

TOUR Championship

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Colin Morikawa

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Colin for joining us here at the TOUR Championship, the FedExCup playoffs. Colin, it's your second start at East Lake, finished sixth last year in 2020. Talk about coming back to East Lake and how special it is at the end of the season to reach that top-30.

COLIN MORIKAWA: It means a lot. It means you've done something right and obviously it's a goal to get to East Lake. But knowing the position I put myself in at that end of the regular season I want to try and win it. And I didn't really give myself the best odds through the first couple playoff events, starting seven back, but you know what, seven back, it's not going to scare me from anything. I'm coming out here hopefully starting Thursday and we're going to start playing well and put everything together. This is a cool season to look back at with how long it's kind of extended, how many tournaments it's been, but hopefully we can end it on a really good note.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned seven back. You came back from six back at the PGA Championship when you won through 36 holes there. Just before we take some questions, and I will remind the people we have a lot of people on line, so limit it to one question.

You were at the Payne Stewart Award evening last night. Talk about that experience and how it was your first go-around at that award ceremony. Can you just elaborate on that experience a little bit for us.

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, growing up I didn't really know much about Payne Stewart. Obviously I knew who he was. I knew the story, a little bit about him, but over the past couple days knowing that I was going to show up to this dinner and look at a guy like Justin Rose, who I've looked up to, who I've been able to reach out to about anything, I wanted to read about it a little bit more, what the Payne Stewart Award means.

It's amazing. It's an amazing kind of award and to continue his legacy to see what the Stewarts, Payne's wife and her and his kids are doing to extend that, it means a lot. So



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being there at the dinner was an honor. To be able just to talk a little bit on stage was pretty cool with Sergio.

But, yeah, Justin is an amazing guy. Payne obviously was an amazing guy to a bunch of people, very, just loving and caring and it was very cool to be there for an hour to see that unfold.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Just wondering, what is your state of mind right now about your state of your game right now?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Way better than it was two weeks ago. I think starting the playoffs I really didn't know where it was going to be with the little back stuff and having not practiced. But I've kind of worked out a lot of the bad patterns that I've built-in. There's one thing that I need to figure out today, but for the most part all the bad patterns that I've worked in Memphis that I should have never played injured, really, have been pushed out. So that's what's good.

So we're going out here just trying to play golf, how do I put the ball in the hole. I'm going to try and keep it simple. I could be thinking about a lot of things, but at the end of the day, everyone's just going to look at our score and what we shoot for this week and I just want to get the ball in the hole. It's as simple as that, really.

Q. Have you given any thought to what you would do with \$15,000,000?

COLIN MORIKAWA: (Laughing) No. It's a lot of money. But, yeah, I don't know, maybe go have a nice dinner.

Q. I think you're one of the more maybe popular players out here, so this isn't really going to apply to you, but I'm sure you've seen some of the comments from fans recently. Curious, what are your feelings on Mr. Monahan's comments yesterday about the Brooksie stuff?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think what separates our sport from a lot of other sports is the idea of respect. That's what our game is about, how do you respect others. And while we're hitting, it's been the norm to for everyone to be quiet. So there comes a point of where it's, almost

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could be called harassment when people are saying certain things, doing this, but they have their rights and they have their rights to say what, so I haven't really thought about it too much. I haven't seen it in person on how bad it really has gotten. It's obviously unfortunate for us players playing when you hear certain things like that being said.

But I heard some things last week, and I'm not going to say it, that were just inappropriate and it wasn't right. So it's an unfortunate circumstance because this is what our game is. Our game is about respect and it's about honoring of the players and doing what people in the past, how our game has been raised throughout the years. I get it, the world is changing, but that does not mean you can just go out and start saying anything you want.

So it's an interesting topic. I'm sure players have been called many things throughout the years, different names, different nicknames, but it is what it is and hopefully it's taken care of.

Q. Curious, your thoughts on the format here. You wouldn't have played the other way, where there was kind of two tournaments going on at once, you had a TOUR Championship winner and sometimes you didn't have a, you had somebody different win the FedExCup, which is actually what happened with Tiger and Justin Rose a few years ago. Now that can't happen and we have got this staggered start. What do you make of it? It's probably different than anything you've ever done in terms of stroke play.

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, well, I think I laid out the blueprint for what this format is. If you start, or finish the regular season at first and you pretty much don't accumulate any points, how far you might possibly drop down to 11th. It is what it is. I've heard other players talk about how they like it, how they don't like it. I think it's awesome to know that everyone has a chance this week, right?

But like I said, our sport is so different than every other sport that you can't, I don't think you can just make it one playoff event at the beginning and cut from 125 to whoever, 70 make the cut because every week is so different. But it shows the strength of these playoffs is that if you're playing well like Erik van Rooyen, you can play yourself into the TOUR Championship, and I think that's what's pretty cool is that he started so far back, I think right before the Barracuda, he was outside the 125 and worked his way in and now he has a chance for the FedExCup.

So the staggered format, I think, is smart. I think it works. So it's cool to see that who is going to win this week is

going to win everything else. So it sucks to be seven back, but it is what it is and we're going to go out firing.

Q. Are you okay to have dropped as far as you did with just basically, I know you didn't play great last week, but you missed the cut. You had kind of one bad week and it really does impact you.

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean, am I okay with it? No, I don't personally like being dropped all the way down to 11th, but like I said, that's the way our playoffs work.

But was there a lot of movement for me? Yeah. To be first in the FedExCup, and then just say I was injured and, which I was, I was injured at Memphis, and I really shouldn't have played that injured, build bad patterns, but just say I was injured and we have three weeks of playoff and knowing that I want to work my way to the TOUR Championship and that's what I said at Liberty National is that this is a three-week stretch, how do I peak at this week, not peak at the first week because you could play well the first two weeks and have a bad week here and then you lose everything.

So, yeah, does it suck to be 11th? Absolutely. Is there a better way? I don't know. I think there's a lot of ways we can go about it and it's just so hard because you have to almost implement it to figure out what's going to be great.

Q. I want to drill down a little more on when exactly did you injure the back and what were you able to do in the last few days with Rick to kind of feel like you're in a better spot right now?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it happened first round of the Olympics and then something else kind of happened in the, in between Memphis and Liberty National, so during that week off. It was all gone by the time I teed off at Liberty. There's no excuses there for a bad back, so everyone can put that aside. My back is fine now. I'm moving fine.

It's just the patterns I built into my swing when I played injured just created such a bad habit. So I was trying to teach myself last week at BMW how to swing like my old self. We're working back there. I'm pretty much, I would call it 95 percent back to the original swing. There's just a couple little kinks here and there that show up. But every week you're not swinging it perfect. I don't think there's one week I can think back at this season where I was swinging it amazing where I knew where it was going to go.

So it is what it is and we're going to go out and just hit my little cut, bring that cut back. And that's the biggest thing I've learned, not play injured, because it really built bad patterns into my swing that I had to think about and I had to

realize, that's what it was.

Q. Is it lower back or where?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, Olympics was kind of just like kind of left lower muscle, no nerves or anything, it was just pulled a little muscle and then in Memphis, I was trying to play around it and, yeah, bad idea.

Q. Do you need these two weeks off to rest it for the Ryder Cup?

COLIN MORIKAWA: No, no, I'm all good now. Like, I am a hundred percent. I can touch my toes now. I'm all good. No, I feel great, which is awesome. It's just I know what my swing does, right? You know, I've done it for my entire life. I know what it does. And then when you swing for two weeks and I'm so -- and PGA TOUR players are so good at repeating something, so when I do something for two weeks, I'm going to think, Oh, that's what my normal is, when really my normal is not that. It's because I was protecting away from not trying to injure it even more.

So it's just building in a pattern that I know that I've done for years and years and years.

Q. How important was it having Rick here this week to work with you?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Well, last week. It was very important, just to build back patterns. Him knowing what I do and what my normal rotations are, it's just building that back. I got my trainer out here this week from L.A. So just working everything back to where it's normal. I'm not doing anything different. I'm not changing anything. It's just going back to what I know what my swing was a month and a half ago.

Q. Do you feel like you should have, you deserve to have a chance to still win after the last two weeks?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Do I deserve to have a chance? I think everyone has a chance.

Q. I know, but in the playoffs, if you have two, one bad week, you would be out of a playoff, but you've had kind of two poor weeks. Do you feel like you deserve a chance to still win this thing?

COLIN MORIKAWA: I mean, I don't think, I think everything's earned. Do you deserve to be here on this camera? Like, do you deserve your job? Is that, I mean that's, it's kind of a, you know, it's a -- deserve I don't think is the right word. Everyone sets themselves up to make a run at the playoffs. I set myself up more throughout the

regular season and obviously I played poorly those first two tournaments, but I had enough of a cushion where I knew I was going to be here. If I took those first two playoff events off, you guys would all be calling me crazy. I would still be sitting here at 11th. I think I would be sitting here at 11th and then you would ask me, Do I deserve to win? I would have said, Oh, I would have rested for two weeks, you know?

Like, I don't, I mean, you're going to ask Patrick Reed, does he deserve to win this TOUR Championship? I mean, the dude had double pneumonia. Like, that's awful. So deserve is not, I would never use that word because we have all earned our position here, right, whether it's from the fall, I mean, you could have, what if you won both majors in the fall and then you didn't play well? Do you deserve to make it to the playoffs? I mean, yeah, you played well. That's what the season's about.

Q. I don't know if you have even the movie Unforgiven, but there's a quote that deserve's got nothing to do with it. That's a good quote, so you can use that next time. Question for you about the Ryder Cup. Putting personalities aside, you've got some match play experience. You were very successful in the Walker Cup, whose game, among people that may be or may be on the U.S. team, do you think would matchup with yours in either alternate shot or four-ball?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, like a JT or a Xander. Those guys have very similar games, they're very consistent. They're just guys you get along with. I think that's what a big part of it is about, not just matching up games, and I think that is a lot of the percentage of how you're going to play well, but it's just getting to know these guys. And I've hung out with Xander, I've hung out with JT and I played a lot of golf with them, that just makes things a little easier by the time when you're put in a setting with 40,000 fans around you, hitting a first tee shot, it just makes it a little more comfortable. Because it's, what I've heard is that, once you tee off, I mean, it's, you're in a whole other world, it's anything, it's everything unlike what we normally do on a regular basis, even when we are finishing off a major, you're at the end of a tournament when you got a bunch of fans, there's nothing like it to describe it. So, yeah, I think it's just guys that I feel comfortable with, everyone's games is going to be plenty good enough to go out there on that stage, it's just how do you just be a little more comfortable with your team and just knowing that they believe in you just as much as you believe in them.

Q. You've had a chance to have a pretty up close look at Patrick Cantlay and his game. What do you respect most about his game and how tough is he going to be to run down this week?

COLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, he's like a silent killer, he just kind of does everything well. And I was, I guess, fortunate to watch his first two days, I think he was -- like we were looking at it, he was plus 11 strokes gained putting for the first two rounds and, I mean, he was make everything, he was hitting it well, driving it well off the tee and it's hard to catch. But this is the game of golf and as I've seen and as everyone has seen, every week is different. Granted, not saying his game is bad, he's a great player and he has a two-shot lead and a seven-shot lead on me, but it's golf, anything can happen. I'm going to go out here trying to force the issue of just playing my best. I want to be ready by Thursday by that first hole. If I'm not it's going to be a lot harder to catch him.

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