHEL NOBLE: Just going back too last season, you had five top 10s including this win, two runners-up, a third-place finish. Just recap last year for us and then any goals you have for the to 202 season.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I had a great season last year. When you have a W and make it to THE TOUR Championship, and third in the FedEx, my best finish ever, it was a great year. I played really well in the Playoffs.

It was a great year. I played really well in the Playoffs and leading up to the Playoffs, so I was very happy with how I played. Hoping for another good year. No place I'd like to do it than at the beginning of the year and get another W. I'm excited for a new year, and looking forward to it.

RACHEL NOBLE: And then lastly from me, announced today, a Netflix documentary series about stepping inside the PGA TOUR, the major championships, just talk about how excited you are to be a part of that.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I know, I met the guys who were getting a Netflix show together last year at the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines. I talked to the guys. I think it will be great for the non-golf fans to get a feel for what it's like on the PGA TOUR and hopefully it brings some more fans to the game of golf.

Q. Netflix, huh. My question for you is you mentioned earlier, last year, you won the title but there were no fans, no nothing. Take me back to then and just kind

of the atmosphere and what it feels like now even with your practice rounds and the Pro-Am today, the experience so far?

KEVIN NA: You know, last year we were just happy to be playing golf. Yes, it was a little disappointing that we didn't have the fans and the local Hawai'i fans but at the same time it was quiet in a nice way a little bit. You were able focus, go through a routine and it was great.

But it's really nice to have the fans back. I know that we get pretty good crowds here normally during the tournament days, and I'm looking forward to seeing the fans back.

Q. Having won here last year, how is the course looking for you this year and how are you feeling going into the opening round tomorrow?

KEVIN NA: The course is in good shape. I played nine holes yesterday and a nine-hole Pro-Am today. The rough is a little bit up from the previous years. I know the winds are going to be down a little bit, so I don't know if both are going to offset it..

The greens are rolling great and you have to make a lot of birdies out here. If you're playing well, low scores are out there.

Q. Starting the TOUR off here in Hawai'i at the beginning of the year, how special is that for you, and also coming back to defends your title?

KEVIN NA: Hawai'i is a great place it start the sure. I think that's one of the perks of being a PGA TOUR player, you can come here, make an excuse for work, but it's Hawai'i. It's nice to start at Sentry and then come here and make it a two-week trip; I brought my family with me. My daughter has been to Hawai'i every year. She loves it. She's been here five times and she's only five years old. My son, it's his first time, he's a little over two and first time to Hawai'i. As soon as we landed in Hawai'i, HAWAI'!!!!" So he's really excited, yeah.

Q. What was your off-season like, especially



considering the way that you were able to finish last year and carry that momentum? I would imagine you're wanting to take a break in there but at the same time it's probably hard to stop.

KEVIN NA: I did take a break. So after THE TOUR Championship, I played Napa and I played the CJ Cup, and I had some rib issues I was dealing with and I took six weeks off and then I played QBE and that was it.

Compared to the rest of the TOUR, I'd probably be one of the guys who had, you know, more time off than most of the guys out here. So I'm feeling fresh and I'm excited.

Q. How do you feel about where your swing is at and where your game is at? At the end of last year it was so good. How do you feel like where you are at compared to that?

KEVIN NA: Last week I felt like I struck the ball really well. My putting is not quite where it needs to be. But you know, more competitive rounds I get in, the sharper my putting is going to get and it's going to come back.

And you know what, if I can make a few putts this week, and I know the rough is rough this year, so putting the ball in the fairway is going to be a premium. If I can do those two things, I'll be in good shape.

Q. Marc Leishman was in here earlier talking about the pressure with the scores as low as last week, on the greens, it feels like you can't miss a shot; it's that important.

KEVIN NA: It's impressive how low the scores are getting out here, not just for the wins but the cut line, too. So everybody has really elevated their game and everyone is getting better. The technology and the coaching, the information that's out there and that helps players improve their game is so good that everyone has really elevated their game.

You see the scores last week, it just shows how good everyone is. The course is not easy. Yes, was it playing a little bit easier than normal? Yes. But you've got to give the credit to the guys on TOUR how well they are playing.

Q. Do you think that's something that we could continue seeing in other events?

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I think so. I think the depth of the field is getting stronger. When the guys get hot, they are not scared, and I think more and more you'll see record-setting scores.

Q. Last thing from me. Obviously last year, you're where you needed to be to get a win here a season ago. As far as the ramp-up into the TOUR schedule, I know you talked about the way you were able to treat the Hawai'i two weeks and being a part of both and how enjoyable that is. How much of that is you're here to win and get some points early in the season?

KEVIN NA: Yes, it's Hawai'i, and it's a relaxing feeling and you can use it as a vacation for your family.

But I'm here to work. I want to play my best and it's really important to get a head start on the FedExCup points because if you're behind the points and you're trying to make it to the Playoffs and to THE TOUR Championship, it's hard to catch up at the end, and you run out of events. There's a lot of pressure you're putting on yourself. Make sure you're getting enough points early on to feel a little comfortable.

Q. Why is Waialae such a good fit for you in your game, and what other courses or course do you get excited about and have a chance to win at?

KEVIN NA: You know, Waialae is a great golf course. It's a golf course that anybody can win at. You don't have to be one style of game. It's whoever is hitting it the best and putting the best.

So it's a golf course that you don't have to overpower, and I think because of my good iron play, I have an advantage here and you have to make some putts. There are other golf courses out there, the ones I've won, like Colonial is a great example. I think Hilton Head is one of the tournaments I'd like to win to get it off my checklist.

And the PLAYERS Championship say golf course that you've seen all kinds of winner, all kinds of style of players. There's still plenty of golf courses left in the schedule that I'd like to win.

Q. How many times do you think you need to win this season to make sure there's no question you qualify for the Presidents Cup?

KEVIN NA: Well, I won twice in 2019 and I didn't qualify; so I guess the answer was three.

The team's been -- I've been right there for a few chances for a captain's pick and I haven't got it. The answer is just pay better. If you're automatically qualified, you don't have to depend on a captain's pick, then there's no issue. So I just need to play a little better.

Q. Just talk about your Masters invite and how special

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that was, and what do you do with those types of memorabilia?

KEVIN NA: You know, every year, this is my, I want to say this is my 11th Masters appearance this year, it's got to be.

And every year that I get that invite, it's special. I have a couple -- I don't have every year, but I should have but I have -- you know, they still send out the old-fashioned way, they send you that letter, and I have a few of those saved.

Now they send you an e-mail and you do it electronically, you register electronically, and it's got that "I accept" button.

I joked, hey, why isn't there an "I decline" button. I joked about that; I'm new to Twitter and I just had some fun with it and people really liked it. I don't think there is anyone in the world that would decline. I'm really looking forward to that Masters, too.

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