

# Men's Olympic Golf Competition

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Saitama City, Saitama, Japan

Kasumigaseki Country Club

## Xander Schauffele

## Collin Morikawa

### Press Conference

**Q. Xander, I know that these Olympics are special for a number of reasons. Because of your father's Olympic aspirations, but also because of your family's connection here to Japan? Some opening comments about representing Team USA and being here in Japan for these Olympic games.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's a true honor, I love Japan, I love being here, most of -- or I spoke a lot about how I've come here a lot, my grandparents live in Tokyo. So I made a lot of visits here and I've always enjoyed coming and enjoy the culture and the food, so as soon as the Olympics were announced in Japan, in Tokyo, obviously the circumstances were different, was hoping I could see family and friends that, or not friends, but family that I've had out here and that's not the case, so I'm really I'm still very excited to be here and to represent USA is obviously a true honor and it's been a lot of fun practicing so far this week and looking forward to competing.

**Q. Collin, coming off an incredible victory, what are your aspirations here as you try to win a medal?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I mean, you said it, the end goal is to win gold. But I think what the Olympics represents is a lot of memories, representing your country, getting to wear a USA on your shirt pants, hat, everything. It's one of the biggest honors and it really means a lot because we play such an individual sport we're so focused in on ourselves that we're put on a bigger stage and we don't get to do this too often and when you do, you want to represent your country as best you can, and like Xander said, it's been really fun the past two days to kind of get some prep in, but I really look forward to finally starting the tournament in a couple days.

**Q. Have either one of you guys talked to any of the players who won gold last time about what it feels like to win a medal at all, what that experience might be**



like?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Collin was still in high school. I haven't had the opportunity myself. It's just, it's been sort of, it's been quite some time since the previous Olympics, obviously, with the extra year in between. So I mean, speaking for myself here, I know a few of the guys now, but I haven't really, there's been so much going on in between that I haven't really had the opportunity to sort of ask what it was like to take the podium and stuff like that. So hopefully we can make those experiences for ourselves.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean, I haven't talked to any of them but I think if you asked Justin Rose he puts that gold medal right on the top of his career, one of the best things he's done as a professional golfer. So many other sports look at the Olympics as their pinnacle, as their top of the top that they have accomplished, and I hope golf reaches that one day. Obviously, it's tough to compete with four majors and that's been in the history of golf forever. Whether it gets there, I don't know, but I think how I with look at it, it is up there for me and I hope to make a lot of memories from it. But I sat on a plane with Foch who is Rosie's caddie at the Olympics and he loves everything about it. I mean, he misses it. He wishes Rosie was still here to defend that because it is that special to him and I think it's going to be special for the four of us on Team USA no matter what happens.

**Q. Feel free to nod, but are you guys staying in the village?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No.

**Q. What went into the process of deciding where you wanted to stay because I know that there's some aspect of the village that people really like.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Personally, I just, the village is obviously a much more convenient factor for other sports and athletes. You can't just put a golf course anywhere or like a stadium, kind of, but from the village I've heard guys talk about it being an hour and a half to two hours away



and I just sort of had the -- do I wish I could experience the village and sort of what it would be like to just see all the other athletes and how they train and how they work with their physios and things like that, yes, I think that would be a really cool experience. But I'm staying 20 minutes away and it's golf for us and it's tricky when you have to, when you have to, a lot, two hours before an 8 o'clock tee time. With a warm-up and breakfast and everything you're waking up at 3:30 in the morning just to get here and warm-up. So I decided to, unfortunately, I decided to go the route of staying 20 or 30 minutes away just because of that.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: We're such a small team. We're four guys and we have our own coaches. We've got our Andy Levinson and Mack Horton here with us, but they're not really telling us what to do on the golf course. They're scheduling things. I think when you look at other sports they have their coaches and you have to be together. You have to be together as a team. So it sucks not staying there. Hopefully we get more tries at this in the future, but it's such an individualized sport that to have my coach/girlfriend here, she wouldn't be able to go there, Xander's dad wouldn't be able to go there. So there's so many different rules that you have to follow this year that it just made sense to stay with the team, stay a little easier, have our transportation ready, and it's been really easy. Even though it's a little while away where I'm staying in the hotel it's been a very efficient drive so far.

**Q. For both you, and, Collin, we'll start with you. If you look at all the sports across the Olympic program is golf maybe the hardest to medal in and if so why? And if not, you can say that too.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I don't know if hardest is the right term to put it at because when you -- I haven't been to the village yet. I know I'm going to go at some point this week, but I'm sure when you step foot there, you're looking at the best athletes in the world hands down in their respective sport and I wouldn't say golf is the hardest compared to something else because other people might think it's harder when someone dominates so much in their sport, how do you try and medal and try to be first second or third.

Golf is golf. We play four days. Every week is different. You don't know how someone's going to play and I think that's what makes our sport amazing is that guys like Xander JT, some of the best players in the world, they are very consistent, so they give themselves a chance to win. And it's just when you put on this stage like this who is going to be able to step up in the moment.

**Q. How do you differentiate this from Kapalua, from**

**any other tournament, in terms of just how hard it is to finish top-5 sometimes, much less win?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, in comparison, I guess, Collin's touched up on it a little bit, you just kind of break it down. There's a field of 60 people. Kapalua is 30 people. You have to imagine that you have a better chance of beating 59 people compared to Collin just won the Open Championship and beat 200 people or so. So there's a few ways of looking at things. I guess when you're talking about it in that sense, obviously the best of each country showing up to play. So that makes it a little bit harder and more refined. So I feel, there's no cut. That's another similarity. I think there is a lot to play for here, but yet there's no, there being no cut, it's almost, it does bring a very prestigious, yet relaxed sort of feel. Kapalua is obviously a nice place to play. You won and it's like a reward. This is something you've earned, like Kapalua as well. So I guess there are a lot of parallels, but if someone was asking me obviously you would like to win any regular season TOUR event, but you also like to win a gold medal more than anything else as well. So it's a tricky question.

**Q. Xander, what is your thought on that, the game that will be held without any spectators? Your grandparents have come to watch you play. Your mother and your wife could have come, but they can't. If they could have come, that could mean much to you, but they're not here --**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it sucks. There's no nice way of putting it. I think anyone that's not aware, golf in Japan is a massive sport. It's really, really a big deal. I always joke with JT and Rory. When we played at the Zozo Championship us three were fortunately played paired together in the first two rounds and there was like five to 10 rows deep on the first hole and when our name got announced it was like, holy smokes, are we at a major championship? You know what I mean? So people in Japan love golf. I know if spectators were allowed, there would be a massive showout with people and a lot of support from everyone. Personally, selfishly, of course I really want to see my grandparents. They're getting a little bit older in age and it would be really nice to see them. I'm going to have to come back and see them at some other point. And so, as well as my mom and my wife coming out as well, with their Japanese ties. We'll have everyone watching on TV, but it would have been really cool to spend some time with them in person.

**Q. Collin, you have performed extremely well the last years since turning pro. Can you tell us, can you describe how it's been for you, this journey, so far?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's been a lot of fun. I don't know



how you can't have fun. We do. This is what we love to do. I love to play golf. It's been a dream of mine forever and to finally do it on a professional stage and turn pro and play how I've been playing it's everything I could have asked for and more. But there's been a lot of work obviously put towards it and a lot of just belief. I think that day when me, Viktor, Matt Wolff Justin sat down in 2019 I told everyone, it was similar room like this, I told everyone that we just believed in ourselves and that's why each one of us are going to have our own paths, but I truly believe that the day I turned pro I could do this. I wasn't trying to learn the ropes as much, just going out and bringing my game and then showing everyone what I've got and thankfully I've been able to play really well in some events and close out some tournaments. But overall the experience is nothing I could have asked for because the guys, like meeting Xander and hanging out with him, becoming friends, and now he's in Vegas meeting guys that I've watched on TV for ages, and just getting to know them away from the golf course, I think that's the best thing, realizing that, yeah, we play golf and we're really good at golf, but there's so many other things that these guys love to do and that we're good at that it's just fun to get to know people that I have kind of idolized and watched for a long, long time.

**Q. There's a golf boom in Norway now because of Viktor Hovland. Can you tell me about your relationship with him and how it is to compete with him?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Viktor, what I've learned, is one of the funniest guys on TOUR. I don't think you're going to get a lot of stories out of him because they might not be the most appropriate. But Viktor is one of the nicest guys. I've grown to love him so much. I love him, love his caddie. He's very fun to play with, and just overall a good guy. He's always smiling. He always has a happy attitude, a great attitude, just like the guy next to me right here, like some of the best attitudes out on TOUR that I've ever seen in the short time I've been out here.

So it's great to hear. I saw that thing that happened when he was back in Norway, like, I think a month ago or whatever, right after he won in Germany, that a bunch of people showed up. That's awesome. That's, at 24, I mean, Xander what are you, 28? 27?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm really old compared to you Collin. 27.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, 27. At our age to be able to impact other people and especially at the Olympics here, how big golf is hopefully we're able just to impact kids, showing them that it is possible for people like us to do it. I

think that's what Xander or that's what Viktor is doing out there. I think that's really awesome to see, so hopefully it just keeps on going.

**Q. Some golf players have chosen not to compete in the Olympics and they are playing the PGA TOUR. Also COVID restrictions are making it tough for you to be here. But winning a medal here, what kind of value will bring you?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I guess I'll take this one.

Yes. So certain players from certain countries decided not to play. The beautiful thing of the position that we're in is we have choices. We have a decision to make and an opportunity and you can decide to go one way or the other. COVID is obviously, you look at our team specifically, I mean, I'm not, I haven't been privy of other information, but our team -- not on our team, but Bryson, and then I saw Jon Rahm as well from Spain, obviously got struck down by COVID and they're not able to show up and play, and those are two people who opted in to play and really wanted to win a gold medal and represent their country. So I know they're both very disappointed, but for us, I think obviously winning a gold medal and representing our country is a big deal or else we wouldn't be sitting here talking to you and answering these questions. It's not something personally speaking that the Olympic golf hasn't been around for a very long time. It's kind of been in and out and, you know, growing up, the things that I dreamt of were Tiger Woods wearing red on a Sunday. They were, I watched film of Jack Nicklaus in yellow at Augusta. Those are the sort of things that I grew up golf-wise.

If you look at other sport athletes, track and field, swimming, judo, any other extreme athlete, this is the pinnacle. This is the most honorable thing and the biggest thing you can do for your country.

For golf it's so fresh and so new and fortunately Collin and I are young, and so when we talk to you, it is exciting, it is very cool, it is something we want to do, and winning a gold medal and representing the USA correctly. And, like I said, we wouldn't be here if we didn't feel that way and feel strongly about it.

**Q. You touched on Jon Rahm and Bryson not being able to be here. You guys have dealt now with COVID on the PGA TOUR and you're playing for a long time but some of that is still fresh for some of these other sports. If you could just give your opinion of kind of how it's been dealing with COVID and then also what it's like to have some of the top players in the field have to cancel their plans to come.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't want to speak for Bryson and Jon. Jon obviously in our sport took it to the most extreme example leading a golf tournament. Collin was right there. He was leading by seven or so or six. He was playing. Obviously I didn't play with him. I just watched it, phenomenal golf, and wasn't able to win obviously. If people believe in karma, him winning the U.S. Open was a nice one, a nice bounce back, and obviously his attitude was really good in that sense in handling the whole situation.

Me personally, once again, I think as a golfer if I got COVID and wasn't allowed to play this tournament I would be very disappointed and very bummed, but there is another schedule or TOUR I can go back and play on, and we have the major championships that we always refer to and THE PLAYERS and tournaments like that that are very big in our schedule. But, man, if you're sort of in your last leg and let's say you're a swimmer from any country and you're getting to that age and this is your sort of last run and you've been preparing for the last three to four years just to compete and you get COVID and you can't play, I have so much sympathy and empathy for the situation. I, can't even explain it. I would feel really bad and there's just no way to make it up to the individual because this is, like I said, this is the pinnacle for so many other sports.

**Q. Additional question here is just how is the golf course? Can you compare it to any other golf courses you guys play throughout the world?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Golf course is fantastic. Conditions are amazing. Rough is up. Fairway bunkers are perfectly placed, at least for me to hit them right in it, and then the greens are just spectacular. The greens are as pure as they're going to get. Maybe it's because I've been playing in, over there in the U.K. for two weeks and they were --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That was really bad for you.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. It was really tough. I had to make a couple adjustments. But out here it's amazing. I think Xander can back me up. Conditions are pristine. It's unfortunate that we are going to get a little rain. It's going to be softer than probably what we would hope for, but I think it still puts a good test. It's going to put a really good test of making sure you're hitting it really well off the tee and then seeing what kind of up-and-downs you can make. I think you can get some pretty tough lies out here for the week and if you're able to save a few pars for the week you'll be doing pretty good, I believe.

**Q. Any comparisons?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Collin played Zozo as well and I

played Yamanashi a long time ago. That was my first pro start ever in my entire career. Golf in Japan typically is much tighter, much narrower. Conditions are to be pristine across the board each and every week. That's just a standard here in Japan. If you've never played golf here, they like things to be perfect and they are, which is very nice for us to compete on.

But the feel of the course, it's very, it does feel like a championship course. It's much bigger. There's a lot of land. I know we're kind of further away from the city, but for being in Japan, this does have a very big golf course feel, which personally I didn't know what to expect coming in to play the Olympic course, and it's kind of nice. If you compare it to other, sort of, growing up playing U.S. Amateur Championships or U.S. Opens or things like that, they have that sort of big-course feel and I do kind of get a little bit of that when I'm out here, which is nice.

**Q. Xander, if you think back to how badly you wanted to be in the Olympics, and your rookie year was the year after Rio, correct, 2017? You hear so much from other sports about how hard someone worked for four years just to make it to the Olympics. I wonder if you could try to express how difficult it was on the golf end, even though everything is so different qualifying-wise when you think about the depth of American golf and who didn't qualify.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, USA historically has had a very deep team. We're able to, I think the rule is we have enough players inside the top-15 that we're able to bring four people, so that kind of just speaks to the depth of American golf. Our qualifications system is simple. We just play our normal schedule and if you beat everyone else, you get to qualify, or if someone else ahead of you can't play or doesn't want to play, you can qualify that way as well.

Once again, speaking to other sports, there's no like specific trial or tournament. That would make it more comparable to a different, if you're a heptathlete or decathlete or any kind of track and field specialist there's a trial in Oregon to, the top 3 get to come and compete in the Tokyo Olympics and if you don't you just have to go back to the drawing board and you can maybe go to Worlds or something like that.

But for us there's no specific tournament to qualify for the Olympics. It's just a running schedule that we're going to play anyway. So with that said, it makes us sort of, we're lucky that we can qualify in that manner compared to other sports.

**Q. For Collin, just to step outside the games for a**

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**second, I would be curious what the first drink was you poured from the jug, and also, has it been difficult to come off such a high, the hangover from that, and then to ramp up for something like this?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, so we had some beers poured in. Couldn't tell you what kind. We were at the hotel and it was J.J.'s birthday, so we had a bunch of beers poured in there and had an amazing time. We've had champagne out of it, so it's been a couple days of great celebrating.

Yeah, yes and no. It's tough, I think, in a sense, knowing that I played so well and I thought I was playing well to re-assess and reset myself to come out here and be like, okay, this is still golf. It doesn't just flow over to the next day and I'm automatically going to start making birdies every single hole. And that's what I did last time after I won on the PGA. I just figured, yeah, I'll kind of walk into playoffs and just assume that good golf was going to go. I think I learned that lesson the first time. So hopefully I've kind of just reassessed myself, kind of taken a step back, and realized what I did was great, but we got so much more left of the season and such an important part of the season, that I want to play well. The end goal I think for you will of us is to win the FedExCup and there's so many steps you have to take to get there, but I think overall I've done a better job than already what I did at the PGA, so hopefully we're taking the right steps to finishing off the season.

**Q. As it relates to the Olympics how much time did you allow yourself to celebrate last week?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: A few days. I mean, maybe like two days when I got home and then after that it was kind of just relax and I was talking to played with JT today and it's like you go from the Open Championship you go home for four days and then we're all on a flight Saturday morning. So the turnaround time was a lot quicker than you would kind of want or expect and but that's just what we do. I think that's what makes us and people don't realize that's what we do every week is that every single week is something new, we got to figure it out we got to travel somewhere across the world to do it.

**Q. I think it's fair to say that you two probably understand Japanese society maybe more so than your teammates or other people in the field. I'm curious if there's one aspect of Japanese society that you really like and maybe even that you wish was more popular in the States.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: We discussed this throughout the week, several times on property here actually. Once

again speaking for myself, but I can almost speak for Collin here a little bit too. What people don't really know about Collin, he's very particular and there's an extreme attention to detail with the stuff that he does. That's something he hasn't told me that's something I observed of him last couple of days and it's very Japanese of him to be very fine tuned and to pay attention to every single thing that occurs. That's definitely one of his strengths. I think the more we talk, the more we appreciate food, the food here the quality of the food and how much everyone cares, the cleanliness of things, everything is just very much in order, people conform to the rules. Which is why it's also like you put a rule out and everyone's going to follow the rule. And everyone wonders why the streets are perfectly clean and everyone's in line versus maybe you go back home and someone might give you a face or something else. And so for me and I think Collin as well we appreciate that part of Japan, it's very refreshing and it's very nice and it's just, it's a very easy quality of life in terms of transportation or, I mean, that's me speaking myself, I've been downtown Tokyo, there's a million people everywhere, but things flow in and out super easy. And you imagine like holy smokes, if I saw this many people in Los Angeles all getting around like it would be an absolute disaster. But here it's like clock work and everything flows nicely and there's no trouble or anything. So there's something to be said to the efficiency that's put in place here in terms of making things flow.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: He hit it on the spot. Efficiency, respect. It's one of my favorite places to come, this is my fourth time being here, third time playing golf. And it's not just because I love the area and I love everything about it, but you embrace the culture, you enjoy just being here and I think you feel like you're a part of the society when you're here, you feel respected and that's how as athletes you want it, you want to be respected and we're very thankful for being here, for people allowing us to come out here, play golf, play on their golf course, but it's very respectful for them to let us be here. I think it's one of the biggest honors and aside from that I love how much they love food, so that also helps.

**Q. Your father was an athlete who wanted to make it to Olympic games but couldn't because of the accident. So what is your father's reaction to you playing in the Olympics?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, he was, he wants to always make sure this is written correctly he was a decathlete hopeful. His accident occurred on his way to the training center in Japan. So he was supposed to make the team, but who knows. He obviously didn't make the team, but we can joke about that now, so far removed from the accident. But I think I haven't really talked a lot about him since we came here. He is my swing coach and he's a

goofy guy when he's on grounds and we like to have a good time, but I really do think if there was an open ceremony, opening ceremony that he could have been a part of and walked, I think maybe he would have gotten emotional, just because it was a dream of his for so long, he put all his eggs in one basket for such a long time and it got taken away from him and he's learned how to deal with that situation. But I'm trying to empathize with what he's done, if I got in an accident and lost an arm or a leg, which can happen any day, and I wasn't able to play golf anymore I would be in the same boat as him. So you kind of have to figure a way around and I think being here, being on the golf course, maybe is not, I don't know, for him as special as if he was at the opening ceremony or on the track at a track and field, I think maybe, maybe if we went there if we were able to go there -- hopefully I can qualify for another Olympics so he can experience that and I think that would mean a lot to him.

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