

Sony Open in Hawaii

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Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Si Woo Kim

Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Si Woo Kim into the interview room, our 2023 champion of the Sony Open in Hawai'i. Picks up his fourth PGA TOUR victory and moves to No. 8 in the FedExCup standings. If we can get some comments on moving back into the winner's circle on the PGA TOUR.

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, I won a couple years ago in Palm Springs, so really want to win when I play every week, but I know it's high expectations, like a little bit of holding me up, but I keep trying to be positive, and yeah, now finally I won the tournament.

JOHN BUSH: Two great birdies there on 17 and 18. If you can take us through those holes.

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, 17, kind of like tough pin, and then it's hard to stop the green because the helping wind so much. I was over the green kind of like into the grain, like tough lie. But I knew he made a putt; I hear the noise. I have to hit it aggressive, and I made it.

Next one was comfortable, feel more comfortable.

The bunker, I was in there yesterday, too. It feels like more comfortable because I've been there yesterday. I think that helps, too, on the green.

Q. What club did you hit from the bunker?

SI WOO KIM: I hit a 5-iron.

Q. On 17 when you heard the cheer for the birdie, how did you feel? Did it make you nervous? Did it rattle you?

SI WOO KIM: It's like, if he made a par, like I'm more nervous because I have to save it, and then especially into the grain with the pressure, it's much nervous for me.

But I knew it. I heard the sounds. Bogey is fine. I have to pass the hole, so I have to hit it aggressive. I think that really helps. Nothing to lose.

Q. You won THE PLAYERS Championship at 21. You also had a 13 on a par-3. The high expectations, you mentioned high expectations. Do those get in your way sometimes?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, I think so. Like I won the rookie year here, and then after next year I won the like pretty much the fifth major championship. After like I was thinking -- I was in the rookie year was thinking like I'm not a good player, and then here's like too many good players here.

But I won like rookie year after next year, so I was like more expectation and then more like nerves myself. I think that's why a little bit hard time next couple years after PLAYERS.

Yeah, just now no expectation much.

Q. What club did you hit at 17? It went right over the flag.

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, I hit a 7-iron.

Q. The start of your round, three birdies, almost four. I think you had like a four-footer at the 4th. Did you come out kind of aggressive, or was that just playing your game and it just unfolded that way?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, if I was one stroke behind, kind of trying to see what happens the first five holes, but I was three strokes behind, so I have to keep aggressive until finish the round.

I think that mindset really helps for me because I don't have time for the pressure, so I have to keep trying to make birdie every hole.

Q. Taking you back to the Presidents Cup in September and you played J.T. in the singles match. Afterward you said you were never more nervous even when you won THE PLAYERS. I'm wondering, did that experience of the Presidents Cup, did that make you a better player or help you today? Was there any impact on that?



SI WOO KIM: Yeah, I don't know about that makes me better player, but I think definitely helps for on the pressure like tournament, any tournament. After I played Vegas I played good, and then I think that helps like pressure -- I think more learning about.

Q. You talked about kind of your confidence wavering there since your last win. What does this do for your confidence and what does this win mean to you?

SI WOO KIM: It was a tough year I had last year, but I played a lot of good rounds, but I didn't play good Sunday. That's why I finished a lot of 13th. Yeah, I think that helps me more patience, and then this year trying to mindset, like trying more less upset, more getting attitude-wise. I think that helped.

Friday and Saturday was a little upset for me, but I didn't act much. I think that helped.

Q. There was a lot of talk from last week to this week about the elevated status of Kapalua. A win is a win, so what do events like these mean to yourself and the guys on the PGA TOUR even though it's not an elevated event but you still get the points and everything that comes with it?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, last week I didn't get in, but last week is huge up-and-down and this course kind of flat. It's kind of still windy, so hard to distance control.

Yeah, pretty much the same.

Q. We say sometimes when you're struggling, it sounds like you kind of get in your own way. Did you feel like that was your issue last year?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, I think so. I always pretty much won every year, like first two years I won, and then I was more like -- I think I can get more wins than I think. But if I play every tournament, it's getting harder and harder, I feel like harder. It's not that easy out here.

So I knew it now, so have to be more like patient and then just trying to play my golf.

Q. What did you do to kind of get out of that mindset of what you were just talking about? Did you talk with somebody? Did you meet with somebody? What did you do?

SI WOO KIM: Always hard, but I'm trying to get -- I've got too much pressure and too much high expectation, so I think that makes me more nervous and pressure and

stress.

So trying to be more -- this year the goal is like with my caddie, with Manny, I talked to him like week before here, so I'm trying to be better attitude and trying to be more -- like act better. When I hit the best shot, try to be less upset. I think that helps for this week.

Q. When did Manny come on the bag

SI WOO KIM: Presidents Cup was the first time.

Q. Does it help that you have a guy that was a player?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, definitely. He knows a lot of shots, and then he knows how to hit a shot. Like conversation way better, and then he knows more grass about it and then green, so everything, so he helps me a lot.

Q. Is Hawai'i a place you've ever visited when you're not golfing?

SI WOO KIM: I've never been here without Sony Open. I was waiting on December so I came here a little early last week. Feels like still honeymoon without the golf course.

Q. When did you get married?

SI WOO KIM: December 19, this year -- I mean, last month.

Q. You didn't come here for your honeymoon, right?

SI WOO KIM: No. I feel like.

Q. It's a nice wedding present.

SI WOO KIM: Yeah.

Q. You played with Tom at the Presidents Cup, right?

SI WOO KIM: Mm-hmm.

Q. When you chipped in for 17, why didn't you throw your hat on the ground?

SI WOO KIM: If I was playing with him I definitely would do that, but this is like more stroke play and he's still behind me. I wanted, but I just kept calm.

Q. There's different tournaments this year. There's tournaments with all the top players and tournaments with everybody. Does it mean any more or less where you win, or is it still hard and good no matter where you win?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, it's always -- no matter what, what field it is, it's so hard to win on the PGA TOUR, professional golf tournament. Still has a lot of good players, big name or not. Still like all the players really good out here.

Q. You had to make up a lot of ground shooting 64s back-to-back to finish. Was there a moment or point when suddenly the realization of maybe you have a chance to win this tournament kind of entered your head?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, was trying to be definitely aggressive before tee shots, but I made birdie first three so I was on fire, so I'm trying to feel more, get more aggressive, aggressive.

I think a little too much confidence I had; that's why I made a couple bogeys like first front. So back to a little bit of just trying to hit shots and like less aggressive.

Q. There's a lot of Asian influence here on the islands. There's a lot of Asian people out there celebrating you and supporting you. What was it like to have their support, and did you notice them?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, everyone was screaming like back nine, like the Korean fans, so I think that definitely helps me, and then more cheer for me.

I feel like I was in Korea. (Laughter.)

Yeah, I think that helps here.

Q. What's the latest with your military service status, and is it possible they might have you do something related to golf, or does it not work that way? And are you a BTS guy?

SI WOO KIM: I would say no comment. Yes, sorry.

Q. Just curious, when you started the year what your goals were and if they've changed now that you've won another time.

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, always before the season starts like my goal is win the tournament, just one more the year, but this is one for one, so hopefully getting two soon, and then yeah, just trying to be more fun, not trying to be win the tournament.

Q. Are you happier winning as a newly married man?

SI WOO KIM: Yes (smiling).

Q. Do you plan to play the Asian Games this year?

SI WOO KIM: Yes.

Q. Where are they?

SI WOO KIM: I'm on the entry, so hopefully -- it's in China, but I don't know -- there's a lot of COVID thing, but I don't know. Hopefully I can play. But if they play, I'm definitely go.

Q. You keep talking about high expectations. How long have you had those expectations? From when you were young?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah, when I was a kid. I had a lot of win, and then I was 15, moved to the national team and I played pretty good amateur, and then having a little hard time the end of the amateur.

So I just turned pro and tried Q-school and make the Q-school. I think that was the hard year, like my birthday is June 28, and I can't play like after my birthday because before the 17.

Yeah, and back to the Korn Ferry and little hard time, and then, yeah, back to here. Win like rookie year after PLAYERS. I think after PLAYERS getting more high expectation.

Q. Did you find yourself trying to change your game because you thought you had to be better?

SI WOO KIM: I think I was not good enough for the top level, like all the top 10 players. But somehow I got lucky, like that rookie year, and then next year won THE PLAYERS. I think that holding me up.

Yeah, my dad keep talk to me, you're not the top player, so don't try to act like top player. (Laughter.)

Q. Do you still think that way?

SI WOO KIM: Yeah. If I play Rory, J.T., all the good players, sometimes I play with them, also like what I'm doing here, they're so good, driving like 360, and I'm like 60 yards behind. Yeah, I'm still a lot of going.

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