

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

## Collin Morikawa

## Max Homa

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Max Homa and Collin Morikawa here into the media center at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. First time together as teammates. We've got a little Cal Berkeley connection going on here. Max, we will start with you. Talk a little bit about how excited you are for this week and playing with Collin.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I think this is a very fun event. It's a nice change of pace, getting to play a team event for FedExCup is pretty awesome. Yeah, getting to play with Collin, two-time major champion, that's an easy job for me, so I appreciate that.

But yeah, I've gotten to know Collin since he was in college and always really respected how he went about his business. Obviously appreciate the way he plays golf, and to get to partner with him and get to compete with him and make some birdies will be fun, but I also think we make a very good team, and I'm looking forward to getting going on Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: Collin, how excited are you to be teeing it up with Max?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I'm very excited. I sent him the text and he kind of gave me the I'll-get-back-to-you-later type of thing. Max has given me a lot of praise, and I'm going to give him a lot of praise right now.

He was our volunteer assistant coach when I was in college, and you don't really do that when you're fighting for your card on the PGA TOUR or you're grinding on the Korn Ferry. I think at the time he had his TOUR card but you hadn't won yet, and you don't really do that. Not many guys would do that.

The effort he puts into things that he truly cares about and the people he loves is incredible, and people see him on Twitter, people see him on social media, but he truly does care about a lot of people, and it's amazing how that comes through. It's just hard to find people like that, and



I'm very lucky to have someone like that as my partner this week.

His golf speaks wonders. He's a six-time PGA TOUR winner. I was trying to get my sixth before I got to this event so I could somehow get tied.

You know, I'm very lucky to have him as a partner. I'm very excited. Look, we're here to win, and we're all starting at even par no matter what our past history has been about playing golf. Like this is a format where anyone could go off. One person can go off in best ball, alternate shot, you've just got to kind of keep it ahead of you, and hopefully one of us or both of us really just go lights out.

#### **Q. What are the strengths of each other's games? Collin, with Max, what does he bring to the team?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Truly everything. I think Tiger said it right on, like why aren't you winning more. But simply when you look at Max's game, all around, driving the ball, he hits that cut, and that's what I do, too, we just hit that cut, and you just wear that out, wear it out, wear it out, wear it out.

There really are no weaknesses, and that's been pretty cool to see. I played one of my first few practice rounds when I turned pro in '19, I played a few with Max. I even played with Max in 2016 when I had my Korn Ferry event, and you could tell he was a very good player, but now he has full control of his game, and I think that's what's really cool is when you see certain players out here on TOUR, they have that, and it's stress free and you just know you're going to be making birdies, so that's obviously very nice.

#### **Q. Max, talk about his game.**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I actually remember the first time I saw him I went down to Southern Highlands and watched them play golf in, what was that, the Southern Highlands Collegiate, and I watched him play, and he hit the ball so well. All the guys went to the range after, and I was just sitting there watching everybody and I was talking to Eric Mina, who was my teammate and Collin's assistant coach, and I was like man, this kid is already a top-20 ball striker



in the world and he's still in college.

I remember I told Collin, I'm not saying this as someone who thinks they're better than you, I've just seen a little bit more golf than you. If you can learn how to get a world-class short game, I just really don't know who can beat you, and he did. He obviously worked really hard. He has a well-rounded game.

It's easy to say I'm looking forward to keeping the ball anywhere on grass so I can watch him hit an iron, but he's very good at everything, and I think that's a comforting thing as a partner both in best ball and in alternate shot. I have a very easy job this week, it's just to watch him hit, clap, and tell him how great he is, so it's going to be a very fun week.

**Q. You had mentioned, Collin, that Korn Ferry event in Wichita in 2016, and I was wondering what each of you guys remember about interacting and playing a practice round together that week, and then Max, what your impressions were of this college kid almost winning and finishing second in a playoff.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I'll start that. This is a great practice round because this is I think the first time I had ever met Max, and he did not care about me at all. I was just some fat little kid walking around out of college just like on a sponsor's invite because I had won the Trans Miss the year before.

It was me, Max and Brandon Hagy, another Cal player, and I think I talked to Brandon almost the entire time, and Max just kind of like let me go.

It's weird, everyone thinks Max is this outgoing guy. When I met him seven years ago, he was pretty shy. He was in his bubble. I was not in his friend group yet, especially back then.

But you got to kind of ease into him, and as we met through college and whatnot, when he came over, it's obviously been a great friendship.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, in the nine holes we played, I obviously was really impressed, but it's hard -- the first time you see somebody play golf, anybody out here can blow your mind for a day. So you just never know.

It's a big spot for a kid to be playing in a professional golf tournament, and yeah, he went out and lost in a playoff, and I was like, all right, so it wasn't -- it's not one of those, hey, he had a great practice round days. He's a very, very good golfer.

I think from the jump, anybody who played with him in college, I'm assuming high school, like there's just a golfing kind of gift there, but he doesn't take it for granted. It's not like he just sleeps on that. He works on it and tries to improve.

But that first time we played, I was like, this guy really does not hit a bad shot. I would be lying if in the back of my head as somebody trying to get their card and progress in golf if I wasn't a bit jealous that a 20-year-old kid just absolutely dominated me for a week. But such is life. It was motivating to get better than a 20-year-old when I was 26.

But yeah, it was nice. Obviously it was cool to see him have that success there, stay in college, do some great things for Cal, and then obviously had success immediately once he turned pro.

**Q. Then the volunteer assistant coaching, what did that entail? What was the rhythm of that?**

MAX HOMA: A lot of it just stemmed from Eric is still one of my close buddies, and I just always -- when I was in college, Peter Tomasulo was very good to me. I hate admitting that, but he was really good to me, and I always thought that learning from someone who has been there is important for kids, whether that's to get better at golf or to learn how to grow up or whatever it might be.

So I kind of felt like this calling to help. I had time on my off weeks. I knew our team was really good. Collin was obviously the best player, but we had a lot of great talent on that team, so I just wanted to maybe just drop some knowledge on people just because I was fortunate enough to see what professional golf was at the highest level.

Yeah, it was fun for me, and it was just something that I found selfishly enjoyable while also being able to kind of hopefully help people's golf career progress.

**Q. Max, how has the kind of relationship evolved since you guys obviously met in 2016, you knew Collin as the college kid, he comes out, goes on a tear, you've now gone on a tear and you've gone from I guess dispensing advice before his pro journey to both of you sharing seats at the table among the game's elite in?**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I get to Collin's not-so-fun story about me, the point of that to me is when I'm at the golf course I enjoy working and I do my thing, and I think that when I -- I'm not super close with a lot of people in golf, but I have my little cluster of friends, and I feel like those are all people I respect a lot and I've gotten to know and see how

they work at this game. So I think over time watching Collin work, and like I said, the first time I went to Southern Highlands and I was like, hey, if you just get a short game, I truly don't see what could ever stop you.

The next week I got a phone call from our coach, Walter Chun, and he said, Collin actually didn't hit the ball well today, which I actually almost fell over, but his short game kept him in it and he won a golf tournament.

I was just like impressed that a kid who already has kind of the world in his hands went home and by all measures worked at something.

For me, it's like once I respect somebody and see an alignment of how we look at the game of golf, it's very easy for me to be like attracted to that person, and then past that, though, he's a very, very nice young man. His wife is amazing. We've all gotten close. Our wives are close. So it's been easy. It's been an easy transition.

Plus it's fun; yesterday we drove home and got to tell stories about college stuff, and although we were nearly a decade apart it's like we were there at the same time because we both did the same dumb things and had the same dumb stories. So it's just an easy relationship for me.

**Q. I assume those are off the record?**

MAX HOMA: Yes.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Very much so.

**Q. Coming off a major and an elevated tournament and then you're here this week, everybody is wondering what the schedule is going to be like in the future. What is the place you think of -- not every tournament can be a major or an elevated event. To have a tour where you have regular tournaments every single week, what is the future for these tournaments, do you think, and as players, as players people want to see play, do you feel any kind of responsibility to say, I'm going to try to make myself -- spread myself around on the schedule a little bit so that people can see me play?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Look, I think every week has the opportunity to tell stories, and it's on the TOUR, it's on the media, it's on everyone to be able to portray these stories. Just because it isn't a top 15 player in the world doesn't mean that it's not compelling or it's not enjoyable to watch or to learn about.

I think what this week offers is something very different.

It's a team event. So yeah, there's two weeks in the schedule that to me stand out completely different than every event, and that's Match Play, which we don't have anymore, and this week. It's because it's just so different from the norm.

Yes, there are majors, and there are elevated events, but to me, I prep the same way. Some guys prep differently for majors, but I show up every week the same thing, so they all kind of do feel the same.

So when you have a week like this, they're fun. We get to have team dinners. We get to go hang out. There's a different vibe to it.

I think that's what you see, we had a chance to be on a Presidents Cup team, you see that vibe of being on a team. When you have weeks like this, it's just about telling stories, and there's going to be excitement in golf.

It's people saying, oh, it's not exciting because there isn't a leaderboard. Well, it still is exciting, but you have to learn the stories of the other people. We know certain stories about other guys, but just because someone else might take the lead doesn't mean it's not interesting.

So I think people have to enjoy it in a way where we are portrayed and people telling their stories and giving out more, I think that's what's great about you see "Full Swing" with Netflix, you see guys giving more access to just what a day is like in golf. It's just kind of seeing that other part of what we do, not just, okay, we're boring guys that play golf and hit a shot every couple minutes and then five hours later we're done.

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I would say I think this year has been a great -- it's not exactly how next year is going to look, but it's a nice bridge, and I think it's been a pretty great explanation to how things will look going forward.

It would be crazy for me to think that every single fan is going to be equally as invested all 46 weeks of the year that we play or whatever it is. However, I think there's a market in each event for a large group of fans. This year has been great to that. The elevated events have been, I think, incredible. Scottie and Jon have won most of them. But they've all been incredible events. I feel like very exciting and major-type feel.

Then you have -- like I thought the Honda was a really great example. Chris Kirk, who's been at the mountaintop, struggle with his game a little bit, has been playing amazing golf, has his chance to win. You have Monday qualifiers who have their chance to win, and all of a sudden, to Collin's point, there's a great story to be told

there, and there's a huge group of fans who are very invested in watching someone climb versus watching the guy at the top try to stay at the top. But I think there's a market for both, and I think that's kind of what this schedule is providing now.

This event in particular lends itself to stories. You see partnerships -- a lot of people don't know who's friends out here, you just see us play, so now you get to kind of see that. So it's different. But even just a regular non-designated TOUR event I think now provides a lot of opportunity for drama in a different way, and I do believe the fans will really enjoy and appreciate that going forward.

**Q. Max, would you agree with Collin saying that you're a little more shy than people realize? Also, to balance that, how have you gone about the last few years becoming one of the bigger personalities on TOUR and more outspoken about things?**

MAX HOMA: I mean, yeah, I guess I'm not shy in that I'll talk to anybody, but like I say, when I'm here, I like to just get my stuff done. I like mostly everybody out here really, and I've gotten along with pretty much everybody.

But at the same time, when they say "big personalities," like Harry Higgs is a big personality because while he plays he's like an entertainer. I would not call myself an entertainer. I like to play golf, and I get kind of maybe a bit shy when people are cheering and wanting something from me.

But if we were outside the golf tournament, I would say I'm much more amicable. College word right there, Cal.

So I guess it's just different. I just don't come to the golf course to -- I wish I was better inside the ropes with like being more entertaining and acknowledging the people that are being quite kind to me and this and that, but at the same time, I guess I just focus on what I'm trying to get done.

Yeah, I don't think anybody out here would say I wouldn't go up and talk to me, but at the same time, I'm not as outgoing, I think, as people would think while I'm playing golf. If you saw me out at a bar or something, I might be a little --

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Don't take it too far. I was a 19-, 20-year-old kid who was just like eyes wide open at a Korn Ferry event, and Brandon Hagy is the complete opposite. He will talk my ear off.

MAX HOMA: Brandon is the nicest.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Don't take the whole shy thing too far.

**Q. Does Team Homakawa have any predetermined celebrations or antics planned for this week?**

MAX HOMA: Absolutely not. We haven't even come up with a song yet, so we need to get on it.

**Q. Max, you have to be yourself first and foremost, right? You can't try to be something -- I think it would be a detriment to your golf if you were trying to say, I need to go out and entertain or show some part of my personality that's not comfortable?**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, there's definitely a blend I've been trying to find, and I don't think I've exactly found it yet, but like I am off the golf course pretty -- I don't take very many things seriously, and on the golf course I probably take them too seriously. I'm looking to find a bit of a blend, but yeah, it's hard for me to be something I'm not, and I try when I play golf just to trust my instincts that if I want to chat with people, I'll chat or whatever, but if I don't, then I don't. I try my best, but I try and find that blend. I think a lot of guys out here go through that.

But it's interesting; we grow up and you're 10, 11, 12 years old thinking we're going to play on the PGA TOUR and we're going to win majors and win golf tournaments and compete and contend and then all of a sudden you're out here and you're doing that but you're also doing that in front of hundreds of thousands of people and at times they're chanting your name, and I don't think you ever imagine that as a kid. Those are the parts of the business you don't ever think about. That's something I think we all kind of get used to, and some people are really good at it and some people are learning how to get better at it. But such is life. It's not really a problem, it's just something I think you kind of ponder at times.

**Q. There's a quote from a few years ago, Max, when you said of Collin's game that he's like a robot. Do you remember saying that?**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, I say it every time I watch him hit a golf ball.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: There's way too much praise on my game.

MAX HOMA: His caddie called him a robot yesterday, so the robot thing is accurate.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, yeah, I do remember that, and that's why I say Max cares about the people that are close

to him. You can feel the love, and I'm very appreciative of that, but I told Golf Channel earlier and I'm going to keep saying it this week, we played a practice round at Augusta, and the compliments have just kept coming.

I didn't do it as much last week, and I probably should have. I was playing in front of him. I didn't turn around and give him a thumbs up, say hey, go make birdie, but there will be a lot of praise on his end, as well, this week, trust me.

**Q. You guys dropped the Team Homakawa with the Dodgers jerseys. Obviously you're used to Dodgers-Giants, big rivalry. You have a few different So Cal teams, Cantlay-Schauffele defending champs. You guys have any friendly trash talk with those guys when you're looking at the So Cal contingent as maybe 1A, 1B favorites?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I mean, we're like true LA guys. They're like Long Beach and San Diego. We're like LA.

MAX HOMA: Also I don't think Pat talks trash. I don't think he'd be the greatest person to get into a trash talking spat with.

**Q. Xander can hold his own.**

MAX HOMA: Yeah, Xander is the most underrated person out here when it comes to that. But yeah, them two, especially Pat, Pat is pretty quiet, so I think you could say the meanest thing ever to him and he'd just nod at you and continue to walk.

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