

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Kurt Kitayama

Quick Quotes

Q. What are you most proud of on how you handled a challenging day?

KURT KITAYAMA: Just proud of the way I fought. Started off fairly solid first three holes and then one loose swing and I'm 2-over. Then got some uncomfortable shots coming in on that front nine. Bogey on 9. It's just tough.

But making that birdie, that putt on 10, that helped calm things down.

Then a good drive on 12.

Really proud of how I was able to fight back to even.

Q. Where did you learn that fight?

KURT KITAYAMA: I don't know. I've just always felt like I've -- there's no giving up. It's just kind of in my nature, I feel like. Even when it's going bad, you can't just like pack it in. You fight for every shot.

Q. Do you draw back to a time earlier in your career, maybe when you had no status or little status or anything like that?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I mean, I just feel like I've always grinded, no matter what I'm doing. Even just practice, trying to get better. Always been putting in the time. So I owe it to myself to, even when you get off to a rocky start, to keep fighting.

Q. You've been so close before. Do you, going into tomorrow, do you feel like you need to do anything differently than you did before or just do more of the same that you've done this week?

KURT KITAYAMA: I think when it's playing this tough you just keep grinding away and just keep doing more of the same. Just keep fighting and hopefully be out on top.

Q. Was Pebble a big turning point, do you think, after that week? Just how you put yourself in contention

and then things didn't finish well. Did you switch anything up after that or did that teach you anything?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I mean, that start was tough in Pebble. It wasn't like I felt uncomfortable that week. I just felt like a few bad breaks and that kind of got out of control. Maybe a little bit of emotions. I got angry. So that experience, I don't know, just probably, like, forget about it, really. Not think too much of it.

Q. We spoke to Taylor Montgomery at length a little earlier and he had nothing but glowing things to say about you. But he did say next week dinner's on you. How do you respond to that?

KURT KITAYAMA: (Laughing.) Yeah, I think I owe him. I owe him from a little practice round, I think. But, yeah, we have good fun. I think that we have a good friendship. He's going to be my Zurich partner, so I'm glad to treat him. (Laughing.)

Q. The bad swing on the double bogey, did you put that in the back of your mind or did you have to cool down a little bit?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I mean, that's why I went to the 3-wood next shot. Just to try to forget about it, not think about it, really. Just kind of like -- it got away from me. So just an uncomfortable thing, I think.

Q. People may view you as the underdog tomorrow considering some of the resumes on the leaderboard. Is that a role you embrace? How are you looking at tomorrow in terms of the opportunity in front of you?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I think you just kind of accept it. You just look at the leaderboard, the rankings and what they have done. People probably cheering for them louder, you know. So there's nothing I can do. Just embrace it.

Q. I know you guys are in a zone you try to tune it out, but how are the crowds out there? They like they're unbelievable, the galleries. Can you just discuss the atmosphere out there?



KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, it's really good. A lot of positives. There's nothing, there's no negatives. Didn't seem like there's a ton of negative out there. So it's good. The fans are great.

Q. What was the highlight of your round, do you think?

KURT KITAYAMA: Probably, I mean, 10 was, that was a big putt I made. It got me settled down a lot more, for sure. Things felt like they could have easily spiralled out of control there. And then the finish, two of the last three. So that was good.

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