

WM Phoenix Open

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Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Brooks Koepka

Press Conference



AMANDA HERRINGTON: We'd like to welcome two-time WM Phoenix Open champion, Brooks Koepka, our defending champion. Brooks, a special place here for you, first PGA TOUR win came in 2015. What's it like to be back this year?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I always like coming back to this place, good memories. You know, I feel like I have been playing pretty good recently. Just a few kinks we worked out.

I'm excited. I feel like I'm striking it well, putting it well, doing everything I need to do. You've got the good memories here, and I guess the feels I get on this golf course I feel comfortable on it. So hoping for a good week.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Opening up to questions.

Q. As you're walking the course, is there a particular memory that comes to mind, a particular shot you think of?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Maybe the drive I hit on 18 in '15 when I won, just being the first time really in contention out here. Stepping up, hitting a good drive. I thought that was big, just for confidence going forward, things like that.

I love this golf course, man. It suits me down to the ground. I think you see a lot of guys that hit it long and fade it, play well here. Martin Laird has always had a good track record here.

Yeah, I mean, it's a bomber's paradise. If you can put the ball in play, you can make some good scores.

Q. I saw your Instagram comment, but I wanted to ask you if you could elaborate on what you thought when you read Phil Mickelson's comments about the PGA TOUR and his position on their obnoxious greed?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I said what I said. I don't need to say anything more. You take it how you want. I know what I meant by it, but it's up to you.

Q. Do you agree with him on the media rights question?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Look, man, I said what I said. So you can take it from there.

Q. I would love to ask you about the Super Bowl. Who do you want to win and who do you think will win?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I want the Bengals to win. My best friend's dad has been a long-time Bengals fan. It would be nice to see them do it.

I love Joe Burrow. I think he's awesome. He was out there doing I think knee rehab when I was out there. I saw him a little bit, and, you know, I just root for guys like that. He's fun, looks like he's having a good time while he's playing. I love his swagger. Definitely going for him.

Q. You're a guy with a lot of mainstream sports fans. There is a lot of those kind of fans out here at this tournament. That being said, what does this tournament mean to THE TOUR? How important is it, given how it relates to mainstream golf fans?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Well, first off, I think it brings a whole new group of fans to golf. I think that's important. I think you look at -- I mean, I don't know the numbers, I don't want to screw it up, but, I mean, it's pretty much the biggest tournament we have on the PGA TOUR as far as fans, people, the presence. The atmosphere is unbelievable.

I love it. Look, I love when people get rowdy. They're cheering you when you hit it tight, and they're booing you when you hit it bad. It almost feels like a real sport, like football, basketball, things like that, soccer.

If you do something wrong, you deserve to get heckled. If you do something right, they will cheer for you. I think that's what makes this event so cool. I understand why some guys don't like it. They don't agree with -- or they just don't play it, I guess, because they don't like it. It's something I have always loved.



Then the 16th hole is just, I think it's just so much fun. I enjoy it. 17 is kind of becoming bigger, as well, with the grandstands they have got down on the left-hand side. This whole tournament has grown. Thunderbirds have done a tremendous job making this I think one of the -- I think that's why they call it The People's Open, right?

Q. On a lighter note off the court, is the hair a permanent fashion statement? A one-time thing? What made you do it?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I just felt like doing it. I talked to my boy Philly, who is my barber, and he wanted to do it for like a year. I just decided. We're like, All right. We got bored, so might as well do it.

Yeah, it is permanent, so, I mean, I can't really just wash it out (smiling). It will be here for a little bit until the rest of it grows in. I'm lucky enough I have enough hair it will grow back (smiling).

Q. Moving on from hair, how was your celebrity partner today, Adam? How would you analyze his game? What does he need to do?

BROOKS KOEPKA: We were laughing about it, my team, Jeff Pierce and my caddie Ricky, we were talking about it. It's amazing. His ball speed is probably in the top 15 out here in ball speeds. I mean, on the last hole it was 179 and change.

We were laughing. Give him six, eight months to fine-tune the game and it's almost like he could play pro golf. He's just an athlete. Athletes it around. He's good, obviously really good with football, I don't need to say that, but I think he played baseball. I mean, he said he played four sports all the way through high school, so a true athlete right there. Nice guy.

Q. I know you have been working really hard at the game. Is there one thing you have been working on consistently or new things every week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, I think it's just been getting more comfortable. I feel like my iron play has been right there. I haven't driven the ball very well, but I got that sorted. That was easy.

Just a few things. It's tough to play from the rough, playing Torrey, just wasn't doing some things. Got that figured out.

I feel very confident, like where I'm ahead of probably where I have been every year previous, where I feel like my game is at. So hopefully good things.

Q. In the past you talked about your mindset being different for Majors. With this being a different atmosphere and your success here, is it fair to say you have a different mindset when you come to Phoenix?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I don't feel like my mindset is any different here, but I think the amount of people, it's probably equivalent to a Major. I have done pretty well in New York where the fans will get on you if you're not doing it right. Been on the bad side of that; I have been on the good side of that. You know, when I basically tried to give away the back 9 at Bethpage, I'm watching DJ so they were on me there.

It's like out here, you hit a bad shot, they're going to get on you. Kind of refocuses you. I enjoy that atmosphere you get in other sports, football, where it's a little rowdy, basketball where they were chirping you, whatever. I like that.

I think that's probably contributed to the success out here, but I don't know. I think that's just a guess.

Q. When you talk to the other players, how much talk is there about the rivalry, Saudis, all this other stuff, or is it something you not discuss with fellow pros?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It's been pretty clear for a long time now that I'm with the PGA TOUR, it's where I'm staying. I'm very happy. I think they do things the right way. People I want to do business with. I'm happy to be here.

And I don't really talk about it with many other players. They have asked a couple of questions, but I trust them.

Q. You've made a lot of gear changes the last year, new irons last year, new driver, new wedges. Just curious about your thoughts, the process getting into the new gear and where you're at now.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, the irons have been probably the easiest transition I have ever made. I forget what they call it, like that V-sole, where I'd never even heard of it, didn't know it existed. But going through the turf, every once in a while because I'm very steep on it, I felt like the club would grab a little bit and kind of drag it left.

I haven't seen that once with these irons. They went in the bag immediately. The wedges, I've played Cleveland wedges growing up as a kid. It's all about getting the grind work done for me. My lob wedge is probably a little difficult to get the grind right. Takes a few tries. Once we got that done, everything else, you know, you just match your specs.

The ball has been crazy actually to me. The ball doesn't move that much in the wind, which I think is the craziest thing. So a little bit of adjustment there. But, I mean, it goes probably, like if I was hitting 7-iron, ball goes 15 feet higher, Srixon ball, and it's got the same amount of spin. So to me it's only going to help me. This place, the greens are kind of firm so I can hold greens a lot better.

Then it's just been very easy transition, something I have been very, very pleased with. We have been working at it for probably six, eight months. So I have been very pleased.

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