

U.S. Open Championship 2022

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

Collin Morikawa

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the interview area. We are joined by world No. 7 Collin Morikawa. Collin, I assume you've had a chance to see the course. Talk a little bit about first impressions.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I love it. I think it's a really good golf course. I think tee to green, some of the greens are pretty sloped, so you have to put yourself in the right positions. It's a U.S. Open, so you've got to have all aspects of your game ready to play some good golf.

Overall I think it's a great golf course. It tests off the tee. It's fair, though. It's not overly difficult, but it still is -- you still have to hit good shots, and the approach shots when you are in the fairway, you can kind of get aggressive to some, and others you put them in the middle of the greens, you might have a 30-footer with how small the greens are this week.

Overall, I've enjoyed this course probably more than a couple of other majors I've played, and I look forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about where your game is right now and your preparation heading into this major.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: As of two weeks ago, probably pretty bad. This entire year has been weird. I've been known for my irons and known to hit cuts. That shot just hasn't been there.

I went to the range probably more than I have over a long period of time. This past week has been a real good grind and a real good just kind of grit to try and figure it out.

This week we're here to just play golf, learn how to make some birdies, and hopefully finish on top.

Q. In 2017 you won the Northeast Amateur. Can you just reflect on that, but also how your preparation has evolved since that time.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think it was kind of cool because I played with two ams today. I played with

Michael Thorbjornsen and Nick Dunlap. They were asking questions about what do I need to do to get here and what do I need to do to play well as a pro.

It was cool to kind of go back to how I prepped in college, how I prepped as a junior.

I think the biggest thing is just learning your routines and coming to these places and figuring out the ropes. It can be overwhelming as an amateur. I remember my first U.S. Open at Pebble three years ago, and it's definitely overwhelming.

You have to learn how to just stay in your own lane and figure out by Thursday how do you play golf.

Q. How important was that Northeast Amateur win for you?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It was huge. It was one of the bigger amateur events throughout the summer. It was one that I obviously wanted to win. To get that, I think I lost in a playoff at Sunnehanna the week before. It started a good stretch of golf for that summer.

Q. A lot of golfers talk about needing to be mentally tough during weeks like this. I'm just curious how you would define what a mentally tough golfer is.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Acceptance. I think we are the best players in the world, and we set ourselves to high standards. Sometimes when you don't perform to the way you want to, you can get upset. It can be frustrating. That's how it's been recently.

You just have to accept that you're going to hit bad shots. It's just how do you go through the process and how do you make sure you're doing the right things leading up to the ball, walking into the shot.

There are so many little things that aren't said or heard or no one else would know other than yourself, but that's the thing. It's the small things that really make a difference.

You always hear that, but that's what really happens, and

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that's what it takes to win majors.

Q. Collin, the LIV question --

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Here we go.

Q. -- or a LIV question. Yeah, here we go. I'm sure that you have huge respect for Phil as a player. Have you lost a little bit of respect for him because of what he is doing with LIV and all that sort of stuff?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, not at all. Look, everyone has their own position to choose what they want. You've heard that from multiple guys out here.

But it doesn't change who I view Phil as, right? This is someone -- obviously I watched Tiger growing up, and Phil was the guy that was right there. He was still an idol for many, many kids my age, right? He is going to continue to be that way.

Look, just how we talked about a year ago about people's mental state and not feeling well or not feeling happy. We don't know what's going on behind the scenes of people's lives, right? You guys see us out here, and you guys can make assumptions about what we do, but in reality you don't know what's going on behind curtains, and that's for us to respect the lines of what they want to share and what they don't want to share.

I think these guys have made their decisions. I mean, it is upsetting because -- I mean, look, I've been out here for three years, and I never would have imagined this is what we would have to deal with three years in as being a professional.

All I dreamt about was playing on the PGA TOUR, making putts to win tournaments, winning majors, and for me it's just how do I get back to focusing on that. This has been such a big distraction. This has been such a talk where it's enjoyable to talk about it because we all like gossip, right? We all like the drama.

At the end of the day, that's what it is. We're all trying to assume or make assumptions or make guesses about what this or that or who is going or what's going to happen next. We know just as much as you. We really do.

I really don't know what's going on behind the scenes, but going back to your question as it relates to Phil, I haven't lost respect because he has done amazing things for this game.

Q. You do know roughly what's going on. I mean, you've read the papers. You're an intelligent guy.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: But you guys are writing the papers, right?

Q. Well, yeah.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: That's the thing. One of my best friends said -- you know, he just texted me about this tweet from a random account saying, hey, there's these rumors. No, it's crazy to see and hear all these rumors because that's what they are, right? I can read all these things, but everyone tells their kids don't believe what's on the internet. That's what we're doing. That's exactly what we're doing right now.

I understand it's your guys' job to get all the details, but at the end of the day I think we're asking the wrong people.

Q. LIV is not a fantasy; we're not making it up that --

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Right, but what -- but what answers would you want out of me? I can't tell you anything about it either.

Q. I was going to ask you, you haven't been one of these guys who has been involved in a lot of these rumors. Is it still a distraction for you?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I think it is. I mean, I know when the tournament happened for LIV, and I wake up Thursday morning, and I'm interested to see what's going to go on.

Yeah, it is a distraction, and I think I read something or I saw what Brooks said earlier today. I think he is on to something.

We're here at major championship, and we're here to win the U.S. Open, and we're here to play and beat everyone else in this field, in this great field. That's what it's about.

I think when you wake up and I'm texting my agent or I'm texting my friend about, hey, did you hear about this or I'm getting news about this, it's fun, it's exciting because it is gossip. Who doesn't like gossip, right? But it also becomes a distraction, and you don't want to be focused on this or that. You want to be focused on playing golf.

I would say over the past six months it has been -- I'm not going to blame it on any part of my golf game. Put that aside. But it is an extra distraction on thinking about this, thinking about that and worrying about who is going to ask what.

Q. Another hard-hitting question about the championship then. With D.J. and Brooks we got a lot



of wedding talk. It's been quiet. It's been quiet. Do you know when you're getting married? What's the update on that plan?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, no, I definitely know when we're getting married, but I'm not going to share it. We like to keep things private. I think that's who we are.

I'm sure people will find out about it, but in no way is our wedding going to be as big as theirs. I think theirs were pretty impressive. Maybe Kat wants it like that. I don't know. I don't know yet.

Q. Collin, you've touched a little bit about playing with Mike today. I know he is a Stanford guy, so don't hold that against him. What do you think of his game?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't hold anything against other guys other than Tiger. His game is really solid. I mean, I've watched him play a couple of times on TV. You see him, and, obviously, he is a name that stands out with his résumé, but it's just growth.

I think there are so many young kids that we see that can come out here and play well, but it's the small little things, right? He was asking me, you know, what are the small little things? Sometimes it comes back to that mentality of how you come out here when you turn pro.

So, look, he is a great player. He has a great future ahead of him if he still wants to keep doing it, and he puts everything to it, which it seems like he does. But it was just a lot of fun to see him and Nick and just kind of go back to how it was three, four years ago trying to just take everything in.

It's a lot to take this in at a major, your first or second major, when you are an amateur.

Q. Justin in here yesterday was telling us about actually losing sleep about the big picture of this. Not the gossip, but the big picture. As an honors graduate of the nation's eighth ranked business school, do you have any fears about the future of the PGA TOUR?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, wow. I mean, you really set me up that I have to give a good answer now.

It's so tough because Justin is right. We don't want to be worrying about this a year or two years down the road. Some guys that have resigned, I think, that have joined LIV have fully grasped the idea that they're okay without playing, and they're at peace. Everyone else isn't at peace.

Some guys want to come back. Some guys maybe want to join. We don't -- we don't want to go, and we want it to end. There are so many things up in the air that you're not really at peace because you don't know what the world is going to bring you the next day.

I guess that's life, right? We really don't know what's going to happen, and you're going to wake up hopefully every day very happy and ready to enjoy a new day, but with all this going on, I think at the end of the day I have to realize and bring my perspective back on what I want to do, and that's win golf tournaments, win majors, and that's why we're here. Play against the best in the world and win major championships.

Even though it has been a slight distraction, I think what I've heard from other guys' press conferences is that it hasn't only been me. I think there's a lot of guys and it's a lot of talk, and who knew we loved all this drama?

Q. Collin, this championship, what is your -- if you don't mind taking us through your history qualifying-wise. I know you became exempt once you were a Walker Cup player from qualifying, and you qualified. But what's your history? What was your -- and then now you have two major championships. Where does this one fall in terms of importance both before winning those and now for you?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, well, I suck at qualifying. I really do. U.S. Juniors, never made a U.S. Junior. U.S. Am, I might have qualified once into a U.S. Am, and then I was exempt from my world rankings, so really bad at that.

Then the U.S. Open I might have gone three times until I turned pro, and I decided I hate California. No, I'm kidding. I love California. I just never played well in those events and decided to go to the Ohio one three years ago. Made that. The rest is history.

The U.S. Open has always been important. Look, it's an Open. It's a major championship. It provides a different sense of a field, right? Guys can qualify, and that's why it was always exciting. Even as a 13-year-old you're, like, man, maybe I can go play on the U.S. Open. All it takes is a few good rounds.

I think that's what's really cool. I think it's always been up there. I want to win all four, so for me it's not like I put one in front of the other. Now that I've won the PGA, I've won the Open, yeah, maybe I would like to win this one maybe a little bit more than the others, or the other two that I've won. But majors are awesome. You only get four a year, who's ready to show up, and that's what makes them so great.

Q. Is this the best suited for your game?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I really don't know. I've always thought of U.S. Opens as very difficult, hard, long. I think if you look at the -- I saw something if you look at the past few champions or handful of champions, they're all guys that hit it pretty long, but I think last year at Torrey really gave me the confidence that I can play well at a U.S. Open.

Thankfully now I've been able to play at every major and have had decent success and been able to post a low number, and I think that is huge for my confidence. Winged Foot, I missed the cut, didn't play well. Pebble I was just grinding. That was my first -- or my second event as a pro.

When it comes down to it, I think last year was very, very beneficial for the future of my U.S. Opens, not thinking I have to hit it far just to win. I think now it just gave me the confidence that I can come out here and win.

Q. You've had such a smooth, steady ascent in your pro career. How are you handling this rare blip in performance?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I think just it's taught me a lot about what kind of player I am, right? I want to be able to just play golf. I think the best players out here, it doesn't matter if it's good or bad. They're able to put the ball in the hole, and I've been so worried about trying to hit this cut. Like, almost forcing a cut. Why not just play my miss or why not play my shot shape? I think that's what Rory, Tiger, all the greats before us, they just worked with what they got, and normally it is a cut, and normally when I'm playing worse, it's even more of a cut.

But it just hasn't been that, and it's almost had a little draw shape to it. This week maybe we'll see a couple more draws or two-yard draws. That's what I call a draw. Just play golf.

I think it's been frustrating because all the prep has felt really good this year. The results just haven't been there, but hopefully we can put it together for four good rounds and finish up this year on a high note.

Q. What's different? Why is it happening?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Why is the cut not happening? Just face control. Spin control with the irons. Face, not being able to keep it as open. Couldn't tell you why.

I've gone through every video on my phone of my swing.

I've gone through nearly every swing thought I can think of since college, and we just haven't hit the jackpot yet.

We'll get it back. I'm not saying I'm going to hit draws for the rest of my life. I'm sure cuts will come back in the next month or so, but it's a weird little thing in golf. It is what it is.

Q. I know you pride yourself on consistency. I'm wondering how has your attitude been on the golf course and off the golf course when you are playing bad. Does it affect your mood?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's frustrating. There's been a couple of rounds over the past couple of months that I've kind of just shut off J.J. and just hit my shot, do everything in my head. That's not me. I think I'm normally a pretty happy golfer. I like to smile out there.

Yeah, it definitely affects your mood, and it is frustrating because I do want to be consistent. It's not what I'm thinking about. I think it just goes back to I felt like my prep was good, and it just didn't turn out that way. Sometimes when you think you're going to do everything right, it just doesn't happen. That's life. That's life, again. It's a learning experience, but I think where my game is at and where my head is at right now, I'm just ready to come out here and try to win again. I focus every week, and how do I figure out how to play four good rounds is really more important than trying to hit my perfect little five-yard cut.

THE MODERATOR: Collin, thanks for your time. Good luck this week.

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