

# The 149th Open

Press Conference

Friday, 16 July 2021

## Collin Morikawa



MIKE WOODCOCK: We'd like to welcome our clubhouse leader after an excellent round of 6-under par 64, Collin Morikawa. Fantastic round, well done. What was the secret for you today? What went so well?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Just sticking to what I've been doing. Yesterday I thought I played really well. Just wasn't hitting as many fairways. Was able to hit a few more fairways early on in the round today.

When I'm in the fairway with a 9-iron or 8-iron I feel very comfortable. Not necessarily going straight at the pins but being aggressive with the lines I need to take and slopes you need to play.

Yeah, sometimes you have those days where you're very fortunate to have good numbers, and today was one of those days.

**Q. This is the type of golf it usually takes a little bit of getting used to and guys sometimes take years to figure it out. What have you been able to do in two weeks, and how did you approach it coming in knowing that it's obviously a lot different than what we have at home?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I wouldn't be here through these two rounds if I hadn't played last week at Scottish. I've played in firm conditions. I can think of places I've played in tighter, drier conditions, but just having fescue fairways and the ball sitting a little different was huge to see last week.

I changed my irons, my 9 through 7-iron that I normally have blades in. I changed to the MCs strictly because I couldn't find the centre of the face. I was sitting these iron shots last week that I just normally don't and my swing felt good, but it was a huge learning opportunity.

Last week I wanted to win, but I came out of it learning a lot more, and thankfully it helped for this week.

**Q. You seem to have taken to majors very quickly; what's been the secret of your success so far, just the way you've handled these big events?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I look at them as obviously

they're starred. We have four of them a year, and you're trying to definitely win these four because they're that big.

Talking about last year's PGA, I had seen every single guy before, I had played with every single guy, and that doesn't make anything different. It's just the stage that we're on, more media, more spectators, more people around. But that's everything outside that I could control.

For me, it's just let's go figure out this golf course Monday through Wednesday like I have been the past couple years and figure it out on what I need to do to play well.

This style of golf is very different, but last week, like I said, helped tremendously.

**Q. What's the sense of The Open for you? How much did you watch it as a kid? What are your memories from watching it on TV?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, as a kid I was always a morning person, and I still am, so I woke up early. I didn't stay up through the night to watch it, but it's a major, and majors are important. Every single one is important to me.

For me, I just want to create my own memories. There's memories here and there, and I'm awful with golf history, unfortunately, like just remembering certain facts. I did not know 63 was the low out here. I just kind of came out and played golf.

For me, hopefully we can just create memories and create lifetime memories that hopefully Sunday comes along and we can talk again.

**Q. A lot of the guys are finding it a bit tricky to stay in their houses in the bubble this time. How do you deal with that? Do you have a PlayStation or something? What do you do with your downtime?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's definitely tough. Last week was a tremendous setup, a very lucky setup to be in the clubhouse and see other caddies, other players.

This week I'm staying in a hotel with my caddie and we're able to hang out. I just bought a laptop to play on my PS4 pretty



much for these two weeks and the weeks coming.

But yeah, it's tough. Try to FaceTime my girlfriend, try to talk to as many people as you can. But to be honest, when you compare it to a normal week, it's not that much different. For me I'm trying to stay focused. I'm staying within my own boundaries of what I like to do normally, especially on a major.

I'm very thankful to have my caddie here with me so I can talk to him, play cards with him, and just get away from the golf course, something that my girlfriend would normally just -- being there, would talk to, just separate yourself from the golf course.

I think that's huge, especially when you have a lot of time going into the third round or the fourth round.

**Q. It seems the irons aren't the only tweak that you made coming into this week. You're putting conventional from distance. What went into that decision, and is there a certain distance or is it a feel thing?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's a feel thing, but it's more I couldn't get the tempo on the saw grip. I think the saw grip is amazing for me. It's going to continue to be in my bag and as I continue to putt.

But from outside 25, 30 feet I just couldn't get that hit. I couldn't get that tempo that you see like a Brandt Snedeker put on his putts. That is something you need out here because the greens slower than what we're used to playing.

Just switching to conventional, I didn't have to change anything mentally. I just kind of went at it like I normally felt, and kind of matched the speeds. That's something that without my caddie, J.J., I wouldn't have figured out on my own.

**Q. Those are two pretty significant changes going into a major. Did that make you uneasy at all?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Not really. Irons I didn't have to worry about it because I knew once I found centre face, I just had to keep swinging it like I had been over the past month and a half, two months. So I feel very confident there.

Putting, yeah, had to take some getting used to, but trust me, the saw grip was not working from outside 30 feet. I would have left everything 10 feet short. I had to change.

Sometimes you have to change, and just like the saw grip, when I changed this, I had to. Mentally it felt that much better. Even though I didn't know how I was going to perform, you just have to go out and feel confident with what you're doing.

**Q. You've touched on this in answering questions, the**

**question about knowing 63 being a course record here. We were getting quite excited about the chance of 61 or 62. What were you thinking about that? And secondly, have you forgiven the European Tour for the prank video last week?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I had no clue what any course record was. I don't know any of those numbers. Like I said, I'm awful with that stuff knowing ahead. Now I do know.

But I was just trying to make a lot of birdies. The bogey on, what was it, 15 today was a little unfortunate. I hit a good second shot out of the rough, put myself in a good position, just didn't have enough speed.

But you know, it's going to happen. Guys are going to make birdies, you're going to make bogeys, and I'm very pleased with today. I just need to continue that into the next couple.

Yeah, I wasn't mad at the European Tour. They cleaned it out a little bit. Maybe I was mad 10 seconds after, but it was good fun. European Tour, they do a great job on social media just to involve players like that. I enjoy watching them. But I'm definitely on edge now when I do interviews. I'll be aware hopefully next time.

**Q. Collin, you won the PGA Championship in your first start, and that was with no fans. I'm just wondering how your first Open experience is compared to that with the crowds, and how you think that might play a factor on the weekend.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I've been biased because I've lived in the U.S. my entire life and I love the fans out here, but I think the fans out here could be even better. They cheer for you walking up to the green, walking up to the tee box, and they truly love golf. You can see it.

They really appreciate a good shot. They appreciate when you play smart and you're in the rough and you hit it out. They know what tough golf is, and this out here can play very tough when you're not in the fairway.

The fans out here have been amazing. Like I said from day one, they bring kind of that energy, that life into what we do, and it's really exciting to see them out here and grow as the weekend comes on.

**Q. Did you find the conditions between day one and day two in any way different? And with all the good scoring you had today, was it a little bit of a grind from 13, 14, 15? Would that give you some optimism for the weekend that if maybe you get into a little bit of trouble that you can mitigate and get out of sticky situations?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I would say condition-wise it was slightly more favourable today compared to yesterday afternoon. I think yesterday was gusting a lot more. Today had a very constant wind out of the north, kind of northeast later as the day went on.

But yeah, out here in links golf you're going to hit bad shots. You're going to hit bad approach shots, bad tee shots. To see the par save on 13 I'm really going to draw on that for the rest of the week because sometimes you have to just bite your tongue, play safe, and try and make par best you can. But sometimes bogey is going to be your friend.

When you put yourself out of position -- I put myself out of position quite a few times yesterday early on, and somehow I was able to get away with par. Those pars go a long way. You remember those a lot more sometimes than some birdies.

Yeah, it's going to be huge kind of momentum, and overall through two rounds, just stick to the same thing for the next couple days.

**Q. The last first-time winner of an Open was Ben Curtis in 2003. Was it love at first sight for you?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I saw a quote, I think Jordan touched on this yesterday, that he tries to show up to courses that he's never been to and find something that he loves. To be honest, I don't think I've ever showed up to a golf course, at least as a professional, and hated the golf course.

I always try and fit my game into how do I play my best golf, and I feel like I can win if I stick to what I've been doing, stick to my approach shots, stick to those 8-irons, 9-irons, 7-irons, because that's my bread and butter. That's what I love to do.

When I'm in the middle of the fairway, I feel like I can hit it just as close as some guys hit their wedges, especially when I'm on like the first two days.

Yeah, Royal St George's is beautiful. It's a great golf course. I think it fits into a lot of shots that I love to hit, so hopefully we can just keep hitting fairways and giving ourselves good numbers to attack some pins.

**Q. If I can just confirm, are you happy with your club manufacturer this week?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I love my clubs. I love every single one of them, thank you. That's TaylorMade, by the way. (Smiling.)

**Q. How many irons did you switch out? Are they the same brand or the same type you were using last week? Not brand, I didn't mean that. But the same type as last week, or**

**is it a different version of the TaylorMade?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, so normally I have a pitching wedge through 7-iron P 730s, the blades. So I switched out my 9 through 7, so only three clubs. Those are three crucial clubs that are some of my favourite clubs.

My 8-iron is my favourite club in the bag, and when I wasn't able to hit it last week well I knew I had to try something different. So I switched to the P7MCs, same irons I have in my 6- and 5-irons, so it flows through the set, and I just kept the P730 and the pitching wedge just felt like I could work it and figure out distances a little better with that wedge.

**Q. Can you just talk through that putt, the length of, and what you thought about that putt on the last, the one for 63? It looked like it hit the hole.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think it touched the left edge. My caddie and I were a little between just outside left, inside the hole. I thought it was going to go a little right. It just wobbled. I thought I hit a really good putt, and what I've learned over the past month is to just analyse putts that don't go in the hole, what did I do well, what did I not do well, learn and go on to the next.

I felt like I hit a good putt. Hopefully there's some footage that I can just look back and see if I hit a good putt or not, but from my perspective I felt like I hit a good putt. That's all I can do. It just seemed like it wobbled a little bit, and you live and you learn, you go on to the weekend, and hopefully a few more drop.

**Q. How long did you have it?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know, I think it was eight, ten feet.

**Q. Could you take us through 13. Obviously a big hole for you, and how you saw that.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, you know, the drive, I didn't think I was going to reach that left bunker, but in the back of my mind I was a little wary of possibly getting there because it wasn't blowing too hard. Blocked it out right, put it in that bunker, and just didn't want to get aggressive with it. I told myself earlier in the week that if I were in one of these bunkers, don't get stupid, just hit it out, play smart, and hopefully make par that way.

Took a 50-degree out, hit it great, and I think I had 115 in. Hit a pitching wedge into the wind, and the entire shot looked like it was right on a string. It looked straight at the hole.

And then the putt, it was a huge putt. It was one of those holes



that -- the 13th hole, you still have a lot of holes left, par-5 next. Making par was huge, building momentum hopefully towards the end of the round and finished even I think the rest of the holes, but that really saved the day.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Collin, thank you for joining us today. Best of luck for the weekend.

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