

Men's Olympic Golf Competition

Tuesday, 27 July 2021

Saitama City, Saitama, Japan

Kasumigaseki Country Club

Rikuya Hoshino

Hideki Matsuyama

Press Conference



HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Apparently, when I was initially diagnosed with COVID 19, the number was very high. But, so once I got tested negative, after the 10 days, I was very happy.

Q. Can you say how the -- what is Olympic golf competition, how does it feel different from a major championship?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: This is the first time playing the Olympics, so I'm not sure how I'm going to feel, but I'm going to do my best and try to get myself to the best position possible.

Q. The Kasumigaseki Country Club, you have a very special memory here talk about the memory and how special is this place for you?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I won the Asia Pacific Amateur here 11 years ago which got me into the Masters, which I went on to win this year. So, in a way Kasumigaseki has been a place and catalyst for me to progress and grow, so hopefully I could do the same this week and move on to the another level.

Q. It seems like the stars aligned for you that the Olympics is taking place at the Kasumigaseki Country Club where you won the Asia Pacific Amateur, which got you into the Masters, and you went on to win the Masters this year. But would you talk about in details about the significance of this place.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: It is a little bit difficult to answer, I'm not sure how to explain this.

Q. I don't know if you've noticed, but tee times have come out and you're hitting the first tee shot. Will you be nervous, will you have pride or maybe a little bit of both?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: The fairway of the first tee is very narrow, so I'm definitely going to be nervous about that, but I want to really focus on trying to hit the fairway and have a good start.

THE MODERATOR: How special is it to play in the Olympics here in your home country of Japan?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: The Olympics is a stage that I've dreamed about since I was little growing up. And since the last edition of the Olympics, golf has been added and since then I've been wanting to participate in the Olympics. And once it was determined that the Olympics was going to be held in Tokyo, I really wanted to participate and I'm finally happy to be able to join the Tokyo Olympics here at my home country.

THE MODERATOR: Hideki?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: To be able to represent Japan and play in the home country, in a home Olympics, this is probably the first and last time I'll be able to do that, so I'm very happy to be able to participate in the Olympics here. Three weeks ago I got tested positive for COVID 19 and I wasn't really sure if I'll be able to make it to the stage here, so finally I'm here and I'm very happy to be able to be here.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Can you talk about how difficult the last couple of weeks have been since testing positive?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I tested positive for COVID for about 10 days in duration, so in that time I was staying home and did my best to recover from the symptoms. During that time I was unable to practice, but once I got back to Japan I started practicing. So in terms of preparation, it started a little bit with a delay but hopefully I'll be able to be in the best form possible for the event this week.

Q. How happy were you when the first negative test came back?

Q. Did winning the Masters make this week harder for you, in terms of pressure?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Since my Masters win I haven't had the best results so far this summer, so I'm a little bit nervous, but I'm really looking forward to it, I think it's going to be really fun and I'm going to try to do my best to play well.

Q. Talk about the course setting as well as what are the key points of the golf course here at Kasumigaseki Country Club?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: It's really important to hit the tee shot into the fairway here, because once you get into the rough it's really difficult to put you in a position to make a birdie here. So I really focus on the tee shots here. I think that will be the key.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I'm seeing a really fantastic course setting here at Kasumigaseki Country Club. It's a little bit unique grass that we see here compared to other Japanese golf courses around the country. The balls tend to sink a little bit into the grass more here and again I think the tee shot will be really key here to put your ball in the fairway.

Q. Did COVID have any affect on your endurance or the physical side?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Yesterday I walked and played the course for the first time and we'll see how I feel after this week, but at the same time I'm going to try to overcome any physical deficit with mental side.

Q. To both of you, Japan has made a great start to these Olympics and leading the medals table. Does that give you extra inspiration and an extra boost for this week and have you managed to watch any of your other compatriots winning their medals?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: I've been watching other fellow Japanese athletes compete in the Olympics as well and it's been very inspiring. Some of them are winning the medals as well. Last night I watched one of them win the table tennis gold medal too, which was also inspiring as well. So I think I want to join them and do my best and convert the inspiration into how I play well on the golf course as well.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: In terms of how much I've been watching, I haven't been watching too much at all because by the time I get back to the hotel I'm pretty tired. But I've actually been following some news on cell phone and whatnot on the news about the Japanese athletes winning the medals. So hopefully I can follow their footsteps and

be in a position to win the medal as well.

Q. Golf is an individual sport, but with this given circumstance, do you feel in a team spirit?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Definitely, definitely through something special, two Olympics, such as the uniform.

Q. A question for each. You said at the start that you dreamed of the Olympics since you were a little boy. Since golf wasn't part of the Olympics when you were a little boy, what sport did you dream of playing? Don't say surfing.

RIKUYA HOSHINO: It's going to a very unique type of nervousness, but I'm going to try my best to win the medal here.

Q. Of all the sports in the Olympics do you think golf is the hardest one for anyone to win a medal and if so why?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: In terms of the differences between the major championship and the Olympics, for the Olympics, only the top players from each country will be able to participate, but on the other hand in the major championships field size is much bigger. Here it's only 60 players, but major championship has a much bigger field size, so there are some of the differences, but I'm going to try my best to put myself in a position.

Q. Many international journalists may not have seen Rikuya play. You practiced with him yesterday, what are the strengths of his game? What makes him a good player?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: The strength of my game is definitely the driving distance. I think it's as strong as other players all over the world as well, so I think that's something that I would want to showcase to the world this week.

Q. What did you learn from playing in several major championships this year?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: Definitely learned some lessons. At the U.S. Open this year I went on to make the cut and ended up in the top 20. So I felt like I could play well in big stages as well and that became a catalyst to gain some confidence there as well.

Q. After the practice round would you tell me, following playing a practice round, what club do you think will be the key on this golf course?

RIKUYA HOSHINO: Definitely the tee shot. Putting the

ball in the fairway will be the key, otherwise it is very difficult to put yourself in a birdie opportunity. There are a lot of undulations on the green, so unless you're in the fairway it's hard to put your ball pin high.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: The course itself is not as long, so the key still will be the tee shot placement and also the placement around the greens.

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