

# The Ryder Cup

Wednesday, 27 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

## U.S. Team

## Brooks Koepka

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: I'm delighted to be joined by the U.S. PGA champion Brooks Koepka. It's a fourth Ryder Cup appearance for you here. Give us a sense of what it's like to be back in the team environment and how much are you looking forward to this week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it's fun. I enjoy hanging out with the guys, seeing everybody, and doing a little stuff behind closed doors -- it's tough to explain, you've just got to be there. But I've enjoyed it. It's been fun.

We're looking forward to a good week.

I think this is probably the youngest team I think I've been on, and we've all pretty much played junior golf together growing up, so it's probably the tightest group of guys that we've had.

It'll be interesting to see how it goes this week.

**Q. A lot of speculation on who's going to play with whom Friday and Saturday, people look at analytics, they look at friendships. What do you think makes a good team?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Oh, that's tough. Yeah, I think guys that -- I think you could make an argument, guys that have similar games, guys that have different games, for either one of those. But at the end of the day, two guys are going to go out and go play good. It's simple. Play your best players and who's playing well and put those guys out and let them go earn points.

**Q. Brooks, when you were in Paris, I know you knew that fans were going to be cheering against you, but did the way it felt surprise you at all? Describe what that was like.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, I don't think it was overwhelming at all. I don't know, it was a different week for me even than probably most of the other guys. Yeah, I'm curious to



MARCO SIMONE  
ROME, ITALY

see how this one is. I'm excited for it. I enjoy the silence sometimes.

**Q. It seems like this team, this era has a different vibe than 10 years ago, even Paris. Just a different group. Do you attribute that more to captains just saying, hey, we're going to let you do your thing, do your workouts, take your naps throughout the week, or is it more so everybody just being friends and getting along better?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Probably a bit of both. I think they've probably learned from past failures maybe. You've got to figure out what works. Different group of guys each time, so you've got to figure out what works for the majority or what works for most, and I think they've done a really good job this week, I think, of letting us be us and do what makes us play well.

I think from when I was on the team in '16, it was very structured of there's a lot more things we had to do off the golf course, but they've definitely toned it back a little bit to let us -- it's honestly probably one of the most tiring weeks with practice rounds, a lot of media, a lot of functions, different things like that. It can be late nights, early mornings, especially if you're going to go play 36-36 or whatever the case may be.

Even when you've got the afternoon off or the morning off, to me I like going to watch some of the guys, so I'll go watch them for nine holes. You end up walking a whole lot more than what you normally would, so just trying to rest as much as you can.

**Q. Is the group also closer knit than 2016? I remember after Whistling Straits you said it was a lot more fun than in years past. Is that still the case?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think so. Like I said, we've been -- I'm trying to think, everybody has been pretty close since they've been '15, knowing about each other. There's probably -- who's the youngest guy on the team? Maybe Wyndham, I guess, and I think maybe the oldest might be Brian. What's that, eight years?

So everybody is -- you grew up playing junior golf with at



least six to eight guys on the team, so traveling -- junior golf is the same as any Tour. You're traveling the world playing with them, college golf and this and that. You're always around each other hanging out.

I think it's definitely, like I said, a different atmosphere than in years past. Everybody has got a lot more in common, too, being in pretty much the same age group.

**Q. Brooks, where is your energy level at right now? You just played a tournament, got a newborn at home. What's your secret to making sure that you're recharged 100 percent? Do you do anything special that's different than other guys besides sleep, obviously?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, just normal stuff. It's a workweek, so everything stays the same for me. Nothing changes, whether it's a major, whether it's a regular event or whether Ryder Cup. Everything is still the same. Routine is still the same. I'm ready to go. It's a big event, so I'll be there.

**Q. Caddies obviously have a big role this week. Can you say how important Ricky Elliott is to your team and how important that relationship has been to what you've achieved in the game to date.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think we've been so successful because I don't understand him half the time. That's probably why we work so well together.

He's a great dude. He was a groomsman in my wedding. He's one of my best friends. We hang out on the golf course, off the golf course. He'll sometimes even pop down to him or I'll pop up to him in Orlando and just kind of spend a weekend up there hanging with him. It doesn't always need to be golf. We're very close, and I think that's translated to success on the golf course.

I think the ideal caddie is just knowing what your player is going to do before they even do it. He can sense if I'm tense, if I'm a little too relaxed, if I'm pissed off, if I'm kind of lackadaisical. He can sense that and kind of get the ball rolling and snap me back into it.

**Q. Regarding Brian Harman, I think you're viewed as one of the more mentally tough players out here, and he obviously went through a lot of BS at Liverpool to win that Open Championship this summer. What's your take on him and how -- he's been overlooked a lot, and he's got a chip on his shoulder a little bit because of that, and he expressed that after The Open Championship.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I love it. I love guys with a chip on their shoulder. I love guys that are very gritty, gritty players. That's something when I first came out, that was who I kind of emulated. I thought to me growing up, it was Dustin and then G-Mac, I thought they were both -- well, G-Mac was just especially gritty. I don't want to say -- he's got to work a little bit harder than everybody else and always finds a way to get it done, and I think Brian is quite similar. I think you can compare those games a little bit.

I just love that. Never gives up. Always battling to the end and ready to prove people wrong.

**Q. That seems like a huge benefit in this forum; is it not?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I would say so. I guess you could say you know people are going to be cheering against you, and I'm sure Brian is ready to hear the silence or not have the crowd cheer. I think that's an added benefit for him, and even when they are cheering, he wants to make them quiet. It's a little added bonus, and always, like you said, that chip on your shoulder.

**Q. One quick question about Sam's hair and the hair tattoo and stuff which is getting a lot of attention?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, Sam has got a nice Kentucky waterfall going. It's pretty solid, although the USA that's inscribed in the side of his head, I don't know if he was doing that looking in a mirror because it's not -- USA doesn't look the best, but it makes it even better, I think. It definitely classes it up a little bit.

**Q. Brooks, when you decided to join LIV last year, was the Ryder Cup even on your radar, and was there a point between then and now that it became in your mind a possibility?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I knew it would be tougher, but I think after Augusta I kind of had my eyes on it. I realised, I think, after Augusta I went to maybe 20th, somewhere around there on the points list, and then from there it was just motivation to get on the team.

**Q. What about (indiscernible), like last June when you joined?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I had a lot of other things going on in my mind. I don't think Ryder Cup was one of them at that particular moment, but I think the closer this got, the more it was definitely in the front of my mind.

**Q. If the Ryder Cup came down to one match on the course to decide it, I suspect if you ask all 24 guys**

**here if they want the ball, they'd say yes. How many of them do you think really mean it?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Very few. False confidence, I think.

I think other than the Ryder Cup, I think the most pressure you can feel is in a major. I don't know what -- yeah, guys should believe in themselves, but everybody else has got to be thinking that they don't. That's why I think that way. You've got to think you're the best player on the golf course, best player on the team, best player in that current time, and if you don't, then there's something wrong with you.

You've always got to believe you're the best and want to be the best and have that drive, and that's what's going to put you over the edge.

I think a lot of guys have it, but I don't know how many guys would want an eight-footer with this on the line.

**Q. What is the biggest challenge being in this profession and being a new father?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I haven't experienced it fully yet. Missing certain milestones. But everybody has got to deal with that. Anybody working 9:00 to 5:00 still has things they're going to miss when they're away from their kid, first steps, first time saying a word, whatever the case might be.

I'm lucky enough I go away for a week or two, maybe three weeks, and then I might be back for a month.

It all evens out in the scheme of things, but it would be nice just to be home with them; but at the same time, I want to be here, and I'm excited for this week, and I'm enjoy it next week when I'm home.

**Q. Do you think playing the team format in LIV can make you a better Ryder Cup player or teammate in any way, and you playing here this week, do you feel like you're representing LIV Golf as well as the USA?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I feel like I'm representing the USA. That's what I've got on the front of my hat this week, so that's what I'm representing. It's not a group of individuals in that locker room. We're just all one team, and that's the way we think. That's what I believe, and I'm pretty sure everybody else there thinks that.

What was the other question?

**Q. Do you think LIV Golf can make you a better Ryder Cup player?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, you're just going to play a round of golf and then the team scores add up at the end. I don't see how that has really any translation to this format. Yeah, you're in a group setting or like a team setting, but other than that, I don't see how it's -- we're not playing alternate shot or best ball I think until Miami in three weeks, and that's just a match play. You can only take care of yourself, so I guess it would be like a Sunday out here.

**Q. Going back to one of the questions there about wanting the ball on Sunday, I'm assuming you count yourself as one of the few who would actually want that. Are you the kind of guy who visualises who you'd actually like to match up against? Do you want to kind of get that statement win against a Rory McIlroy or a Jon Rahm early in the order?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't know if it would be like early in the order, late in the order. It's tough, right? The points system can go so many different ways.

We have no idea where we're going to be on Sunday, what order, or at least I don't. I don't think any of the guys have that down yet.

But I mean, you want to play a good player, and you want to -- some guys want to play certain people. Yeah, I'd love to play Jon, Rory, Vik. I'll play anybody.

**Q. In terms of the LIV side of it, clearly you're conspicuous here as the only LIV Golfer --**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I didn't notice.

**Q. In terms of the selection policies, Zach has repeatedly said that all he did was look at the rankings. Clearly that doesn't favour the LIV side for the obvious reasons, but do you feel like the LIV guys got a fair crack of the whip at selection?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't make the decisions. It doesn't -- everybody had an opportunity to get there. I mean, I had the same opportunity as every other LIV player, and I'm here.

Play better. That's always the answer.

**Q. You seem like the type of person that would just say, hey, the camaraderie is what it is, let's go put the ball in the hole, that's what counts, but it also seems like the camaraderie matters to you. Why does it matter? How can that help a team, and specifically why does it matter to you?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: It matters to me because I think it's a lot easier when you know that everyone has got your back. Like you're playing for more than just yourself when we're teeing it up this week. When guys are out there, it's a lot -- it's always fun looking up -- I'm just throwing names, like I'm playing my match, and I see Xander following or whatever, it makes -- you just fight a little bit harder. It's a little bit more fun, and you're just trying to show off for those guys, too. I think that's some of the fun.

But even the stuff that goes on at night, hanging out with everybody, getting everybody to have different conversations. If you're on Tour, you might see these guys a lot -- I don't get to see them as much anymore, so it's kind of a little bit more special to me.

Then the fact of just trying to catch up on life because, yeah, you can only talk so much over the phone or text or whatever you're doing with these guys. But at the same time, there's a lot of events that go on just in everyday life and knowing more about guys you don't know much about, and I think it makes the week a lot easier and kind of takes the -- I don't know if I'd call it pressure or stress or all the other stuff that goes on in the week, just helps ease it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports