



Collin Morikawa

Press Conference
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THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody. Good afternoon on this auspicious day. We've got great weather today, and I'm really pleased to welcome Collin Morikawa to the interview room. Collin, two-time major champion, coming out this year as No. 1 strokes gained tee to green, so obviously playing very well. You finished in the top 10 the last three years. What do you attribute your success to?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Honestly, I think it's just getting comfortable. I tried to convince myself the first time I played in 2020 that you can come out here and essentially tackle this golf course, what it is, and I think I shouldn't have tried to do that.

I think the more reps you get in, the more you understand this golf course, how you play it and how you fit it into your game -- everyone always talks about this is a certain type of golfer's -- the way to play this golf course and attack it, but I've found a way, I think, in the past few years how to kind of dissect this golf course and really use my strengths, especially with irons and the undulating greens to take that to my advantage and hopefully give myself a lot of looks.

Q. I know you're not a huge golf history buff, but have you thought ever about the Career Grand Slam? You're halfway and obviously Rory is in here and gets asked about it, but is that on your radar?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think I've been in the lead at the Masters last year. A few years ago even at Brookline I was leading through 36. Yeah, it creeps in. If it doesn't creep in, then you really don't care. For me, you care so you want to know and you want to put yourself in these positions. It doesn't always work out.

But yeah, it's definitely something you want to try and accomplish. I do know fully how hard it is, but it's not like one of them I haven't played well. I've been close. It's just keep knocking at the door.

Q. Collin, sorry in advance for bringing up a little bit of a sore subject, but your comments at THE PLAYERS on you don't owe the media anything got a lot of attention, a lot of criticism that you seemed upset by. The conversations around that whole situation was, oh, professional golfers, in comparison to other athletes from other sports, are soft or sensitive when dealing with criticism. Do you think that's a fair or unfair assessment?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's an interesting way to put that question. I'll answer it in a few pieces. One, I was not upset by it. I think everyone took it in a wrong direction.

Look, I said it in my second media thing. I could have said it differently. But I stand by what I said. I was in the moment. We talk about giving people space to be who they are, and at that time, it was for me to be who I was, and I didn't want to be around anyone. I didn't even want to be around my wife. I said hi to her after, we hugged, and I just went straight to the locker room.

In that aspect, I'm not -- I think there needs to be a balance and an ebb and flow between everything. I do want to be here for you guys, but here's the thing: I've been in the top 5 in the world before, and people don't come up to me and ask me questions. If you guys -- you can't just ask me when I'm playing well. You guys should be asking the top 10

players every single week, every single day, and just document it. Then you get a sense of who we are and you get a flow of how that comes to be.

But if you're only asking me -- look, I've been in the top 5 for however long in my career, there's plenty of times where media doesn't ask me. There's a balance, right? If you guys don't want to ask me, it's not my job to go out and tell you my story. Sometimes it is, but you do that through social media, you do that through playing well, winning tournaments. But not everyone is like that.

That's what I don't get this whole -- I stand by what I said.

Q. Do you read comments on social media at all?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I mean, I browse. But I don't live and die by them.

Q. First of all, why aren't you a history buff?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. It's just not really my thing. I think some guys love it and I appreciate it, but it's just not -- I know where things stand and that. I just never got into it. I always kind of liked the present stuff and what's going on today.

Q. Do you know who won the '86 Masters?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No. I was looking at the board in the gym today. I was looking at the years when Jack won it, when he was spreading that out. I was really hoping -- I think he won in '72, '76, around there. I would have said that.

Q. '75, '86. Well done, Collin. Seriously, what I wanted to ask you is what's the recovery time like here when you walk out of here with a close call? How much time do you spend looking back at what you could have done better, and what's it like when you return?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Honestly, I think it's never-ending. On courses that we play every year, a lot of the places we play the same time, I've kind of been to all these golf courses. I don't think it ever stops, the recovery stuff. I think you look back and think, what could I have done different this year? What could I have done different in a year that you've played well or won or been in contention?

Because it just always brings up the memories of some good, some bad. Last year I think I was in a place where I didn't feel like I was in control of my game, and then you get to 9 and you just try and pull off a shot that, one, you should never hit it there, but just -- I didn't feel like I had full control.

So I look back at last year and a lot of it was how do I just make do with what I have. You can win tournaments like that, but if you're really trying to win the Masters, you want to be a little bit more in control of your golf game than me spending hours on the range trying to hopefully find something. It can click, but I'd rather be in the position where I have a little bit more control and you go out and if you execute the shots, then you give yourself a chance to win.

Q. Going off that, at Bay Hill, PLAYERS, you were incredibly bullish on where your swing was, the control you felt. Been a couple weeks since then. Do you feel like you've maintained that as we've reached the Masters?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, and it's sometimes tough because sometimes you find something that doesn't work, and it might work for two weeks or a week and then you kind of go off after that.

I feel like I've found just a lot -- a lot has to do with my setup, just basic things, just making sure that, one, I'm aligned properly. Even at PLAYERS I kind of got away from just aiming a little bit too far right with my driver and things kind of got crisscrossed up.

For a lot of the top players, it comes down to just basic stuff because our swings are in a good enough spot most of the time, and that's just the -- just hammering down on those things and trying to do that. But yeah, everything has felt

good over the past few weeks.

Q. Since the 2023 ZOZO, you've played as good of golf as one could play without winning a tournament. Should have won the TOUR Championship if not for starting strokes. Does that come with an added pressure, or is it more of, look, I'm due, I've just got to get the right set of breaks and eventually I'm going to win?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I said it even going up into ZOZO. At that time I had not won and my game was not feeling as good as it does now. For me, I know it's going to happen. It's not like I'm never going to -- well, (knocks on wood). This is wood, right?

I believe it's going to happen. And I don't want to just win once. You want to go on a run. You hear -- JT talked about it at the end of last year, early this year, you want to go on a type of run that Scottie has, and I believe that.

Whether it happens or not, so be it. But I fully believe that in myself that I can do that, it's just you've got to keep doing what I'm doing. I'm not searching for anything new. A couple putts drop, a couple shots hit a little bit closer. That's how you win golf tournaments.

Sometimes you blow away the field, and those are great, but it's the ones where you're in the grind that you just need essentially one shot on that Sunday to go your way, and that sometimes flips a switch. I think I've been a little bit too much in cruise control. Sometimes that's good. Sometimes that's bad.

I think you have to learn what type of player you are. I like when things are elevated a lot, just because it gets my focus in a lot more. Sometimes when it's just a little bit too mellow, I just sink in a little bit. That's on me.

Q. You were always pretty open there was kind of like a two-year stretch where you weren't fully confident in your swing, and now obviously you are in a such a good place. Is there anything you learned about how to handle right now from those years where it wasn't as confident?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, I think you can always -- you always have to be ready on Thursday. I always talk about that. I always say that. No matter how your prep is, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, you just have to be ready to play golf on Thursday.

I think I take a lot out of those last few years where things weren't good, but then you just play with what you have. I think we've played golf long enough where you can figure that out. It's just, okay, it doesn't have to be perfect. A lot of us are perfectionists. I am. But you have to learn how to get out there and just say, okay, I'm going to hit this shot and just make do.

Q. We've seen a lot of players play really good golf and then change a lot in their golf game, whether it's a swing coach -- I wanted to ask you because you had your swing coach and then you went to another swing coach and then went back. How do you balance that never-ending urge to get better with not changing what's already working?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's really tough. It's really, really tough because we're always searching for new answers, we're searching for a new way to hear it. But I can't always say, oh, go back to the old. I think a lot of us would be like, yeah, if I could pick this out of my 2019 game and pick this out of 2020 and do that from 2021, I'd be the best golfer in the world.

Well, it doesn't work like that. Life moves on. Your body moves on. You as a player move on. You keep playing more tournaments. You get a lot more mature that way. But there also comes a lot more scar tissue. And a lot of veterans talked about that when I came out. It's like you talk about that with any young player, they don't have scar tissue. Scar tissue might not be the right word, but you have more experience, and sometimes experience is good and sometimes it's bad.

When you're searching for these answers -- I don't think I'll ever find the right answer and how to be that because my body just keeps changing, every day you wake up. And that's why golf is so hard because you're hitting so many types of shots, and it's never in a vacuum, that you just don't know if it's actually what you're doing. It's all just kind of feels

and guesses.

It's a never-ending search. You're going to continue to do it because you want to get better, but what I realized through that little process was I could have all the answers, but once again, I've got to go play golf. Like playing golf is the most important part, and that creativity, I think a lot of people have lost or that's just not how they play golf.

Q. Paint me a picture if you would of the difference in how you felt coming here last year versus how you feel this year and why it's different.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I mean, I think last year, like I said, I just sat on the range. I was searching for hopefully a consistent ball flight to where if I aimed at the middle of the green, I wasn't going to miss it 10 times left, 20 times right, and just had no clue.

But it's the same as Hawai'i. Hawai'i at the beginning of the year I had a lot of good practice and a lot of good work that I did in the off-season, and I showed up. But I hadn't played a tournament for essentially two, two and a half months. It's similar in that way to where I've come to the realization no matter how good you feel, it does not mean you're going to play well. But you have to go out there and put what you have into a full game plan for Thursday through Sunday.

So when I am playing well and I am feeling good, I can kind of narrow in that game plan, and you can attack a few more pins, you can be a little bit more aggressive on certain shots that you have. You feel a little bit more free out there. It doesn't mean you're going to play good, but you have to execute the shots, but you feel like you can execute them.

Last year, there was a guess on whether I could execute them. I did, for 65 holes, roughly, but sometimes it catches up to you.

Q. How was it to have to call Rick and say, I want to get back together?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it was never an easy -- I left him for the first time, right, this was end of '23, right around the Ryder Cup. For me, started working with Blackburn, you go and win, you just think, here we go, right? Then early on in the year, not playing great, get through Bay Hill, get through PLAYERS, missed cut at Bay Hill in a short field. PLAYERS, I'm on sitting on the back of the range.

I think sometimes you think you need more answers, when you look back and you realize you just go back to the basics and you just start fresh. It's really hard to do that. It's really hard to take two steps back. I don't think a lot of guys could admit that they've taken two steps backwards.

We always talk about that. But to actually do it and say, okay, yes, I like where I'm at or I don't like where I'm at, but I'm really going to take two steps backwards, and that's what I had to do.

I had to start from the very basics of what we've done since I've been eight essentially, maybe not that young, but my golf game into college, and say, okay, what are the pieces we're going to -- not rebuild, but just fit back together and kind of piece together and layer one on top of another. The only way to do that is to essentially take two steps back.

Q. You haven't played in a field against Rahm and Joaco and probably a couple others since Paris. You get them this week. Does that matter to you at all?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I enjoy it. Look, I think everyone enjoys it. All those guys were amazing to me. They still are. We were very friendly out there.

Look, I think the golf world enjoys seeing everyone playing together. I don't think anyone would say no to that.

Yeah, it's amazing how much we take for granted in life, I think.

Q. What do you mean by that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, I mean, look, you look back at whenever LIV started and this whole debacle started, and back then when I first turned pro, no one really complained. You just -- we enjoyed it. But then this all happened, and you take things for granted. You get my point?

You look back and you're like, man, we had it pretty good. Everyone always talks about money, and I think the whole -- the money thing needs to get pushed aside. It's just being golfers, being professional golfers, playing. These weeks are special now. You don't take them lightly.

Q. Do you care one way or the other if they figure something out?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I think from my perspective it's what's best for the PGA TOUR. I haven't sat in those meetings, and I know guys have sat countless hours, and I thank them for that. That's up to the whole board and stuff. They'll figure something out, one way or another.

Q. Your sixth start here, experience is obviously at a premium, and you've played well here. When guys making their first start come to you for advice, what are the tips and tricks you give out about how to get around Augusta National?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't think anyone has come to me for advice.

Q. That's a shame.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I guess. I don't know.

Q. What would you give them?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I'm not going to say it here.

Q. You've had a lot of success here over the years. I'm curious about how has your strategy of how to -- how has your strategy in terms of attacking the golf course evolved over the last six years?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: You know, everyone always talked about you have to hit a draw, have to hit a draw, have to hit a draw. I hit one draw out here. It's a hook. It's on hole 10.

I've learned how to prep a little bit better kind of coming into this week knowing what you really need to be hitting well. You need to hit your irons really, really well. You need to have control of your irons.

But I've kind of worked in this straight ball, per se, even if it's cutting two yards. Essentially a straight ball that I can start straighter.

This year -- I played 13 holes today. I played a little loop out there. A few of the tee shots just look a little bit different because you don't have the trees -- like 2, not having the trees down the left side opens up the left. So you can play a few different tee shots out there now, just with what happened with the storms. But for the most part the straight ball for me is how I play this golf course.

Q. Have you gotten more or less aggressive over the last six years?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. I hate the word "aggressive" because we're never just saying, oh, eff it, I'm just going to go hit it 110 percent and I'm going to aim at every pin and -- aggressive I think is not the right word we use.

But it's just you're more strict with myself. When I'm saying, okay, this is the shot I'm going to hit, if you end up 20 feet, great. 20 feet sometimes is great out here, especially positioning where you are. Then there's other places, other holes where you can attack. So yeah.

Q. Following up on the storms and what you've seen of the golf course, what specific things have you noticed about what's different, and what might be affecting how you play and what might be kind of cosmetic?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, today was the first time I saw the course since last year, and it looked amazing. Honestly, even after the rain yesterday the fairways looked incredible. They're actually skidding out, running out a little bit. Greens are still on the soft side. When the greens are soft, it completely changes how you play the golf course because you're ripping back some wedges on some holes. I think with the trees, you just get a different view. So I played the back nine and I played 1, 2, 8 and 9. 2 is a good example, like 2 tee obviously you can't hit it left but now you can almost start it a little bit left and have it cut back if I wanted. I wouldn't have to play as straight of a ball, 9, same thing, you don't have the trees crowding you.

The way this golf course is set up, it normally forces you to hit a shot, most likely a tiny draw, tiny fade. You can't really work it as hard sometimes. But you lose a few trees, it kind of plays a little bit differently. Not a ton.

Q. Have you found a silver lining in not winning at Bay Hill?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I mean, look, like I said, there's -- I didn't feel like I played awful. I've given up -- you go to Hawai'i when I lost a round -- Jon played amazing golf just to even give himself a chance, but I essentially said, here you go, take it, and he took it.

Bay Hill was kind of -- look, Bay Hill is one of the toughest courses we play all year. Like hands down, it is a top 2 tough golf course. So it's not like I'm going out trying to shoot 66 and be like, man, I didn't shoot 66. I didn't play bad golf. But like I said, just things weren't clicking as well, and I think going back to earlier, the question of -- I just get in the zone sometimes where I try and -- everyone always talks about being nervous and ramping up too much and they have to calm themselves down. I'm almost the opposite. That's what I've learned over the handful of years of being a pro is I almost need to put more pressure on myself and ramp it up and get my heart rate going. I'm better off if I were to just show up with a minute to spare and I didn't warm up and say, okay, go play golf.

You just have to find that balance. But that's what I'm learning about myself, and that's the silver lining. I didn't play awful. I didn't play great. Russ made a great chip and ended up winning the tournament. I hand it to him; he played some great golf. He birdied the par-3, 14, and then eagled 16. Those are great holes to be 3-under.

But like I said, you keep knocking at the door. Look, I'm not giving up tomorrow. I hope to play a long, long time. You've got to learn how to lose and you've got to learn how to win. It's just part of it.

Q. Going back to what you said earlier about taking things for granted, did you take for granted how you won two majors so quickly, how difficult it is to do that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, I didn't take it for granted. I know there's only four a year. It's tough. No, I don't think I ever took it for granted. I think after that, I wasn't playing as good. I think what I took for granted was just like, oh, golf is easy. Not that I made it seem that -- not that I told myself that golf is easy, but you just think, okay, 2019 goes great, 2020, okay, keep it going, 2021, and I've learned there's a lot of ups and there's a lot of downs. That's just part of life, it's part of golf, and you kind of try and smooth out those downs as much as you can. I think I've done pretty good. It's time to hit that stride and see how far we can go.