

Shriners Hospitals for Children Open

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TPC Summerlin

Kevin Na

Press Conference



**Shriners Hospitals
for Children Open**



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started here. Like to welcome defending champion, Kevin Na into the interview room here at the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open.

Kevin defeated Patrick Cantlay in a playoff to win last year. Just get an opening comment on the positive memories that come to mind when you look back to last year.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, it's a great memory. You know, every time -- the trophy, where it sits in my house, it's right in front of my master bedroom entrance. Every time I see it reminds me of the great week I had. I had an unbelievable putting week last year.

You know, set the TOUR record in most feet made, and to share that moment with my family at my hometown was very special. I'm very excited to be back at the Shriners Open. It's unfortunate that I don't get to see the fans or play in front of my home crowd, and also I'm a little disappointed I don't get to Alec. (Alec Cabacungan)

THE MODERATOR: I was going to ask you about that. You made the donation last year to Shriners Hospitals for Children after winning the RSM Birdies For Love competition.

If you could speak to that a little bit and elaborate on your relationship with Alec.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I got to know Alex through Shriners Open, and he's a great guy. I know his dream is to become a sports announcer, and I hope his dream comes true.

You know, it made sense. Being the past champion and the defending champion of the Shriners Open it made sense to donate that money to Shriners Hospitals for Children. I was happy to do it and I'm glad I was able to have the opportunity.

Hopefully I can do it again this year.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open up to questions.

Q. Did Kenny buy last night?

KEVIN NA: (Laughter.) No, he did not. (Laughter.) We were at Spago's and -- well, I'm not really supposed to go out, right, but we had to. My management team, ProSport, came -- they drove all the way from Phoenix. They all got tested and drove up to see me.

So we went out. Sophia was supposed to pick up the bill, but I had to pick up the bill.

Q. Is there any explanation? In your last seven starts here you missed three cuts but you've won twice.

KEVIN NA: (Laughter.)

Q. Are you up and down or what?

KEVIN NA: I think I've had a second as well.

Q. Yes.

KEVIN NA: You know, I feel like when I'm playing well this is a golf course I can win at and I can go low. I just played a practice round last Friday with John Hunt. I was 8-under -- we started on the back. I was 8-under with three holes to go and I was like, Man, I needed three more birdies. If I birdie the last three I can shoot my best 60 here. I par'd 7, 8, and 9.

Something about this place I feel comfortable. I know the greens. I can putt well on them. But when I'm not playing great, I think I expect so much that it can be a little disappointing during the round.

It's hard to get really pumped up when maybe I'm even par through 12 or 13 holes, whatever that might be. I think that's why you see couple of the missed cuts.

Q. Does it feel surreal at all being home for two weeks, and what is your experience on other course next week?

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KEVIN NA: Yeah, I'm really excited about these two weeks. When am I going to ever be able to play two tournaments in a row from home? Probably never. This is probably the first and the last time that will ever happen.

Obviously Shriners, I love playing here. Next week at Shadow Creek, you know, I played the MGM Pro-Am there. I played it right before the playoff just to get another look at it, and it's a beautiful golf course.

Looking forward to playing there. I think people have seen it at the Tiger and Phil Shootout, but to see the whole field of the PGA TOUR players play, it'll be exciting.

Q. Just a quick follow there about next week. Have you got your best Shadow Creek stories? I know not many people get to play it a lot, but some good people do when they're there.

KEVIN NA: I don't have too many good stories. It seems like always when I play there it's for the MGM Coca-Cola Pro-Am. I always enjoy playing there. The greens are in perfect condition, grass is perfect.

You know, it's a beautiful place to play. Never busy because they only allow X amount of people to play or the high rollers that visit Vegas.

Oh, actually, I do have a story. I was playing -- few friends of mine wanted to play, so I went out there and he brought a guest over and he was an elder guy and he was playing par-4 as a three shot.

We were up the green talking and he hits one and he yells, Fore, and I ducked down and it hit me right in the middle of the back. So I do -- so my last memory of playing there is I got hit in the back.

Q. Sensational. Was he apologetic? Did he realize who you were?

KEVIN NA: Oh, he was it shock. He was like, Oh, my God. What I just do? I just took this guy out. I was fine.

Q. Brilliant. Now bring you back to t here. Your putting last year just off the chain. Just reflect another year later, and do you think you can replicate that again?

KEVIN NA: If I ever do replicate that in any tournament I think I'll win. I remember we were talking -- I was talking to Notah Begay at some tournament. He was talking about how good I putted. He was looking at my putter. He goes, Man, how many feet of putt did you make? I made 558

feet of putts. How many strokes you gain? Like 14.2 or 3, whatever that was.

He goes, Yeah, that was incredible. Yeah, but you barely won. I was like, really? That's what you take from this? (Laughter.) So we had a good laugh. It was an amazing putting week. I actually did everything else pretty well, too.

I putted well, but I struck it pretty well, too. I had some mistakes, the triple on 10 obviously set me back.

If I can putt like that again this week I feel really good about my chances winning again. I have the same putter, so maybe it can -- lightning can strike twice.

Q. Did it feel like you couldn't miss? That's what it seemed like watching.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I just felt really comfortable over putts. I was seeing my line and my speed was great. I just got over the putt and there was no doubt that I was going to hit a good putt. I was just focused and in the zone.

I can't really remember missing in any putts. But like people asked me on the playoff hole when Patrick made his first birdie and you had a nine-footer, were you concerned at all?

There was no doubt that I was going to make that and we were going to an extra hole. When I had like a three and a half-footer to win, I mean, it's not a gimme, and I felt so comfortable. Some weeks you feel comfortable over the ball, and some weeks you don't.

Last year it was one of those weeks that I just felt really comfortable and confident.

Q. You've obviously had quite a bit of success on TOUR. Not a lot of success playing majors.

KEVIN NA: Uh-huh.

Q. Never have made it to a Ryder Cup team. As your career has moved long, how important is it for you to focus on those things now?

KEVIN NA: Yeah, you know, I've had -- I've played obviously I want to say not quite 40 majors, high 30s, and I've had two Top 10s, three 12th finishes, I think, two at the Masters and one at the -- my best finish was seventh at Oakmont at U.S. Open.

I feel like the Masters I have the best chance at. The way it sets up, there is no rough. You have to be a great chipper and a putter of the ball, and I am.



I feel like Masters is a major that I can -- I want to really focus on. I also feel like at the right venues at the Open Championship I have a good chance at.

But it seems like some of the PGAs and U.S. Open, when the rough gets so thick that it favors such long hitters, because the long hitters hit it so far out there and they have a shorter club in out of the rough, I feel like I'm at such a disadvantage.

It's really hard to overcome that disadvantage, and we're seeing that every year of these bombers overpowering these golf courses. You know, at certain venues, like maybe Pinehurst, I had an outside chance there last time we played there.

I have chances, but I just got to pick the right venue. Yes, it's a goal of mine to win one. Do I think I can win one? Yes, at the right venue, and hoping the Masters.

It is disappointing to play this -- the last few majors I have played I've been very disappointed. Obviously the last tournament I played was the U.S. Open and was it very disappointing.

Am I trying to do something to change that? Yes, I am. I'm working on things, not drastically, but trying to improve my distance, whatever I can, to play better in those majors.

The other question was Ryder Cup. Yes, I think if I'm not mistaken, somebody told me that I was the highest career money earned without making any Presidents Cup or Ryder Cup team. So, yes, it is disappointing. I have been right on the bubble. I thought last year's Presidents Cup I had a really good chance.

But some of these times, like I've played good in the fall where they don't count towards the team points. Because it's a calendar year and the Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup is before the fall tournaments, those tournaments haven't counted.

So sometimes it was timing of when I played well that hurt me, but I'm hoping one of those days I'll make one of those teams.

Q. So you mentioned the bombers, which makes they think of Bryson. How does it feel being a veteran seeing 20-somethings like Bryson and Collin winning majors?

KEVIN NA: It's exciting. I mean, where the golf game is at, I think we're at a really, really good point in the game of golf. Not only have these young kids in their 20s winning

majors, Tiger Woods won the Masters last year, so these guys, there are so many guys in the mix; young guys are really changing how it's done.

And Bryson obviously a bomber that won the U.S. Open, but Collin is also a bomber who also won a major. It's nice to see the young kids be so successful. The average age is getting much, much younger, but at the same time there are still veterans, older guys, that are pulling it off and still winning tournaments and majors.

It's nowadays I feel like I'm getting up there and I root for the old guys.

Q. Does that put any more pressure on you to see the younger guys? Does that just add to the pool of people you have to beat?

KEVIN NA: Well, I think that the depth of the field is getting better every year. We're seeing that. No, I think if I play my game at the right places, I'm going to get my share of wins and I'm going to do just fine.

But like I said, the scheduling, I have to be very picky about what I play and where I play. That's just my game. I don't think I want to change that. At my age I don't think I can make too big of a change. Think it's too big of a risk.

Q. Returning to the bombers theme, and you've been here quite a bit and played here quite a bit, what can Bryson do to this golf course?

KEVIN NA: There are definitely some holes that he can take advantage of, but not a whole lot. I'm thinking maybe 9, 14, 15 just about everybody gets into. 16 he will have a shorter club in but everybody gets to it. There are only a few holes.

People forget how good of a putter he is. I've played with him in team play events and I've played practice rounds with him and I'm really good friends with him, and I see his game. People don't credit -- give him enough credit for how good of a putter he is and how good he reads the greens.

You can't win golf tournaments without making putts. You got to realize that this guy makes a lot of putts. Not only does he hit bombs, he makes bombs. I don't hit bombs but I make bombs. (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: All right Kevin, we appreciate your time and best of luck this week.

KEVIN NA: Thank you.

