

The 149th Open

Press Conference

Sunday, 18 July 2021

Collin Morikawa



MIKE WOODCOCK: What's been the secret for you this week, and how does it feel to lift that famous old trophy?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: The secret? Well, I never do this, but I had a burger for four straight days, so my body is probably feeling it. I know my body's feeling it. I think I just enjoy these moments, and I talk about it so much that we love what we do.

And you have to embrace it. You have to be excited about these opportunities, and that's how I looked at it today, especially coming down the stretch, was I'm excited.

To have the Claret Jug right here in my possession for a year, I believe, I'm excited to have it.

Q. Collin, congratulations. When we spoke to you last night, we were talking about the possibility of a two-way shootout. You were saying it's not about head to head, it's not about making history. You've now made history as the first player to win two majors on their debut. So I just wondered if you could talk to us what it is like to make history, and also does it mean you'll only win a maximum of four majors?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I hope not. I think when you make history -- and I'm 24 years old -- it's hard to grasp, and it's hard to really take it in. A quick little side note, when Phil won the PGA -- I think he's 50 years old, right -- I didn't look at him as this old guy winning. I looked at him as competition that could still play really well. If he put everything together, and he did, he could play well and win.

At 24 years old, it's so hard to look back at the two short years that I have been a pro and see what I've done because I want more. I enjoy these moments and I love it, and I want to teach myself to embrace it a little more, maybe spend a few extra days and sit back and drink out of this.

But I want to -- yeah, I just want more. When you're in these moments and you truly love what you do, which I love playing golf and competing against these guys, these are the best moments ever because the nerves push you to just be a better person.

Q. What drink will be going in there?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. It's JJ's birthday. I'm going to let him decide.

Q. (Indiscernible).

COLLIN MORIKAWA: You know, I'll drink anything. We've been staying at the hotel right by the course. Every night I see all the caddies drink, and I'm like, Man, I really want to drink, but I hold back. I hold back on tournament week.

Q. You'll drink tonight, yeah?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: We'll see, yeah.

Q. Let loose tonight?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, we've got to make a flight, but we'll be fine.

Q. Collin, congratulations. Everyone remarks on how calm and collected and cool you look on the golf course at what was presumably quite an intense, high pressure situation. Are you actually that calm and collected, or are you jumping up and down inside? Or if you are so calm, how do you manage to feel that way?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I'm glad I look calm because the nerves are definitely up there. But you channel these nerves into excitement and energy, and that puts you away from like a fear factor into this is something I want.

So that's how I look at it, especially as those last nine holes were coming in. Jordan was making birdies; I think Rahm was pushing; Louis had a birdie on 11, an amazing birdie.

You can't worry about the score. I had to worry about every shot. Can I execute every shot to the best of my ability? Some we did, some we didn't, and then you move on. We can't control what's going to happen, what has happened.

So I really looked at that as just focus on every shot, how do I see what is the best shot possible, and try and do my best from there.

Q. Collin, well played. You've spoken frankly about the



importance of the Scottish Open, getting yourself in position. Last Sunday when you're 4- or 5-over after five or six holes, did you genuinely feel then that you could become Open champion a week later, and have do say no to the Scottish Open for the rest of your life?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, I'm not making any promises here, but, yeah, I still felt like, you know, if I made the right changes I could come out here and win. The Scottish Open last week at Renaissance was different from Royal St George's this week, but it still had that same turf, same fescue fairways.

I was just rolling the dice on hoping these irons would work. I didn't know if they were going to work. There was no real answer, and I still need to figure out the answer. Even though I struck it really well, but I need to know an answer why. I can't just put these irons in and hope they're going to work for the next 15 years.

I need answers why. Equipment changes, everything changes. I'm going to go into a deep dive and figure out why these MC irons, the TaylorMade P7MC irons worked, and just keep moving forward.

Yes, the Scottish was huge. Even after that start, I think I finished with two or three straight birdies, build some momentum.

Q. Even with that last week getting a little bit of experience, there is typically more of a learning curve with links golf. It's very rare that a guy wins this tournament his first try. How do you think you overcame that, and how much different of a style of golf is it from what you're used to?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, you try not to listen to everything when you have a rookie or it's your rookie year or it's your debut. And if you do, you do. Sometimes it gets to people.

But I truly believe that what I've done over the past two years, every single tournament -- maybe not the first two, but when I heard Brooks say at the Travelers Championship, I think, which was my third PGA TOUR event as a pro, he said he was there to win. When he first turned pro he was there to make cuts. Then he went to top 30s and top 20s and top 10s. From that day I just switched to, let's go out and win.

So by the time I was at the PGA last year I had already played in these events with all these guys, all the big name guys, and felt like a normal event. I come out this week not worried about playing against everyone else. I'm just trying to learn the golf course. Learning a links style golf course is tough because there's so many slopes, and I like to know everything. I like to know every little detail possible, but it's hard to do that out here.

So you have to be precise about everything, and that's how I looked at it as a challenge, and I look forward to it.

Q. Collin, congratulations. Can you speak about the 7th hole, just that whole swing there that seemed to swing everything, and did you feel that was the spot where you could kind of seize it and just push forward?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, that wasn't the spot where I could seize it because there was just so many holes out there where you put it in one bunker and you're going to be chipping out sideways and you're going to try to save par, hopefully bogey.

But the 7th hole was definitely the turning point. At that point I felt like I was hitting quality shots. I was hitting good shots to give myself chances for birdie. But to get a good break off the drive, I thought I pulled it left, hit it up short, was about to putt it, hit it to tap-in range. At that point, I kind of got the round started.

Saw what happened to Louis. I'm not sure what happened with his first bunker shot, if he had a tough lie or anything, but just to have that little switch of a two-shot swing kind of got that round started and into another gear in a sense.

Q. Obviously, an unbelievable performance. I'm just wondering where would you rank that putting display today?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Definitely one of the best, especially inside ten feet. I felt like it was as solid as it's going to get. I don't think I really missed many from that distance. Especially in a major. I think in a major on a Sunday in contention, I wasn't thinking about anything other than making a putt.

I'm going to tell myself probably tomorrow why can't I keep doing that all the time? But you know, I'm going to try to figure out what worked today and use that for the future because I know I can putt well. I know I can putt well in these pressure situations. I've just got to keep doing that.

Yeah, everything about my stats say I'm not a good putter statistically. I feel like I can get a lot better. But in these situations I feel like everything is thrown off the table. Forget about all your stats, who can perform well in these situations. That's why I think over the past few majors you've seen a lot of the same names up there, because they believe in their game, they know what they're doing when they practice, and they're able to bring it out in these big moments.

Thankfully, I was able to put it out there on Sunday today and close it out.

Q. Collin, playing with Louis both Saturday and Sunday, is there anything you noticed different in his demeanor and his game, in the way he played between yesterday and today?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, not at all. These are the first few times I played with Louis, and Louis is an outright amazing player and person. I hope I get more pairings with him because he's just a great guy to play with. Just everything about it, tempo. It's nice to see another guy just stripe it down the middle. I mean, when I watch him play and hit his drives, I'm like, Wow, I want to hit it like that.

Yeah, Louis is consistent, he really is. He's going to keep knocking at these doors, and I'm sure he's going to knock a few more down. He's just too good. He just had an unlucky break on 7. We were in the middle of the fairway and he makes bogey, and just had a couple other bogeys.

My caddie JJ on, I think -- was it 15? No, sorry, 13. I hit 5-wood off the tee. If he wasn't there I never would have hit 5-wood, and that was probably the best decision of my life to keep the round going and hit 5-wood. I think Louis was in the bunker and had to chip out sideways.

Louis is a great guy, an amazing person, and I was very lucky to have the pairing with him the final two days.

Q. Collin, many congratulations. I've seen some photos already of you gazing at that trophy quite lovingly, might I add. If you don't mind, what's the first name that's popped off that you've looked at and gone, oh, my goodness? Secondly for me, your earliest memories of this championship, where the love affair with it began for you.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: There's so many names. I'm not going to pinpoint one. But to be cemented on the Claret Jug with countless names, countless Hall of Famers, countless people that I've looked up to, not just from golf, but outside of golf, it's so special.

To be honest, I cannot tell you my earliest memory of the Open Championship. I didn't watch a ton of golf growing up. I probably watch more golf now than I do because I know a bunch of guys and I want to see them play well.

It's going to be up there now. We only get four majors a year, and every single one of them is very special. To finally get to play an Open Championship for the first time and win it, it's going to be that much more special.

I won the PGA, and then coming back as the defending champ you just have a sense of like you belong, this is going to be part of you for the rest of your life. The Open Championship is going to be part of my life the rest of my life no matter what happens.

To be a part of that history, it's awesome. To hear Champion Golfer of the Year, chills.

Q. Collin, congratulations. Funny enough, you mentioned the PGA there. That was done with a minimal number of people on site to witness an incredible win. Now you've got what is also kind of a record in golf, 32,000. Maybe if you could contrast that for me, but also whether that made it really easier or harder to close this one out, if you see what I mean.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I wouldn't say either. I hope the thing is off the table that I can play with fans and I can play well on a Sunday. But talk about the fans here. They are some of the best fans I've ever seen. They truly understand the game. They appreciate the game. We owe them a huge thank you because they cheer us up walking up the tees. It's awesome. It's a great energy. Sometimes they're not smiling and waving at everyone, but I embrace it. I take it in, and I hopefully everyone feels that.

When you hit a tough shot out of the rough and you hit it in the green they actually enjoy that. They enjoy tough shots. They appreciate, they applaud good shots. So to have fans, it's so good to see people back. I hope everyone stays safe. Obviously, that's the number one goal, but they bring so much energy. We love it. I think every single golfer this week appreciates all the fans here because it's just so much more fun to play in front of.

Q. Just quickly on that, did you have something to prove? Did you feel you had to prove something, that you could do this, because clearly you didn't seem like you changed between and the other?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, no, I had nothing to prove. It's just to you guys. I'm just answering it for you guys that we can play in front of fans. No, I had nothing to prove. I had nothing to prove to myself today.

I knew -- I've been able to do it. I've closed out tournaments before. Being in the final group, being in the final group on a major to tap in like that, I have not had that yet in a major. At WGC, but to have this many people here, these are the moments you remember on TV. People tapping in for par, birdieing, whatever it may be, to win a tournament, to win a major.

Those are the moments, the few seconds that you embrace so much. You look around, every seat is packed, everywhere is packed with people. That's just what's going through my head of just enjoying those moments.

Q. I know you measure things like goals differently than



maybe some others, but how do you put them on the shelf now? How do you sort of -- where to from here?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, this is about the same time that I roughly won the PGA going into last season. I think I went from the PGA straight into Playoffs the week after, two weeks after, and I've got a couple of events before the Playoffs.

I really need to sit down and talk to my coach on how to reassess the entire year. I'm not going to throw everything into the trash and just say, Okay, we're a completely different person, but goals have to change. I didn't do that last year, and I think that's why that first week back everything was kind of tail ending.

I don't want to do that this year. I want to finish on a strong note in the season, and I'm going to sit down, when things slow down hopefully, and try and embrace that and figure out what's next.

Q. Collin, you talked at the start of how much you love golf and you've always loved it. Has there ever been a day when you didn't love golf?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, there's always those days. I think golf is a love-hate relationship, but every time you're able to tee it up in a tournament, you just love it because every shot's a new challenge, every day is a new challenge, and it's all on your own.

There is a big team supporting me that I don't give credit to, or we don't give credit to enough -- my family, my girlfriend, agent, sponsors, TaylorMade, everyone down the line, my caddie, coach. They all deserve the credit.

But when it comes down to it, I'm the one hitting the shot, and every shot is just so unique. There's not one shot out there that was somewhat similar to any shot I've ever had in my life. Although sometimes they're kind of similar -- for example, that 16th hole at Harding Park. It's still a completely different shot. It's a completely different moment.

I think enjoying every moment you can, even though sometimes frustrating, you look at some of the best players, their demeanor is that calm, cool, relaxed, but they're so driven, right? The end goal is still there.

So we've had tough days. We've had good ones. You try and remember the good, forget the bad, and then move on.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Thanks again for your time and congratulations on a wonderful performance. Well done.

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