

The 149th Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 13 July 2021

Brooks Koepka



STUART MOFFATT: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm delighted to say that we're joined by the four-time major champion Brooks Koepka. Welcome to Royal St. George's. You've performed really well this season, two strong finishes in the last two majors. How confident are you of contending this week for The Open title?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I feel good. Coming off a couple good finishes. Felt like I was playing well. I'm pretty excited for this week. It's a major, so I'll be up for it, and excited to play this week.

Q. You said on several occasions that you find it so much easier to get up for the majors. I just wonder when that starts to kick in. Is it when you set foot on property a few days before or when you start making plans?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I don't make plans, but it's kind of more when I show up. I don't know, it's a different feeling. It's just more focused, more locked in on what I need to do, no distractions. I don't know, I just simplify everything, and it becomes a lot easier.

Q. How much do you enjoy coming to the UK? I appreciate it's a very different year with COVID, but tell me about that and about the challenges of coming and playing links golf and taking part in an Open.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, I've always enjoyed coming over here. I came over here when I was a little kid. Actually here, watched Ben win. Me and my brother and my mom came. I must have been like 10 years old or something.

Yeah, I've always enjoyed playing links golf. I think it takes a lot of creativity and imagination. In the States a lot of times you just throw it up high in the air and the ball is going to stop, where you've really got to pay attention where the ball is going to bounce into the green. You might have 50 yards but you've got about six clubs you could play.

I think that's fun. It brings out the creative side. It's fun. I love it. I love it over here.

Q. I can't use in the circumstances the word Pete Cowan used to describe what you said about not getting the job

done at the U.S. PGA; you were rather annoyed shall we say. How would you sum up your feelings about not getting over the line in the last two majors?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, disappointing. PGA I started off with a double. Made a mental mistake there, so that drives me nuts. I don't mind making mistakes, making a bad swing, but when you make a mental mistake -- I kind of pride myself on not making a mental mistake during a major, and that was unfortunate.

At the end of the day, I just didn't play good enough. I didn't putt anywhere remotely good enough to win.

I didn't deserve it, but still lost, so doesn't matter.

Q. What do you think of the golf course? How does it compare to some of the other Open venues? And what do you think is its biggest challenge?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I only played the front nine. I don't know, it's not my favourite venue that we've played. I think Portrush and St. Andrews are definitely the favourites.

I haven't seen all 18. I'll see the back nine today. But a couple -- quite a few blind tee shots, kind of hitting to nothing. Fairways are quite undulating. I don't know, it's not my favourite of the rotation, put it that way.

Q. How would you describe your performances so far in the Open, and do you feel the best is still to come for you in this event?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think I probably haven't played my best over here. I don't know, I think over the last couple years -- I don't want to say it's been a distraction, but I've won the PGA or the U.S. Open before, and I've enjoyed those weeks after a little too much.

I came over -- Sunday was the first time I touched a club since Travelers. Maybe I always don't have the best of prep coming into this. But I feel good. I feel my game feels solid. I like the way I'm hitting it right now, and definitely more comfortable than I've been in years past coming over.

Q. In this country we've been quite royally entertained



recently by the back-and-forth between you and Bryson. Is there any kind of pantomime element to that, or is it the fact you just genuinely don't care for each other?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, there's a story behind it, but I've already said the story. Like I said, we had a conversation at Liberty, and he didn't hold up his end of the bargain and I didn't like that, so I'll take my shots.

Q. When you say it's not your favourite venue and you explained why, how does that affect your confidence or your attitude towards going out there and trying to win the Claret Jug?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it doesn't matter. I've won on golf courses that I'm not a big fan of before. It has nothing to do with it. Still got to get up and go hit the shot and do what I'm supposed to do, so that doesn't bug me.

I don't care whether I like the place, don't like it. You've still got to play good and go hit the shots.

Like I said, playing St. Andrews is probably my favourite place in the entire world to play. Portrush two years ago was -- I don't know, I love that place. I thought that was just such a good Open. A fun golf course to play. Really enjoyed that.

This one, it's just not as exciting. I don't know why. Whether it be a couple shots to nothing, a couple blind -- I don't want to say -- a couple blind tee shots or shots in where you can't really see much. I'm not too big of a fan of that.

Q. Is there a point considering that the Ryder Cup is coming up later this year that you have to start getting along with Bryson somehow if you're going to be in the same team in September?

BROOKS KOEPKA: You realise it's only a week, right?

Q. But you are on the same team.

BROOKS KOEPKA: It's only a week. I mean, look, I can put it aside for business. If we're going to be on the same team, I can deal with anybody in the world for a week.

I'm not playing with him. I'm pretty sure we're not going to be paired together; put it that way. I think it's kind of obvious.

It doesn't matter. I don't think they're -- we're not going to be high fiving and having late-night conversations. I do my thing, he does his thing. Yeah, we're on the same team, but it's not an issue at all. I don't view it as an issue. I don't think he does.

Like I said, I can put anything aside for a team, business, whatever, just to get the job done. No problem with that.

Q. Last month I think you quite rightly said that your rivalry with Bryson is good for the game. Do you think it would be good for the game if you two were playing in the final group on Sunday, and is that something you relish?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I would enjoy it. I would enjoy it. I'll be close to the final group come Sunday. I always feel like I play well in the big events, the majors. I think it would be a lot more people tuning in, with everything that's gone on over the last two years, something like that, three years.

So yeah, I think there would be a lot of people tuning in.

Q. Your experience as a four-time major winner, I think you're the only one who's won multiple majors in the last five years, will that be crucial going into that final day do you feel?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Maybe a little bit, not much. At the end of the day it just comes down to how well you're playing. Are you going to make the putts, are you going to hit the right shots at the right time, avoid bunkers out here, keep it out of the rough? The rough is pretty thick out here, probably the thickest I've seen of the venues over the last five years maybe, six years.

So you've got to be able to drive the ball straight. That's the big key out here.

Q. In addition to your wins, you've obviously contended in the Open and the Masters. Is the career grand slam something you've given a thought to going ahead?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, that's a goal of mine. We were actually just laughing about it. It would be pretty cool to go back-to-back in all of them. I think that would be pretty cool, so that's the goal.

Like I said, I just need to get the job done here. I love St. Andrews, so hopefully it'll happen.

Q. Did I hear you say you came over here in '03 when Ben won?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I did.

Q. That seems like an odd vacation for a Florida kid. What brought you here? What were the circumstances, and what are your strongest memories?

BROOKS KOEPKA: We got the opportunity -- I must have been -- I don't know what I was in, fifth, sixth grade, something like that -- just to come over here and play St. Andrews, Carnoustie, come watch I think the final round of The Open.

Me, my mom and my little brother, we came over I think a couple days early from when the whole thing was going to start, and just got to play links golf. I thought it was so much fun. That's kind of when I fell in love with it.

It was cool getting to -- I remember my brother at the time, he thought it was so cool. Tiger was playing on 13 and my brother had said something and Tiger said something back to him, and we thought it was the coolest thing at the time.

It's kind of funny, I think with about three holes left, I remember Thomas took a few out of the bunker, and I think Ben was maybe a group or two behind him, but I ended up falling asleep right in the little pavilion to the right of 18 and didn't even see the finish.

I remember getting yelled at by my mom, I didn't bring you over here to fall asleep kind of deal.

But it was fun. We enjoyed the whole trip, and it was a cool family trip.

Q. How big a help has Ricky been to you in relation to plotting your way around links courses?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, Rick is a help anywhere I go. I love that guy to death. I don't think I would have the success I've had without him. He's a crucial part of the way I game plan. He really understands how I play golf, how I go about things, and he keeps it light out there.

We have a good relationship off the course, good relationship on it. Keep things light. He knows I'm not going to take it too seriously. We've been together for eight years now almost, I think. He can pretty much tell exactly what I'm thinking, what I'm doing, and I think when you build that relationship so well on the course, off the course, good things are going to happen.

He's been a big part of those major wins every win I've had, and even coming over to links, just -- I mean, he's grown up on it, so I don't want to say I lean on him all the time, but he's definitely got a better understanding of how to play links golf than I do, so it's definitely been helpful to have him on the bag, and that relationship I'm super grateful for.

Q. Obviously the protocols here are a lot different than what we're seeing at home, especially in the last couple months. What kind of adjustments did you have to make? Have you found it to be difficult at all to kind of go back to what we were doing maybe a year ago? How are you sort of getting along with the whole thing?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, it's different. I don't have my full team here this week. I don't have my trainer, don't have

my chef. The cooking definitely is not as good with me, Rick, my physio, and my manager, Blake. We're trying our best, but it's not as good as she would make it.

It's not too big of a deal. Most of the times I don't do anything anyway. I come to the course, I go to the gym, and I don't leave the house.

It's not too big of an adjustment for me. Obviously just missing those two would be the big thing.

I've just got me, my physio, my caddie, and my agent, that's it, just the four of us. It's quite fun. We're all so close, and we enjoy -- we've always enjoyed this week. It's fun, the four of us getting to stay together because usually it doesn't happen.

Q. When you explained recently the start of this thing with Bryson, you said that he went back on his word, which is why you sort of -- did you explain what he did? How did he go back on his word? Apologies if you have said that and I missed it. What made you think he had gone back on his word?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it was at -- I said it a couple weeks ago. It was at Liberty. He didn't like that I had mentioned his name in slow play, so we had a conversation in the locker room, and then I guess we said something else in the press conference but didn't mention his name in it, and he walked up to Ricky, said something. It was, You tell your man if he's got something to say, say it to myself. I thought that was ironic because he went straight to Ricky. Ricky told me when I came out, hit a few putts, and then just walked right over to him, we had a conversation. We both agreed we'd leave each other out of it and wouldn't mention each other, just kind of let it die off, wouldn't mention each other's names, just go about it.

So then he decided I guess he was going on that little, whatever, playing video games online or whatever and brought my name up and said a few things, so now it's fair game.

STUART MOFFATT: Brooks, very best of luck this week.

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