

TOUR Championship

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Collin Morikawa

Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: Collin Morikawa joins us here in the virtual interview room at the TOUR Championship making his first start at this event. Just a tremendous season, obviously, for you, winning at Workday and then also the PGA Championship.

If we can get you to sort of recap what the last month or two has been like on the PGA TOUR.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's been crazy. It's been week after week, a lot of golf. Obviously some pretty big wins. Yeah, you know, I'm very thankful to be here. This is obviously a goal of mine, to get here, but not just get here but to win it, and we've put ourselves in a pretty good position.

It's been kind of an up-and-down past couple weeks of trying to figure out how to play golf again after the PGA Championship, but we're heading in the right direction.

You know, like I said, it's kind of been a crazy ride since the win at the PGA, but I think everything is pretty much settled down now and I'm ready to play some really good golf this week.

JOHN BUSH: What are your thoughts on East Lake? Have you been out to see it yet this week and how will it fit your game?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I saw nine yesterday; played the other nine today. It looks really good. Obviously fairways are really important out here with the rough. Not being crazy high like last week, but the ball sitting down, having some tough kind of iron shots or long par-4s where you might have to even have hybrid in there out of the rough. Fairways are going to be key.

I think there's not a lot of runoffs around the green. There's a lot of rough. You might have some short-sided chip shots.

Overall I think the course looks really good; fits a lot of my tee shots. I don't really feel uncomfortable with any of



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them, which is always nice heading to a course. But yeah, I think there's going to be some birdies out there for sure.

Q. You broke down a little bit about the course and your first impressions of it and all that. Can you talk a little bit about the 18th and what makes that hole so special in that final round on Sunday?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, even though I haven't been here at East Lake, I feel like I knew a couple holes already just because of what you see, obviously what Tiger did two years ago, and I was trying to think of what crowds would even be like just anywhere in general.

But yeah, it's a really cool hole, because if you hit a good drive you can have a pretty short -- not a short iron, but you can have an iron into that green and make something happen. I think finishing on par-5s is always really fun because you never know what's going to happen. Guys are making birdie. Guys are trying to make eagles. There can always be a little swing here or there.

To have that hole be our finishing hole will be really cool this week.

Q. East Lake has been the TOUR Championship layout for a long time. Do you feel like you have any local knowledge just from watching it or favorite memories from seeing it on TV over the years?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Definitely don't have local knowledge. I could really only name the 18th and the 9th hole for you before I played this week. But memories, I think going back to two years ago watching Tiger come down -- we played the front nine today and we were remembering -- we went to go watch Bill Haas' shot out of the water on 8, which was pretty cool.

But no, I mean, I really hope I make some memories this week. I think that would be pretty cool.

Q. Having had a chance to play it, why do you think the course has stood the test of time so well? And secondly, is there a pivotal hole or stretch on the back nine that you think will be critical on Sunday?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, you know, I think if you look at the course -- and I don't really know what the scores are

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like. I think they're roughly between -- in the teens, from the 10 to 20. Hopefully guys aren't shooting 30-under here like we saw a couple weeks ago.

But if you look at the grass, fairways are so important. And it's not like these fairways are super, super narrow, but if you do miss them, the iron shots and controlling them into these greens are a little tougher. And it's not like there's runoffs everywhere. There's a few little shaved areas in the front of greens, but trying to even run that up from the rough isn't easy.

You know, it's all about controlling your ball out here and then just giving yourself a good putt at it. If you can control off the tee and get it in the fairway and you're playing out of the fairway for most of the week, I think those are the guys that are going to be playing the best.

Q. Is there a hole or anything that --

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, sorry. Not yet. I'm going to have to go through all the holes again. I remember there's a par-3, the longer par-3 on the back, and then the hole before that I think was like a long par-4 that might have been converted into a par-3 -- I mean, a par-5 into a par-4. That little stretch as I remember yesterday was a pretty good stretch of holes.

It's going to make you test, but it's not like 16, 17, 18 are just driver, wedge, either. You've still got to play some really good golf. It's going to be a test 1 through 18 for sure throughout the entire week.

Q. This has been a crazy stretch of golf here and a lot, but I'm curious because of all the golf that you've been playing starting this week five shots back, as young as you are, how much do you still have left in the tank, and how are you trying to manage kind of how you can keep your energy up and not fall into some lulls kind of in the middle of the rounds?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, we've got a lot of energy, I'll tell you that. I'm very excited to be here. How could you not? For me, yes, this is the end of our season technically, but the next season starts next week and starts at the U.S. Open.

I was just talking earlier. You can't just figure out this week and then we're done and then you can go take a break for a month. You've got to be mentally prepared, and I knew that was going to be the stretch of golf -- you know, if we play well throughout the last couple months, how do you get ready for this kind of big stretch of golf where you have a major, then you have three weeks of playoff, then another major, then who knows what.

So there's a lot of energy in me. For me, when I practice I'm not out there from sunrise to sunset. I'm not grinding out there too long. I'm just really efficient with what I do, and I think that saves a lot of energy. But yeah, this is going to be my first three-week stretch in a little bit of time, so make sure I get some rest, make sure I eat well and do my stretches and what I need to do.

I'm excited to play. I can't see why anyone else wouldn't be. I've put myself in a good position, so I'm not just here to limp my way to the final on Monday. I'm trying to win this thing.

Q. Last year Rory was in the exact same place you are right now, in fifth. Do you take any comfort or consolation or confidence in the fact that you can be fifth and still win this thing?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I mean, Rory is obviously a very, very good player, but five shots, that can be a lot, that can be a little. You don't know how the guys are going to play ahead of you. You don't know how anyone is going to play below you.

All you can really do is show up on Friday and play good golf. I don't look at it like I need to make up five shots in the next five holes at the beginning of my round. This is a four-day tournament still, and there's going to be a lot of ups, a lot of downs, a lot of swings throughout the entire tournament. But just to give myself a chance, can we come down by Monday morning or whatever the tee times are on Monday and make the turn, front nine, and be in the mix, and that's the key.

How do I get myself and position myself to be there. So we've got a lot of work to do, obviously, being five shots out, but to know that it's been done is nice.

I think last year was the first year where the scores were staggered like this, so who knows in 10 years' time what that'll play out like.

Q. I know you said it kind of rolls into one season right after this one ends, but with the FedExCup and also Player of the Year being on the line, does it feel like you're playing for a lot and that it's kind of playing to a finale, if that makes sense?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Oh, yeah, I didn't mean like this week means nothing. This is still the big week. This is where our season ends for this week. Mentally I can't be like, Okay, I'm going to take a break now. But knowing, okay, this is where this 2019-2020 season is going to end, someone is going to be crowned the champion, all this

stuff, yes, this is where we want to be.

But that reminds me, I'm going to have to reassess my goals in a week's time, by the end of this tournament, and get ready for next season. So not just keep rolling in thinking, okay, this is like a rollover, these are one combined season. Next season is completely different. Everything that we've done this past year won't really affect how the points and everything work out for next year.

Yeah, you know, this week still means a lot. I'm still going to be really focused for it, but I've got to know I've got to be just as sharp if not sharper come the week after for the U.S. Open. Not be, okay, we finished one season and now we can take -- ease into the fall season.

Q. What would your reaction to the statement be that the player who was not the 2019 college Player of the Year was the 2020 PGA TOUR Player of the Year?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. You know, you've seen my college career somewhat and I didn't win a bunch. Wolff won a lot last year, the 2018-2019 season. And that's what it comes down to sometimes, who's going to win the most. I was obviously very consistent but I just needed a few more wins. That's what's going to separate -- it's a fine line what separates 1 and 2 and 3.

That would be a really cool ring, and hopefully it plays out that way. I wouldn't mind if that happened for sure. Yeah.

Q. Was there something that changed from being a consistent top 5 guy to winning events either mentally, physically, or just getting one early helped you get momentum?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think winning last year early helped. Obviously the 3M loss helped. But just getting out here, getting comfortable with these guys, these guys being really nice to me out here, being able to play with no status just really helped me.

And then I believed I could do it. When I was out there in college of course I believed I was able to win, but the thing is some of those college days, like if I didn't play really well, you know, I was still able to keep my game around there, the top 5, top 10 players for that tournament.

Out here you've got to be sharp, and how do you get as consistent as some of the guys when they're really at their peaks finishing top 5, finishing top 10s in pretty much every event. That's what I want to get to.

Wins will start coming, more wins will start coming like that. So it's just figuring out that kind of specific routine and

strategy to get there.

Q. What was it that clicked with J.J. as your caddie?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. I mean, I hit the lottery. I have now figured out that having a caddie is obviously very important, but coming out of college I thought I could have hired you and I would have been okay. I don't know how well you are with golf.

But I'm serious. Like I asked him a question on the phone and I really didn't know what to ask any caddie when I was figuring out who I was going to get. But I asked him, Are you organized? That's the kind of person I want on my bag. I don't want stuff going around. I want him to show up when I tell him, Okay, let's meet at 9:00. I am on time and he'll tell you that. He'll vouch for me. Like I'm there between 8:59 and 9:01 every day. If I tell him I 9:00 I'm there, and that's just me.

I want someone on that same wavelength. He's been awesome. He is not just like a good caddie, he's a good person. He's got a one-year-old little boy who is like so cute. He has so much fun. And like seeing him -- because we both live in Vegas, has been really cool.

So, you know, I look at how -- yes, I need them to figure out my golf game. I need them to think like me on the golf course, give me other shots that I might not see. But he knows what to say at the right times, he knows when to say it, and he really offers just good insight.

He's been out here for a good amount of years. Obviously being with Ryan Moore for a long time, you know, you see one type of game. I might have shots that Ryan had or Ryan might have shots that I don't have, but I want to have every shot possible, and he's always offering up different shots that I might not see, that in college I might have just always played this stock just cut.

Yes, that's going to work for 90 percent of the time, but he's taught me so much just throughout the game. Him being a huge Giants and Warriors fan always gives us a good talk, me being from LA and loving everything in LA. And he's just awesome. Yeah, seriously is.

JOHN BUSH: Collin, we appreciate your time today, and best of luck this week.

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