

Men's Olympic Golf Competition

Monday, 29 July 2024

Paris, France

Le Golf National

Team Japan

Hideki Matsuyama

Keita Nakajima

Press Conference

MARK WILLIAMS: Welcome to the interview room of the 2024 Paris Olympics with Team Japan, Hideki Matsuyama and Keita Nakajima and we also have our interpreter for the team who will assist us with questions and answers.

Start with you, Hideki. Welcome back to another Olympics. You came close in your home country in Japan. What does it mean to have a chance to come back and perhaps get a medal this week?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Three years ago in my home country, I couldn't get the medal to get in the playoff. I still remember that moment. The last three years, I had an injury and I didn't have much win the last three years but I'm very much thankful, grateful to come back to the Olympics and I'll do my best.

MARK WILLIAMS: Keita, a question for you. You've obviously got some experience here at Le Golf National. Played here in the Eisenhower Trophy. How honored are you to come back here and represent Japan in the Olympic Games?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: I'm very excited to play Olympics and very honored to join Team Japan. I'm looking forward to play Thursday.

I played here Eisenhower Trophy but I will do my best to learn again this golf course and try my best on this golf course.

Q. Through the practice round this week earlier, what's your impression of the golf course and what's the most difficult elements on this golf course?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I know this golf course is not easy but as long as I do my preparation in the best, I should be able to get the medal. I'll do my best in the preparation.



KEITA NAKAJIMA: This is a tough golf course so I need to have a strong mindset, strong determination and good golf course preparation.

Q. What kind of elements on the golf course are challenging?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: Tee shot, of course, very challenging. If I don't make that tee shot, second shot into the green will be a tough angle. So short game is quite important. So pretty much everything is important.

Q. Hideki, do you like French food or did you bring your own chef?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Easy question.

Q. What kind of a goal was this to be in the Olympics, and when did it become closer to a reality?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Since 2015, I've been wearing this national Japan uniform, Team Japan uniform, and competed for this nation and then turned pro after many years as an amateur national team member. I always dreamt of playing Olympics and wear this Team Japan uniform again and compete for Japan. I'm really thankful, grateful, happy to represent Japan this week.

Q. When you led the Money List in Japan, what was the decision to go to DP World Tour instead of Korn Ferry Tour?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: I've seen Ryo go through Japan, DP and PGA, and so of course that gave me good stimulation to my brain. I thought that pathway is matching my game, so I committed to that.

Q. You know my Japanese is very limited. What did you do last week after the British Open?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I have been staying near London. Rest my body and then trying to get my condition back. I feel very ready for this week. So stayed in London.



Q. Did you play golf?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: (Shaking head.)

Q. Katy, what did you do last week?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: I go back to Japan one week, and yeah, prepare for this week.

Q. Losing the playoff in Tokyo, and then watching Xander Schauffele getting the Gold Medal did it add more determination to compete again in the Olympics?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Yeah, it's still a tough moment in the Olympics, the Tokyo Olympics. But if I stick to that memory, I won't be able to play professional tournaments. So I don't keep that mindset. I didn't keep that mindset after the Tokyo Olympics and try to focus on every week.

But I think the motivation to compete in the Olympics I'm learning that from other sports. Japanese are pretty strong in other sports as well and that gave me the motivation to play the Olympics.

Q. When Tokyo Olympics was hosted, you were an amateur. Back then, how much motivation did the Tokyo Olympics give to you back then?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: Back then when the Tokyo Olympics was hosted, I didn't even think about me playing Paris Olympics but I think all of my preparation after the Tokyo Olympics on the way to here, the last three years, led me to represent Japan this week.

Q. There's a proposal from the International Golf Federation to the IOC to add a mixed-team event, men and women, playing between the two individual events. Any thoughts about your interest, excitement, about possibly playing that type of event?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I think that's very interesting to have a mixed-event for any team event because this format is focused on more individual athletes. Having doubles, mixed doubles or playing as a team gives you more feeling of the team, representing for your nation. So I think that's going to be a very interesting format.

Q. One question for Hideki. What do you think the reaction in Japan would be for someone to win a Gold Medal compared with a green jacket?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I think the green jacket, I think every single golf fan knows what the green jacket is. But maybe more golf fans, they would the green jacket.

But the Gold Medal I think every single national in Japan would know what Gold Medal is in the Olympics. I think both are important, but I think the Gold Medal would have a big impact in Japan.

Q. For both players, it seems that golf in Japan, the competition has gotten stronger in the last ten years, a lot more players getting higher in the World Ranking in amateur golf. Why do you think that is?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Glad to hear that Japan is improving, but my feeling, it's not there yet. But I think in the last ten years, I think Japan Golf Association as a federation inputting a national team, a national squad is impacting that.

KEITA NAKAJIMA: Yeah, maybe Japan format's ranking is improving, Japanese players but it's not there yesterday as Hideki said because knowing in The Presidents Cup, Korean players, there are three players, Hideki was there, but I still think we have room to improve.

Q. Which is more important, winning a major against getting a Gold Medal? And to Hideki, getting a Gold Medal or more major wins?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: I think both have different values. For winning major in golf, I think it's important as one single golfer.

Winning Gold Medal, I think is more valuable as an athlete.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I think if you are competing this week, Olympics, if I'm competing in the major, major.

MARK WILLIAMS: Before we wrap up, I'd like to ask if there's a specific Olympic sport or athlete there Japan that you two will be following with interest?

KEITA NAKAJIMA: I go to see female judo athlete Uta Abe. So I've been following her on the Internet. She lost on the second round in judo tournament, but she's got all the brother.

So all the brothers after her loss, all the brothers competed hard and won the Gold Medal. So that's the athletes that I follow particularly.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Recently, I started getting close to a particular athlete who really competed and prepared towards this Olympics, but he or she didn't qualify this Paris Olympics.

Having interaction with my close friend, I learned Olympics is very special, and it's something very impactful. So I

want to play for those athlete who are not here, even though they prepare their best for this Paris Olympics.

Q. Sorry, one more for Hideki, two things. What is your favorite baseball team?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Every one.

Q. You have played and competed against a lot of great players since you've been on tour. What makes Scottie Scheffler different from some of the others?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I had played with him in the Phoenix Open the first two days. I watched him, his performance, and then felt, okay, this is winning performance.

So I'm taking that as the standard benchmark to get myself improved for this week to win any medals, we need to beat Scott and Xander Schauffele, best players, I would say but this field strong, so I need to play my best.

MARK WILLIAMS: Thank you, Hideki, Keita, Team Japan, and good luck this week.

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