

AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Pebble Beach, California, USA

Pebble Beach Golf Links

Kamaiu Johnson

Press Conference



DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome Kamaiu Johnson to the interview room here at the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. Thanks for joining us for a few minutes. I know how long and anticipated a journey for you to get here with lots going on. If you could just kind of bring us up to speed on how you're feeling and your excitement level as you're about to make your first career PGA TOUR start.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Thanks for having me. But, yeah, just I'm feeling really good. Game's feeling good. Just kind of anxious to get tomorrow going, but all in all, I'm ready to go and looking forward to a great week here at Pebble Beach and at Spyness.

DOUG MILNE: I know there was an initial setback at Farmers and so forth, so if you could just kind of -- lots going on with your game, with your career, and so forth, just kind of bring us up to speed on where things are.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, you know, I'm honestly blessed to be here, blessed to have an opportunity to play on the PGA TOUR, and couple weeks ago was a tragedy for me. I looked forward to playing in the Farmers Insurance Open, being an ambassador for Farmers, but as I said earlier to Scott Van Pelt last night, it was a blessing in disguise. Like I said, I wanted to play in the Farmers, being a brand ambassador for Farmers, but hey, God had bigger plans for me. But I'm just thrilled to be here, thrilled all the support that I'm getting, the love that my family's getting. It's absolutely greatly appreciated from us. And I just love what the golfing world is doing right now. It's amazing and I'm just glad to be a part of it.

DOUG MILNE: Have you had much experience here? Have you been to Pebble before? Is this your first go-around here?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah, this is my first go-around here in the Monterey, first time in the Monterey, first time at Pebble. But I love the golf courses. I told my buddy the other night, if God made golf courses, he definitely started here on this property with these great golf courses around

here.

DOUG MILNE: We'll open it up and take a few questions.

Q. I understand that you've been working with Andy Walker of the UGA Academy. With him being a former TOUR player and current college coach, working with him, how did that help you get to this point? Can you talk about your relationship with him to prepare you to get to this moment and also how to help the next generation of golfers?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah, it's just good to be around somebody who's been there. Andy and I have a great relationship. I love working with Andy. I think that he's going to be a good impact on what the, you know, the golfing world and what we need. So it's been a thrill to be working with him and just excited to see my game progress. And, yeah, just happy to be here.

Q. Did you talk to Willie Mack? Was there any kind of a download after he played in your place at the Farmers, and if so, what did he tell you? And then secondarily, do you have the same crew here this week that you were going to have at the Farmers, in other words, is your roommate caddying for you again and do you still have your coach on-site with you?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah, Willie and I talked every day. We have a great relationship. It's absolutely grown now that we're both part of Farmers. And he immediately got back home and went to work with Todd Anderson last week after the Farmers and he played in a tournament this past week and played really well. Willie's got the game to play out here. Willie's a great player. Great player, great person, and I love hanging around him in Orlando, getting better with him.

And no, I actually don't have the same crew here. My roommate actually is trying to chase the dream as well, so he had to get back and play in some tournaments as well, and I actually got one of my other good buddies, J.P. Thornton, here on the bag this week who is golf IQ is through the roof. Amazing guy. Amazing with numbers. Very smart around the golf course.

So I'm actually looking very forward to what we can do here this week, him and I, and what we can do down the line. So I'm excited. I'm thrilled to be here. And, yeah, just happy to represent the companies that I'm an ambassador for. And, yeah, I'm glad I'm an inspiration to people. And, yeah, just ready to tee it up and ready to be a part of the PGA TOUR.

Q. You'd played Torrey Pines before or you had at least played the North.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah.

Q. But what's, do you have any familiarity with these courses in Monterey or not really?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah. So I got here on Tuesday and I've been playing every day since Tuesday, and so I'm learning these golf courses. They fit my eye pretty well. I cut the golf ball, so this is a cut, these are cutter's golf courses and pretty generous off the tee, but most of them are second-shot golf courses. You got to be -- like at Spy, once you hit No. 5 at Spy, you better be golfing your ball. On No. 5 is when the golf course gets real, so you better be golfing your ball when you get to hole 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 and that's how I see it.

And once you get through there, you can cruise a little bit, but then once you hit 15, 16, 17 and 18 you better be golfing your ball again. So, yeah, I'm looking forward to it, man. I'm just happy to be here and I feel comfortable on the golf courses for sure.

Q. You got there Tuesday of last week?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah.

Q. Good for you.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah, been playing a lot of golf around here. I played Cypress Point yesterday. What an amazing place that is. And yeah, this place is awesome.

Q. Did you keep score at Cypress? What did you shoot?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: So I played Cypress with Harold Varner and a couple, Greg from PGA TOUR Live and Scott from the RoboGolf. And we actually didn't really keep score. We was just around there enjoying the time. We teed off at 7:15. Harold and I had a little bet going, and I beat him on the front, he beat me on the back. So it was fun going around that place with HV3. He talks a lot and so do I, so we hit it off pretty well.

We teed off at 7:15 and we were the only ones out there for two hours, and so it was just so special. I'll remember that round of golf for a long, long time for sure.

Q. Did you par 16?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: 16, yeah. I parred 15, 16, 17 and 18. Yeah.

Q. This being your first PGA TOUR event, it's obviously, even with no fans it's a bigger atmosphere. You're sharing the range with guys that you have grown up watching. I don't know if star struck is the right word, but has there been that moment where it's, like, Whoa, I'm here, and then how do you go about putting that aside and focusing on this as just another golf tournament?

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah. Yeah, I've had that moment, but, you know, I feel like I belong out here. Maybe it's, you know, looking good, decked out in Titleist, decked out in Footjoy, you know, I feel good.

And yeah, but it's very motivating to me, honestly, because this is where I want to be. I don't want to go back to the mini-tours. This is where I want to be. So it's a big point that I take advantage of these opportunities that I'm getting on the PGA TOUR and the Korn Ferry TOUR because I don't want to go back to the mini-tour. I mean, you get treated so well out here. The guys, I met numerous guys this week they have been absolutely amazing to me. We have talked. And so, yeah, this is where I want to be. This is it right here and this is all I ever dreamed about and I'm just happy to be here.

DOUG MILNE: I have one more question for you. I know we could sit here and talk to you all day about this. But a little bit about your history, where you, who you looked up to, what TOUR players you most admired growing up and then we will let you get about your business and carry on.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, I mean growing up, I mean, TOUR player-wise I looked up to Tiger Woods, Adam Scott, I mean modern day TOUR players I looked up to those guys, Rickie Fowler. Peter Uihlein, Justin Thomas. I love Justin Thomas. The thing I like about Justin Thomas is when he first got out here his wedge game was very mediocre and to see where his wedge game has gone since he first came out on TOUR is absolutely amazing. I think that's why he's one of the top players in the world today.

Yeah, I really like his game, I look forward to teeing it up with him one day and you know I've actually got to

pleasure of hanging out with Jim Thorpe the last couple months and I really look up to Jim just because everything that he had to endure back in the day and still was able to become a champion on and off the golf course, it's absolutely amazing.

I picked his brain and he's got some of the best hands in the game ever and so that's been good for me and it's good, like I said, it's motivating for me hanging around on the range with these guys, being around these guys and being around TOUR players, you know, this is where I want to be and I'm just looking forward to teeing it up out here this week and ready to get things going.

DOUG MILNE: I had a great opportunity to spend time with Jim Thorpe many years ago and he'll be the first to tell you he has the biggest forearms in the game.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Absolutely.

DOUG MILNE: So my last question and I promise I'll let you go is, what's your biggest weapon in your bag? What are you most confident with, what part of your game are you most confident with right now.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Oh, I drive it straighter than anybody, for sure. I think that's what you need around these golf courses is to be in the fairway and playing from the fairway and I think if I can just stick to my game plan and do that then I'll have a good week this week.

DOUG MILNE: That's fantastic. We certainly hope that's the case and we appreciate your time, wish you the best of luck and again have a fantastic week.

KAMAIU JOHNSON: Doug, thanks for having me, man, appreciate it.

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