

The Northern Trust

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Liberty National Golf Club

Collin Morikawa

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started here with our FedExCup standings leader, Collin Morikawa, in the interview room at the Northern Trust. Collin, your first start since Memphis and ready to kickstart these playoffs, finishing sixth last year, being in the mix there at the TOUR Championship, and now you're starting this run as the standings leader. Just a few comments just quickly on your game and how you're feeling as we start the FedExCup Playoffs.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Obviously, it's great to start out No. 1 going into the playoffs. It means I was doing something right throughout the regular season. We had a couple wins, a couple top tens. Overall, it feels good.

My game feels good, and I think the way I looked into the playoffs last year, I was so focused -- especially after that PGA win -- let's go win, win, win, and I think I was almost burnt out by the time I got to that third week knowing I'd be here. Not everyone has the luxury of knowing where they're going to stand coming to the TOUR Championship, but I at least know I'm going to be there, I'm going to have a chance with four rounds no matter where I stand.

So I think it's just thinking about how do I rest up? How do I feel great about myself body-wise by the time I do get there? Because we do throw in a few three-week stretches, and it's a long three weeks. When you have the playoffs, this is everything. This is everything wraps up together. This is the finals for us. I think I'm going to kind of look at this a little differently throughout these next couple weeks leading up to the TOUR Championship and just see if I can plot my way to really peak in that third week rather than burn myself out in the first few.

THE MODERATOR: Before we dive into those questions, Collin, you just finished your Pro-Am here at Liberty National, 18 holes. I guess just kind of what's your initial take on the golf course and how you think it suits your game?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's good to see a playoff course that I've seen before, obviously two years ago. Two years



ago I was a lot more tired than I was this week. Having taken last week off, it was very nice. Last time I played, I had won Barracuda, played at Wyndham, and it was just a busy summer.

It's nice coming back to a course I've seen. I don't remember too many shots, and I don't think I hit too many great shots, but are inform the most part, the course is in great condition. It's going to play great. I think we've got winds from all directions, so that will be interesting to see how we kind of adjust to that.

Overall, I haven't played in much wind over the past month, so it will be good to kind of adjust to that, hit some shots, and then go back to really playing golf rather than hitting a stock 150-yard 9-iron or something.

Q. Now that you're officially on the Ryder Cup team, I'm wondering have you spoken to Steve Stricker at all since then about pairings? I don't know if he's factoring you guys' opinions into what he might take with his captain's picks. Have you spoken with the captain since you clinched your spot?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I texted and actually called him a bit. It was one of the best calls I could get knowing that I was going to be on the team, so I'm very happy to talk about it and everything. No, I thought about potential pairings, who I kind of mesh well, blend well with. I think I'm pretty open to playing with a lot of guys.

We're going to have a dinner at the TOUR Championship with the six guys or six guys that qualify for it, so it will be good, I think, in a person-to-person setting and really lay it out there and see what other players think, see what captains think. It will be interesting. I'm very excited to see how it plays out.

This is my first Ryder Cup, and I've seen what the teams have been, but I've never been in the process of thinking about what player might make it. Who's going to play well here, Whistling Straits? Who's going to play well with other players? I want to put my best foot forward in putting my knowledge, but a lot of these guys have played Ryder Cups before, they have that experience. Sometimes it works, sometimes it hasn't, and I think it's just finding a good formula.



Stricker is obviously an amazing person, amazing captain, so it's going to be a lot of fun to see how that goes over the next few weeks.

Q. This doesn't apply to you because you're already on the team, but for the guys, the six captain's picks, there's obviously a lot of debate about who should be taken. There's been talk about stroke play. Do you feel there's a type of player who excels in match play? Is that a real thing?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Absolutely, I think there are players that just excel. Man, I wish I could pinpoint exactly what that is, but some people just have that in them that, when you throw it out there 18 holes or 18 separate matches, mini matches, they're able to turn something on, and I think you see that in the WGC's match plays throughout the years. You see guys that are the most consistent players.

Yeah, I think that has to go into sometimes who you're going to pick and who you're going to throw out there because the Ryder Cup is one of the biggest stages. It's one of the biggest team events we can play for. It's one of the biggest honors we're going to have representing the U.S., and you have to be ready for those moments really.

I think guys that are going to be scared -- and I'm not saying any of the guys will, but some guys are willing to step up a little more, whether they're a veteran or whether they're a rookie. It doesn't matter, right? Some guys are willing to take that next step and really just embrace it. I think that's what the team needs is guys embracing what the Ryder Cup is rather than going out there and just hitting for fun.

Q. What do you think of Matthew Wolff's decision to step away from the game earlier this year?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's a very honorable decision. I was reading into what Matt said yesterday in his press conference, and not just him, but other athletes around the world in every sport, it's a big thing. It shouldn't -- how do I put this? It shouldn't be -- where we are in this world today, I don't think it should be that big of a topic because it should already be something that we've been talking about for ages, and it's something we haven't talked about, which is why it's so important now because this should become a normal thing for people to feel physically injured, mentally injured, whatever it may be.

If they don't feel right, they should have the right to not be out there. They should decide for themselves whether they want to put themselves out there, and when they do feel right, go out and play and play their respective event.

It was a very honorable thing, and I'm so glad a lot of people are talking about it because we really don't know what people are going through. I've touched upon this early on in the year is that you don't know what your friend might be going through. You don't know what someone -- your girlfriend or your boyfriend, whoever it may be, what they might be going through. We can't guess what people are doing, and that's the hardest part.

So I think it's a great topic. I think it's something that needs to be pushed, and I hope it becomes a normal thing, when I look back in ten years, that yes, people are going to be doing this because it's absolutely fine. It's acceptable to do. It's something that we as humans are going to live with.

Hopefully, I think Matt is getting better. It was great to see him at the U.S. Open. I talked to him a little bit. Seemed like a completely different person. Seemed very happy about it, and that's how I know Matt. Matt is a very happy kid. You know, he's a kid. So it's good to see him back on track. I talked to him yesterday at lunch. He seemed very good about himself.

But that doesn't mean we're not going to all hit blips in our road. We're not going to stumble across things that we can't expect. It's going to happen to a lot of us, and I think by Matt, especially at such a young age, to realize something like that. People like Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles, to step up for younger people, I think it's very important. Hopefully that came off right.

Q. That was a good answer. On the technical side, we talked so much about your iron play, and I wonder if you could provide some insight into why you think you excel at that part of the game, how much it's an innate talent where it's something that came easy to you, that part of the game, maybe mechanically about your swing makes you be a good iron player, and what about your mental approach helps you in that area?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Throwing out all the secrets there, huh?

Q. Yeah, just let us all know.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Growing up, the way I practiced, I was practicing on the golf course, so I'd always hit different shots. I'd never just throw it on a mat. I grew up at Chevy Chase Country Club, it was a ten-hole course. I remember they had a net cage, and you could warm up and hit balls, and that was pretty much the only place you could warm up to hit balls.

I would stand kind of off to the side and create a ball above

my feet, even though it was a half inch above the ground, and I'd have one foot off. I remember a parent came up to me and was like, why are you doing that? You're not really practicing anything good, and it actually sticks out to me now because, look, we're never going to get a flat lie. We're always going to have to adjust. You're always going to have to do something different.

So I think that's why me practicing on the golf course, throwing a few balls out, and it's been that creative side of hitting different shots. What in my swing does well? To be honest, obviously, I have a little bowed wrist, not as bowed as some people's. Club is still fairly square. And I just hold that, kind of turn, rotate, clear out the hips, and I'm able to hit that little baby cut, what I've been known for the past few years.

Mentally, I think I just -- I know what my body does. I know what my shots do. I just kind of stick to that. I've created more shots. I've learned different shots throughout the bag, but even through college, this is what I've been doing, and I don't want to change anything just because guys are hitting it higher and guys are hitting it farther. I've stuck to what I've been doing, and I think I truly believe that what I've learned throughout college was good enough out here. Obviously, it's shown sometimes here and there that it's solid enough.

Q. When you look back on your two years and three months as a professional golfer -- and people talk about ups and downs they have during their careers -- what do you consider to be your struggles that you've had to overcome? I can't think of any, but that's why I ask. I'm curious what you think of some of the tough times.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, after that PGA win last summer, didn't really play golf -- I played golf, didn't play great golf. I wouldn't call it a struggle. For me, it's more of a learning experience. How do I take that? That might have lasted all throughout the fall, and hopefully because of that, I learned it won't last even a week maybe. Maybe I can learn from that.

I wouldn't look at it as a struggle. I love to look at them as learning experiences because even during those weeks that I wasn't playing great, I might have expected to play better, that my standards were higher just because I'd won a PGA. I look back at that now, and I don't look at it as I struggled. I look at it as I had a different mental process. I was looking at golf a little differently that I shouldn't have, and I needed to go back to what I was doing great, what I was doing well to play great golf.

I'm sure there's going to be struggles out there. There's

going to be tough times. But for me, since I hope to have a long career and I hope to play this game for a long time, I want to look back and realize, okay, yeah, it might have been tough a few events here, a few months here and there, but how do I learn from that and make sure I don't make that mistake in the future?

Q. That makes me curious. When you finally had a break at the end of '20, which I guess would have been maybe three weeks in December, did you find yourself bummed at the way you had finished the year, or did you still allow yourself to think about Harding Park, think about Muirfield, things like that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I rarely go back and think back like, oh, man, I won a major a month ago or I won this tournament whenever. I don't really do that. I wouldn't say bummed, but I was curious on why I had done -- or I had played like that throughout the fall. I sat down with my coach, and we kind of reassessed and figured out what are we doing differently? They're such small, minute things that no one would ever pick up on, but it's something that, if I sit down with my coach for an hour and really talk through things, talk through the process for showing up at events, what I'm doing on the golf course, we find discrepancies of what I did that fall versus what I might have done the week before the PGA and the week of the PGA, right?

So these are things that we bring up now to make sure I don't do them and I didn't do them after the Open win, and thankfully I had that experience, I learned from it, and we move on. There's going to be things that creep up into your head that aren't good, and that's just golf.

Q. Kind of an off the beaten path question here, but with the PGA TOUR schedule coming up for next year, there's no event in Chicago and no event here in New York. I know you're a guy who likes to get out there and explore. Is it kind of a bummer to not have those two big cities? Do you enjoy coming to the big cities on TOUR?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I love it. I'm a city guy at heart, and I think obviously I have no sway into going where the tournaments will be, but I'm going to miss it. Every time we've been to Chicago, every time we've been to New York, my girlfriend and I, we've always gone into the city. We've had some great dinners. We've toured around.

By no means we're locals, but we've enjoyed enough of the city where we can go find some hole in the walls or better spots that the tours don't necessarily go but the locals know. Yeah, I'm going to miss it. I'm going to miss it for sure, and hopefully they make their way back, but I'm glad

at least L.A. is still on the market there.

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