

# The 151st Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 18 July 2023

## Brooks Koepka



STUART MOFFATT: Good morning, everybody. Delighted to welcome the 2023 PGA champion Brooks Koepka to the interview room. Brooks, how are preparations going so far this week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it's been good. Got in Sunday night, so saw a bit of the golf course yesterday. First seven holes, and then kind of skipped over. Played I think 14, 17, 18. Got nine holes in.

Pretty much exactly how I remember it. It's a good golf course, fun. Links golf I love. Be a good test this week.

**Q. You saw the course once in 2014. How do you reflect on that experience, and how does Hoylake set up for you as a course fit?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Probably a little bit different golfer than I was in 2014. But I mean, the course sets up really well.

Links golf is all about avoiding bunkers and positioning yourself in the right spot and playing smart. Just comes down to making putts.

I think it's a good golf course. I don't think length is a huge advantage out here. It'll be interesting to see.

**Q. How is your game compared to where you were at the PGA and during that stretch? Is it the same, or have you lost anything or gained anything? How would you assess it?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, I feel like I'm playing just as good. Still feel pretty disciplined, focused. Game is there. I've been practising quite a bit. We'll see how the week goes.

It's a major, so probably should be up for it.

**Q. I didn't do the math correctly. Did you play 17 yesterday?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah.

**Q. New 17, can I just get your thoughts on that?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think it's an interesting hole. Depends on the wind. If you get a cross wind there, it could be

pretty interesting. I'm a big believer in the short par-3s, make it difficult, exactly like that. I'm not a huge fan of 260, 250. It kind of takes -- I don't want to say the excitement out of it, but it's kind of boring. You already know it's a 3-iron and everybody is hitting to the same spot, where I think all the best par-3s in the world that have ever been designed are 165 yards or shorter.

12th at Augusta, Sawgrass. I mean, Postage Stamp. There's a bunch of them, and you can walk away with 5 just as easy as you could it. I like it.

**Q. What did you hit there just out of curiosity?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think it was playing a little into. I think I hit 9-iron.

**Q. Obviously the big topic that is still dominating golf is the LIV and the divide in the sport. We know there's been the peace deal, there's been talks, but Rory McIlroy in particular still seems to be quite strident in his feelings towards it. Do you think some of the feelings have gone so deep that they'll never quite be healed between some of the players, or do you think maybe some of the players, with reference to Rory, maybe need to forget about it and move on?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: That's probably a question for them. Probably you should ask Rory that. I don't know. I can't speak for him.

I know me and Rory have had quite a few good talks over the last, I don't know, year, maybe couple months.

Yeah, everybody is entitled to their own opinion, how they feel about it.

To me, I don't have enough information on it to even know how to feel, what to think. That'll probably be coming in the next few months I'd say.

**Q. Do you think there could ever be a time where you could all be friends again?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I've always been friends with all those guys. Unless they're saying it behind my back. I don't know of anybody that's extremely mad at me. We've all been



friends. We still see each other.

I think everybody thinks there's this -- just because there's a divide with LIV and the PGA TOUR that the players are actually divided, and I don't think that's the case at all.

**Q. Obviously with everything that's transpired over the last year, what have you learnt about yourself?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: What have I learned? I'm going to be a dad, so that's probably a little different. I'd say definitely more off the golf course. Just getting ready to be a dad I think is the main thing.

**Q. How are you feeling about becoming a father?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it'll be fun. I'm excited for it. It's been an interesting few months just prepping for it all. Golf is probably going to take a backseat. My family will take priority.

Yeah, got to manage my time a little differently, which will be interesting. I'm excited for it.

**Q. What have you done to prep for it?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Jena and Kristin McDowell are doing all the prep right now, so I'm just enjoying working for a month straight. That's typical, right?

**Q. You played a practice round with Zach yesterday?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah.

**Q. How did that come about, and --**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Walked on the first tee right behind Scottie. He didn't have a tee time, neither did I and neither did Zach and neither did Cam. There was a good little wait, so we all played.

**Q. Ryder Cup discussions at all?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it was fun. We got to talk about it a little bit, just what's going on, I guess how the team is shaping up. It's kind of interesting.

**Q. As it relates to the majors and your formula for such great success, when did you figure it out, do you think, as you look back, and what did you learn?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Probably the U.S. Open '14. Kaymer won Pinehurst. I wasn't in contention -- I've said this, maybe at the PGA, I wasn't in contention because Martin was so far ahead of everybody, but there was still something to battle for, second place. Just the pride of it.

But just played very disciplined, conservatively aggressive, and just stick to the game plan no matter what the situation calls for, whatever situation you're in. Just be as disciplined as you can and know where to miss it. I think that's why I've had such success. It's just understanding the moment, the shot, where it needs to miss.

**Q. Brooks, in LA you kind of shared some thoughts on course design features that you're not keen for like blind tee shots. I'm curious if you have an opinion on internal out of bounds and maybe how it plays into a factor this week.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't know. We don't really play too many golf courses that have it. I think at the PGA they had it on 6. Couldn't go down 7. Obviously one here on 3 and I guess 18.

It's fine. Just don't hit it over there you won't have a problem, right?

**Q. You said "interesting" when talking about your discussions with Zach. Can you be a little more elaborative about that?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it was just hearing his perspective and all the stuff he's got to do. The PGA of America does a really good job in easing it for him, and just kind of talking about the preparation for it, what our team is going to do, where are we going to be, and just a little bit more about the shuffle of guys and the stuff they have kind of behind the scenes stats, stuff like that. It's quite interesting just hearing about it all.

I guess when you look at the standings, where guys are, versus I guess some events don't count at the end of last year and -- I think everybody knows. But if you just equate all that as equal, where everybody would stand.

**Q. Just on your game out here, what do you think is the best parts of your game that fit this golf course?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Hopefully all of it. I mean, I don't know. I'll let you know Sunday.

**Q. Within the mixture of that perspective, with the injury problems hopefully behind you now, as well, how much do you feel this is kind of the beginning of the back of what happened earlier this year, the ongoing kind of second stage of your career where you can really kick on and add multiple more majors and really build the rest of your career?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I don't know if I could really look at it as the second stage of my career; 33, probably right in the middle of my prime.



Yeah, it's interesting. I told my team even when I was hurt that I was going to give it at least five, seven years of just real hard work and see where everything panned out.

I think the injury and everything that went on, it was frustrating at times and wasn't fun to just wake up and have to grind, but I kind of enjoyed the work that's gone into all this and it's made it a lot sweeter.

I guess my perspective on how to go about it has definitely changed.

**Q. You said you don't necessarily know enough about the proposed agreement to say much about it. When something like that comes out, is that a situation where you try to find out as much as you can, or are you kind of waiting for things to play out and see where you stand?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Just let it all play out. I mean, I have no control over anything. Why am I going to worry about something I can't control?

Yeah, I hear the news. I see the news. There's a lot of -- I don't want to say the rumors. Maybe not everything is true, maybe this, maybe that. There's a lot of different scenarios, a lot of what-ifs. But it really doesn't matter until everything is definite.

**Q. Did you have any sort of emotional or -- what was your first reaction when you found out about it?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I figured it was going to happen. I just didn't think it was going to happen this soon.

I think it was just more surprising, the timing of it all.

**Q. You talked about being conservatively aggressive. Like what does that mean when you're out on the golf course, and when do you find your discipline or your game plan being tested?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Let's just take 3, for example. The wind is off the left and the pin is on the right. I'm going to make sure that I miss that left, considering there's internal OB on the right. Just picking a good target and sticking with it and being committed.

Listen, it might be 45, 60 feet left of the flag, where if you're just watching it might not be a great shot, or if you don't know much about the situation.

But to us or to me, it's a really good shot and right where it needs to be, something like that.

**Q. Your UK connections, what do you like best about coming here? I hear you're a big fan of brown sauce. Rickie is playing as a Manchester United fan, as well. Have you been to Old Trafford to see them play?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, actually I had Rory's tickets back in -- they're good seats. Back in maybe 2014, '15 went to Old Trafford. It was pretty cool. I think it was the week of the Ryder Cup maybe. I wasn't playing, clearly.

But yeah, way back in the day I used them. It was awesome, had a great time. And brown sauce is pretty good. Just had some.

**Q. How closely do you follow Manchester United? Are you in for buying them, as well?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I could use a little more. I think that's a bit out of my price range, but yeah.

**Q. In this proposed merger, one of the things that became clear was that Greg Norman is likely to be eased out. Do you have feelings of sympathy for that? I know you're going to say it's hypothetical, but how do you get on with him? What sort of a job do you think he's done? What did you think when you saw that his future, if this merger went ahead, would not be -- he wouldn't be involved?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Like I said, it's a bunch of what-ifs and scenarios and nothing is finalised. Until it's finalised -- you don't count the winner here on Saturday just because they're at the top of the leaderboard. You wait until Sunday to find that out. When all is said and done, we'll see what happens.

But I've gotten along great with Greg. Obviously had to have more communication with him probably over the last year than I've probably had in the last five years previous to that, but just we're down in the same area, so we always have communication. Pretty good friends with his son. We've been in touch for a while.

**Q. Do you think he's done a good job?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, I think he's done fine. It's all perspective, right?

**Q. Your perspective is very interesting.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, he's done fine. From everybody else, it's up to them. Everybody is allowed to interpret it different ways.

**Q. Are you a little bit scared about becoming a dad? It's quite a big responsibility. I know I was terrified. Secondly, just picking up on your earlier answer, would it be kind of**



**the ultimate sign of friendship, would you be brave enough to ask for Rory's tickets for Manchester United again with everything that's gone on? Do you think you'd have much of a chance?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I've hung out with Rory, for like I said, the last six, eight months. We still practice together. We've had multiple conversations. We've talked about a bunch of different things, life just off the golf course, and he's told me some stuff that's gone on with him that I really appreciate he's opened up. So I don't see why he wouldn't.

Like I said, we've always been friends.

But, yeah, becoming a new dad, yeah, there's probably bits of me that are really nervous. There's another human being that's going to rely completely on me and Jena. It's excitement, but yeah, a little bit nervous at the same time.

**Q. You mentioned taking a bit of time off and maybe golf taking a bit of a backseat when you do become a father. Do you think that would have been possible or viable or even conceivable before the injection that LIV Golf brought? Do you think that's kind of part of the attraction is that you will be able to take a bit more time and a bit more financial security, as well?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I just think it comes down to family being first for me. It's all what your priorities are. If your priorities aren't family, that's fine. That's cool. But that's where mine lies.

**Q. That decision that you made, maybe that was in the back of your head or the front of --**

BROOKS KOEPKA: My job has nothing to do with my family.

**Q. This is your ninth Open and you've had four top 10s in the last eight Opens. You said you love links golf. Have you managed to play much links golf leading up to this week, and what is it about your game that allows you to play well at links courses?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think what helps me the most is probably my creativity, seeing different shots. I enjoy hitting the -- I guess maybe like showing off a little bit of a stinger or whatever. Like as a little kid I remember the guys were over here practising at the British Open, so I was trying to hit Stingers at 10 years old even though it was not going to go anywhere. It's Florida, soaking wet, and it's going to fly 200 yards and plug.

Just trying to be like these guys. I always tried to hit those shots when I was younger.

Came over here with my mom and my brother when I was pretty young, played St Andrews, Carnoustie, and I think Kingsbarns. Honestly, we had I think North Berwick, too. We played up there. I just loved it. I thought it was fun. Like I said, the creativity. You can hit 10 different shots, you can hit lob wedge, you can hit it from 80 yards, you can bump-and-run it with some kind of 3-wood or hybrid, whatever you got, or 6-iron.

Like I just think that's -- it doesn't favour one player.

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