

# THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

## Collin Morikawa

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Collin Morikawa to the media center here at the 2025 PLAYERS Championship. Collin, making your fifth career appearance here. What do you enjoy about coming back to this place and the challenge that TPC Sawgrass presents?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I honestly think it's one of the best golf courses we play all year, not just from the conditions but just how it tests your game. You have to be on in all aspects from the tee to the green, putting. Nothing's easy.

There's some courses out there -- I mean, last week, one of those courses you just can't let up even if it's a par-5. Bogeys can come in an instant. This is one of those.

There's I would never say easy holes, but there's some gettable holes out here, but in turn you just have to play really, really good golf if you want to finish up on top.

THE MODERATOR: We'll just go right into questions.

#### **Q. What's the mental reset look like for you over the last 36 hours?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Oh, yeah, I mean, Sunday night was a lot of frustration. Just looking back over the past year and kind of how I went about my fall was to figure out how to play better in final rounds, and when you don't play well and you don't close it out, you're like, how do we go back to the drawing board.

It's not really rip everything off and start over, but there's just little things, right. Obviously I wasn't hitting it as well, I wasn't putting as well, but I still had my chances to close it out, and Russ obviously played some great golf. I mean, to make birdie on 14, eagle on 16 and finish out with two pars is great golf out there. So props to him.

But there's just small things. I love being in that position. Like, I don't take it for granted because you just never know. But it was frustrating Sunday night. I have to get over it. I mean, I'm back on my two feet; I'm trying to figure



out how to play my best golf here for this week.

I know my last few finishes haven't been as good, and yeah, you just move on. I'm going to think about it. I know what happened. I fully am aware of how it played out. But I just have to move on and I have to learn from it. I have to keep getting better. Like I always say, like, you know, why not win this week.

#### **Q. Early in your career you closed kind of remarkably well those two majors in particular. I think last year final round scoring average you were outside the top 100. Are there specific things you feel like are happening in those final rounds or anything that has been consistent that you're working on?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: So I would say early on in my career in the final rounds I played really, really good golf. So I hit the ball great, putted great, like things were easy. Anytime I'm playing good golf, like, things are going to be easy. You don't really have to think; you just play.

I think last year I was never in the position really swing-wise to go and do that so I was always kind of fighting that. Even in the practice and the warmups, like just fighting what shot I was going to be able to play that day. That makes it that much harder.

Sunday was a little bit different. I felt like I was hitting it good. Hit a couple bad shots but wasn't hitting it that poorly. I just didn't make anything, and out there, you can't be too aggressive on putts because you could easily have a five-footer coming back and you just have to play smart golf and take it when it's in front of you.

But to me the biggest difference is just kind of how I go about my shots. They're just small little things that -- not only for a Sunday but it could affect essentially a Thursday round, a first-tee shot, all these types of things. So my head's already going on how do I be better for the next time, and you just figure it out.

But I would say early on I just played a lot better. You can look at strokes gained and whatnot now, but there's just a different comfort level in the game of freedom that I had back then that I'm slowly getting back right now, and you just got to keep inching at it.



**Q. In the wins that have come, you've been really consistent. Is it difficult to not be defined by wins and losses? Obviously this sport if you are defined by wins and losses, there's going to be a lot more.**

Losses, but do you take some solace in the fact that the game is there, or are you only focused only the trophies?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: A little bit of both. I don't look back and be like, man, I had a great week and I feel great about it, because I do care about the wins and I do care about finishing up on top. So it does -- when I look back at it, I'm not like oh, man, my season's set; I've had two seconds; I can breathe.

I'm working harder than ever. I'm trying to figure out things in more and more detail. So there's a little bit of, yes, I feel great because I know I can keep putting myself in contention, and if I just keep doing that it's going to happen. Like it's not a -- I said it when I won at ZOZO or in Japan; it's not a matter of if, it's just a matter of when. But for me it does suck because I do look back at the wins and I do care about winning, so that's where it kind of hurts.

**Q. You've been back with Rick Sessinghaus, your longtime coach, for a little while. Can you tell us what that's been like the second go-around?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's been amazing. He's been someone that I could just talk to through things, even away from swing stuff, just kind of how I go about going into shots and going into my practice and going into tournaments. It just helps to have someone to talk to for two minutes, five minutes.

He's been on the road a few more times this year so far, so it just helps to let it out. I feel like I'm a pretty independent person and I can do things a lot on my own, and even then like it's just nice to have someone that just is there to listen, and I'm not saying that I don't have people there, but he's there in a golf space at least that can help me a little bit more to just say, man, this is what I'm feeling. I feel very, very honest with him, and I have to be. If I'm not honest, then I'm just lying to myself, and at that point I'm doing myself a disservice.

**Q. You mentioned small things and the difference about how you go into shots. I'm not sure I understand what you mean by that. Can you explain that better.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, so 2019's a good example. I thought I hit my ball really, really well in 2019 when I turned pro. You're thinking through shots but you just know the

ball's going to be close. That's how it felt on Saturday.

So back to when you're playing good, things are easy. It always is. You're not really thinking about much; you're just looking at the target and hitting shots. But it's the days where you don't feel like you have your A-game. It might just be a little bit off.

That's where, to me when you look at the best, best players in the history of the game, you can't really tell the difference. So how do I get to that point where, yeah, you know, I -- through a few holes I'm not hitting it as good, but I know how to switch that or turn that switch on and just fire at all costs, just kind of aim at the middle of the green or aim at the pin or do whatever and just have complete control of the golf ball when I don't have complete control.

Those are little things. So it's just minor little tweaks that will go into this week on just shot preparation essentially of how I walk into it. You wouldn't even be able to tell the difference though.

**Q. I won't look for it then.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah.

**Q. I hope this doesn't sound silly, but one thing we hear endlessly out here is how hard it is to win on the TOUR. Do you appreciate that more after you've won or after you haven't?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. I think the satisfaction you get after winning is incredible. Because you just know you accomplished your job and you just beat however many guys in the field for that week. You were the best player that week.

For me, I don't look back and be like, oh, man, I could have won this, I could have done this, I should have done this. Like for me it's just, all right, look, I lost, I did a few poor things last week, I got beat, I just have to get up on my feet and beat everyone else this week, right.

So I think if you solace in the fact of, oh, man, it's really, really hard to win, to me that mindset isn't where I want to be. I'm coming out here to try and win every week, and granted, I haven't done that and no one ever has, but that's my mindset is, like, I know it's hard, but screw it; like I want the challenge. I want it to be hard. I want everyone to come after me. I want the eyeballs on you. I want the pressure because when you're put in those situations, like, sometimes people perform, and people can say like I haven't performed on those Sundays. So what. I'm putting myself in position to perform, and I know I have before in the past, and like I said, it's just small little things that can

make the difference, right, and everyone has ups, everyone has downs, and we'll figure it out.

**Q. Did the chip seem like it was makeable before you got up there? And also, after it goes in is it a little bit helpless knowing you've got two really -- 17 and 18 there aren't necessarily birdie holes and now all of a sudden after all day you're behind?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, kind of makeable. Kind of trying to lag it up there because, I mean, the greens were baked. They were dry, crusty, whatever you want to call them.

So when he hit it, it looked really good and you just have that gut feeling that it's going in, but it looked pretty fast, and granted, it was the right line, so, you know, he made that. I had 25 feet for birdie and then at that point I wasn't really making anything and that was probably the worst putt I hit all day aside from 18 because I just felt like, you know, got to put a little more pace, play a little bit more aggressive on the putt, and it ended up being one of my worst strokes for the day.

That kind of sucked and being one back, but I've been back before. I mean, not to harp on JT, but like one of my best wins I felt like was the one at Memorial, the Workday, and I was two back with three to go or something like that or three back with something to go, and I never felt like I was out of the tournament.

So I never felt like I was out of the tournament even after he made that chip. I knew I had a lot of work in front of me with two holes left, and like you said, tough holes, but I've birdied tough holes before, so this time just happened to be two pars.

**Q. Pace of play question for you. I know the TOUR aggregates data every week where they can rank players based on their average stroke time, and I was speaking with Gary Young, and his idea was that if this were released it might be an effective deterrent for the slower players, but the players would have to approve that being released. Is that something that you would be up for?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I had this question at Genesis a few weeks ago. I think it should be released. I don't know why you wouldn't want it to be released.

I think after talking to some guys, I think you just have to start stroking guys and giving guys actual penalties, whether it be strokes or FedExCup. What I've learned is that monetary fines are useless. We make so much money, and some guys frankly could care less about -- I

don't know how much the fines are, but whatever X amount they are, and I think they care more about playing good golf and making sure they make the playoffs and making sure they make, you know, 70, 50, 30. That's where it hits hard.

And I see no issue with it. I think what is there to hide, right? If you're slow, you know you're slow. I mean, if you don't know, then there's an issue. To me, there's no issue with letting it out, right. It's only going to make things better because then you're either going to have a target on you, put a little more pressure and hopefully you pick it up, or you get penalized. Like it's very simple.

But I think the fans need to realize that slow play is not going to fix -- like if we pick up 10 minutes of pace of play for this week, the fans won't realize that at all. Like zero. So that's not the issue with watching golf.

**Q. I think the new phrase they're using is speed of play and it gets to what you're talking about where even though the overall round time might not be that much faster, it's also not fun to watch somebody spend two minutes over a putt, so even though it doesn't change things, that does matter for the TV.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yes, yes. Last week they put out a clip of me. J.J. and I were hitting a shot. I watched the video. It was like a minute 50 I think it took or a minute 45 until I hit the ball.

People -- you know, I read it. I read stuff (laughing). Bad, really bad. I'm the first one to get to my ball. J.J. has to walk off the number, and people are complaining like, oh, hit the ball. I don't just walk up to the ball -- no one, I mean, Ludvig's one of the best, fastest players out there. He doesn't just walk up to the shot and be like, all right, Joe, this looks like a 7-iron. How far is it? It's 175. All right, perfect, go.

Like you still got to walk off our numbers. We still have to look at the pin. You got to look at the wind, and like, that's part of the whole situation. So to me part of it is how they're putting this out is sometimes they make us look slow because, like, you show this entire clip of J.J. had just put the bag down, we're walking to this. But there are guys out there that are taking a minute and a half, two minutes, when the camera is on them, on that putt, and it's their turn, and it's too long. That's why we should release names. Like there's nothing wrong with that.

**Q. You seem to have rationalized what happened Sunday to a great extent, but in the moment you didn't. I want to understand a little better what you were feeling, why you didn't stop to talk or anything.**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, just heated. Just pissed. Like I don't owe anyone anything. No offense to you guys, but for me in the moment of that time, I didn't want to be around anyone. Like, I didn't want to talk to anyone. I didn't need any sorries. I didn't need any "good playings." Like, you're just pissed.

Honestly, if it was an hour later I would have talked to you guys, but an hour later I was on my way out to here, because I didn't want to be in Orlando anymore. But I just felt like I put everything I did into the, let's call it, seven hours of my time being there, right, a few hours before showing up, physio, workout. Look, my entire routine, right. I was just drained.

I get it. Like you guys are there to figure out how we played and how things went, but in my perspective, like I just didn't want to talk to anyone, and I think that's fair to myself, you know.

**Q. Wife, coach, caddie, anybody say anything that helped get you back into a better place?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, no one -- I'm a very independent guy. Like I hugged it out with J.J. in the locker room, hugged it out with my wife when I got back to the condo. For me, it's not really about words. Like, I don't need someone to pep me up and say, "good job." (Showing thumbs up.)

I think I know where I'm at and I know where I'm at with my golf. I just have to win. I have to be able to close it out. For me, that's going to come down to me. I'm the one hitting the shot. I'm the one pulling off the shots, hitting, doing what I need to do. But for me it's not about the words to fluff it up.

Like we all know what happened. I think the people -- my team knows, like, I don't need the fluff. Like I'm not about the BS'ing and saying, you know, all right, good job, we're doing better, like we're going to win next week. No, we know what our goal is at the beginning of the week. It didn't happen, but it's a lot better position than finishing 40th.

**Q. Figuring out those Sundays, do you look back with your team and say, are there certain tendencies, either mentally or physically on those final rounds or is it kind of circumstantial what happens depending upon the day?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: A little bit of both. I felt like this week or last week I was hitting it a lot better than I have essentially all of last year and all of the last couple years to

go into a Sunday.

Started off with a couple squirrely 9-irons on 1 and 3, and to me that just factors into how I was playing on Saturday. Like Saturday I was playing so well that you kind of just not hope but you kind of go into that mindset of like let's just do the same thing, when in reality, like, it's not the same. It's I need to hit this shot to 15 feet, and if I don't, then that's a bad shot.

So it's almost a sense of urgency. I tell you guys I like the pressure. I do. I didn't feel like I was hitting it great all day, and on 17 -- 17's a very, very tough hole, and I felt like I hit a pretty good shot and the wind just didn't really take it all the way.

For me to hit that shot when I didn't feel great and then even on 18 to hit a drive when I knew I had to hit the fairway, like sometimes when you have to do things you pull them off. I think for me on a Sunday there just has to be more of a sense of urgency. There is, but there isn't. And I think I can do a little bit better on that.

**Q. You've just answered 20 questions probably about Sundays and not winning tournaments. I'm always curious what that does to a golfer when that becomes a discussion point. How does that affect a player?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know. I'm going to show up on Thursday and tee it up at even par and hopefully be in the final group come Sunday and see how it goes.

**Q. I guess in terms of you're very much taking of, like, I own this, I want the pressure. I mean, you're clearly thinking about it, you're conscious of it. Do you think that helps you?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Conscious of?

**Q. I'm not necessarily winning on Sundays. Do you think there's a benefit to that?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Well, I have, like I'm giving myself reasons of what I did right and what I did wrong, right? For me, I mean, okay, I've played how many tournaments in my career? I've finished second however many times and I've won however many times.

I know this sport, like, it's not going to go your way every time, right. Granted, I -- trust me, I would much rather be in this position than be where I was in 2023, struggling and missing cuts and trying to figure things out, right. So it's going to happen. Like yeah, I don't know what to tell you.

**Q. I always wondered, do you feel like you lost on**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**Sunday or did you get beat on Sunday and then how do you handle that or do you handle it differently mentally afterwards?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, a little bit of both. I felt like -- I've definitely lost tournaments before. This one I felt like I played -- I didn't play horrible, but I didn't play great. I didn't make enough birdies. I shot even par. Russ came out on 14, made birdie, one back, two-shot swing. Then makes eagle on 16.

So I didn't -- it was a little bit of both. That's why I think it's really frustrating, right. If you get beat, you get beat, like I can't do anything about that. But I knew I had more inside of me to control for that day to where I'm like, Man, if I shoot, if I have two more birdies, I win the tournament. So I look at it both ways. And that's why it sucked. That's why you just, you're pissed. But you got to move on.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Collin, thank you for the time this week and best of luck.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Thank you, guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports