

# The American Express

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La Quinta, California, USA

La Quinta Country Club

## Kevin Na

### Press Conference

MARK WILLIAMS: We're joined by Kevin Na to the interview room here at the American Express.

Kevin, welcome back, coming straight off a victory at Sony.

This is your 16th start here at the American Express. I think your best finish during that period was a top 3 in, a 3rd in 2016. What's, this tournament's very different this year, obviously no amateurs and two courses instead of three. What's it like coming here in this environment, given the different nature of this tournament this year?

KEVIN NA: Yeah, we're disappointed that the amateurs are not part of the tournament this year. Playing this tournament 16 years out of the 18 I've been on TOUR, you get to meet all the amateurs and a lot of the same guys keep playing and you become friends with them and you catch up with them here, see how they have been doing over the year. And some guys I've stayed in contact with and it's too bad that they're not here. We're going to miss them. And we're going to miss La Quinta Country Club. It's a great golf course, fantastic greens there every year. We're going to miss that.

But it's still, I'm still happy to be here. I enjoy coming out to PGA West. It's a beautiful place. The weather's going to be fantastic this week. So a lot of positives.

MARK WILLIAMS: As I mentioned, you won last week at the Sony Open in Hawaii. It is your fifth victory on TOUR but your fourth in the last four years and you mentioned that you've been out here for 18 years. So what do you put, what do you contribute your longevity to? You started as a teenager out here, so, and winning a lot recently.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, a lot of hard work, great team around me, good swing coach. Drew's been very helpful. Kenny has been a great caddie. And then now, Cornell, my trainer, is going to help me even -- I put him on the team so I could even be successful in my 40s too. And just, I've always been a positive thinker. I know I've gone through a lot of tough times having, not being able to win, some yips. I mean, I've gone through quite a bit, but I've always stayed positive. I kept believing in myself, and more people



around me believed in me helped me believe in myself. And I think that's been the key to a steady career and having more success as I get older.

MARK WILLIAMS: It's interesting, you do have a very positive attitude and some of the things that you've done in public on the course, like at THE PLAYERS with the putt where you walked it in and then Tiger followed you, do you think that doing those sort of things and having that positive outlook and obviously winning and being in contention a lot, does that affect your fan base? Do you feel like you're connecting with the fans a lot more.

KEVIN NA: Yes, I mean, I've always had a goofy side of me and a lot of people that know me well have seen it, and I think over the years as I got more comfortable on the golf course, I think that side of me came out more and more and fans have liked that and I've appreciated the fans liking that. I'm very, I feel blessed. I feel like I'm getting a huge support when we had fans, and even, and now most of the fans will be through, we see through social media and I've been getting a lot of support, so I'm very appreciative. I'm just going to stay this way.

MARK WILLIAMS: We'll take some questions.

**Q. You said last week after you won that every year you expect to win and you hope to win on the right golf courses. Do you think these are the right golf courses this week for you?**

KEVIN NA: At PGA West?

**Q. Yeah.**

KEVIN NA: So the answer I'm going to say is "nah." (Laughing.) You can interpret that as the whatever how you want it.

**Q. Well, I asked because you've had some --**

KEVIN NA: It is my last name, so you interpret it how you want.

**Q. I ask because you've had some pretty good scoring rounds here, but you've just got the one top-5 in all those years. And with La Quinta not in the field this**



year --

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I think I had one top-10 and a top-5.

**Q. With La Quinta not in the field, it kind of changes the character of the tournament.**

KEVIN NA: What's that?

**Q. And with La Quinta not in the field, it kind of changes the character of the tournament.**

KEVIN NA: Oh, yes. I think my best score was at Nicklaus, though. I shot a 62 a few years ago and I finished third.

You know, this golf course is, it can be good or -- it's questionable. Like, do I feel like I can win? Yes and no. So we'll see who shows up on Thursday (laughing.)

**Q. I saw that 15 years ago you won in the area at the Mark Christopher Charity Classic, like 45 minutes away, and I found it unique that you played, you weren't a Nationwide TOUR member, but you played that tournament. I was wondering if you could reflect on the circumstances of why you decided to play that week and the memories from winning that week kind of right down the road?**

KEVIN NA: So I don't know if you remember, so that year I was hurt. I was on -- I had I think close to four, about four months off due to a hand injury and it was my rehab start. So before you make a comeback from an injury, the PGA TOUR allows you to play events on the Korn Ferry TOUR -- at that time, it was the Nationwide TOUR -- so it was like a warm-up tournament for me and it happened to be close to where I was from. I grew up in Diamond Bar and that was the Ontario area, and I happened to win. So it was a good warm-up for me at the time, yeah.

**Q. What other the memories, like, is there a shot that comes to mind or kind of just thinking about that week and what kind of clicked and came together? I know it's a long time ago but when you think of it in your memory bank.**

KEVIN NA: I think it was 2006, right? It was a long time ago. I just remember just fans, local fans, friends, high school teachers coming out and cheer for me. I just remember that was nice to have friends come out and cheer me on and watch me win. I know it wasn't a PGA TOUR event, but it was still a win.

**Q. To follow up on what you just told Larry, so I assume there's golf courses where you don't feel like**

**you can win on and if that's a safe assumption, why do you play those courses?**

KEVIN NA: (Laughing.) Kisner stole my answer. (Laughing.) And Brooks too. There's some great answers.

Look, I actually think that -- I mean, I finished third here, so I had a chance to win here. In the correct conditions, in the right conditions for me, I have a chance here. There are some long golf courses where on paper that I don't look good, but I've been successful, like Memorial, like on paper obviously that's a bomber's course, but I've had success there. And I've lost in a playoff, I had top-10s, and I've been successful there.

On a course like that, it's, yes, I have a chance to win, but my consistency is not going to be as good. So like this, I think this golf course, yes, I think if, with the firm conditions, I think it's pretty firm out there right now, and if I'm playing well, yes, I can. On paper am I the favorite? No. And it's, like I said, we'll see who shows up on Thursday, but it's not out of the question like Torrey Pines or something like Bethpage Black is another one, but I mean there's something -- like East Lake, I feel like that's a tough one for me. There's some courses that I don't feel good at. But this one is not bad.

**Q. Kind of based on what Bryson has done maybe the last couple of months, when you sit down with Drew during the off season to kind of come up with goals going into the next year, do you ever kind of look at the radar gun and think to yourself, yeah, I want to get to whatever number, ball speed or clubhead speed?**

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I mean I've, we work on speed. Look, I'm just trying to max out what I have and I'm not going to make a ton of changes. At 37 years old I'm not, I don't think I can change my body that much and I just don't think that works for me.

And I'm going to maximize what I have and I'm a great -- I got great short game, I got to keep that up -- but I'm trying to always push myself to get my numbers up a little bit.

Unfortunately, last year I lost some distance because of due to some injuries, I lost a few mile an hour ball speed, but I'm starting to slowly get that back up. And, look, if I can -- my ball speed's somewhere to mid to high 160s off the tee and if I can get it to consistently at 170, I'll be very happy.

MARK WILLIAMS: We don't have any more questions, but I've been asked to ask you one just about the news that broke yesterday with Tiger Woods having another back surgery. I'm sure you've heard of that. Just your reaction

to that.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I was disappointed to see that he was, he had another operation. Hopefully it went well. We wish him the best. We're going to miss him. It's too bad that's not playing Farmers and Genesis Open. We always like him out here, I've looked up to him as a golfer, he's a super star, obviously. We need him and we want him to be healthy and play well. So all the best to him.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right, thank you for that and thank you for the time today to talk about the American Express and have a great tournament again. Appreciate your time.

KEVIN NA: Thank you.

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