

THE PLAYERS Championship

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Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Collin Morikawa

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Collin Morikawa to the interview room here at the 2026 PLAYERS Championship. Collin coming off the solo fifth finish last week at Bay Hill. Three top 10s in a row including your victory at Pebble Beach.

How is the confidence level right now as we arrive here at TPC Sawgrass.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's in a good spot, honestly coming into this year I had a lot of confidence and I think you always do in an off-season trying to work on some things.

The season didn't quite go to plan at least at the start, but was able to just get in the right mindset for Pebble and have been able to just build off of that each week and really just find this little rhythm that I can go out and just play golf and try and compete and win golf tournaments.

THE MODERATOR: This is your sixth appearance at THE PLAYERS. Finished T10 last year, your first top 10. How has your couple for the level on this golf course evolved over the years?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's a weird golf course because there's so much that you have to do right. And there's not one shot that you could just practice on the range and say, like that's going to get me through the week.

There's not one chip shot that you can go to. I played a few holes today and I'm messing around on the greens or around the greens and you drop one ball, you might fluff it, and you honestly can't replicate that again.

So there's a lot of just being able to adapt throughout the week and seeing how the course kind of changes and see how the rough plays out because out here it's just being able to plot yourself around this golf course.

But I love it. I think it's a ball-striking golf course. I think you got to really play out of the fairways, especially with the



rough so far, and it's one of our favorite weeks for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Awesome. We'll open it up to questions.

Q. It's been written and said that your game fits this golf course, but is it ever that easy? You just talked about some of the difficulty of those holes and everything, but is it hard to type cast somebody's game as being, this is a good fit so therefore you should play well here?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think it's impossible. You never know the mindset of going into the week for some guys. You never know what tee shots guys feel more comfortable on.

There's holes out there that -- yeah, I'll give you an example. Like 1 at Augusta. Everyone would like think like it's a perfect fader of a hole. I mean, dogleg right, aim left, hit it right. I like never hit that fairway, okay.

I think it's one of the most uncomfortable tee shots for me. Not because of where you're at, but I just have never gotten comfortable with aiming at a certain tree or a certain part.

So I think, yeah, on paper it's nice. You want courses to fit your golf game because that gives you maybe a slight edge. But you really have to figure out where you're going to attack this golf course, where you're going to play smart, because some holes might feel uncomfortable and might feel more comfortable where you have to take advantage.

Q. Is there a tee shot that you're uncomfortable with out here?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No. I think there's a lot of tee shots where it requires you to work the ball either left or right or right-to-left or hold the winds. I think what makes this golf course great is that you get a lot of different winds throughout the week and I think that's what we're going to see.

So you can't go into the week expecting, hey, I'm going to hit this one tee shot and this is how I'm going to play hole 1 for the week. Like you really have to adjust.



It might be a difference of 5-wood, 3-wood, driver. Hole 1 fore for example, you might hit three different clubs depending on the wind. So you just have to be able to kind of adjust.

Q. Looks like you've added a decent amount of speed coming into this year. Is that something that you worked on in the off-season or where has that speed coming from?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't know, honestly. (Laughing). I think it comes from extra weight. So maybe I'll put on a few more pounds. No, I put a lot of work into my body just to get stronger in general, get healthier, get strong guess, get fitter.

I think that has just maybe replicated into the driver, into a few irons throughout the bag. But it was never my thought to say like I want to hit 178, I want to hit 180, I want to hit 185.

I think I've learned -- I mean I've tinkered around messing around for five minutes on a range trying to see what I could get in years past. But I think what I've realized is that guys always work on their driver, yet if you work on your driver, that's going to kind of lead down to the rest of your clubs and that's going to change the whole entire blueprint of everything else.

So it's been nice to see the numbers that I've been producing out there, even at Pebble and Riv when it's been a little bit cooler. Hopefully we can just kind of keep that routine up. I've got a great team of a couple physios with me, a trainer back at home, and we're putting everything we can to just be healthy and let that play out and let my natural instincts go from there.

Q. One of the things that Akshay said yesterday multiple times is you just never know in this game. Meaning you never are out of it. Curious, as someone who has made comebacks but also who has lost leads late, like is there a universal point on the back nine when you're chasing when you finally tell yourself, okay, this one isn't happening; like I would have to hole out multiple times? Is there a universal point where you think that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. Unfortunately. And there's only so much pressing can you do. Certain courses don't offer the ability to -- you know, we're not finishing par-5, par-5 where you have eagle, eagle opportunities and the realistic, you know, chances of holing out from 180 yards or that.

But it doesn't mean you give up. It doesn't mean you stop. It doesn't mean you quit. It doesn't mean you change the game plan. It just means you just, you know, might have not had it for that week.

Yesterday was great example. It was like I'm kind of playing through, kind of stalled out right around 12. Like I'm not birdieing 12, which is a par-5. I think most guys in the lead are birdieing.

First cut on 13.

14 just right.

And I'm just kind of going through these holes and it's just not quite there. You can't force the fact. Like I can't start attacking pins. But you realize like I get to 16 and you're kind of standing there and you're like -- and at that point I'm not trying to make eagle. I'm just trying to have a great finish, see if we can go birdie, birdie, birdie, essentially hit 10 very, very good quality shots and see where we net out.

And yeah but you truly never know. I could have went eagle, birdie, birdie a couple bogeys here and there, but so you never give up, but you also know like the realistic chances if someone's playing well, them hopping back three shots is not likely.

Q. Is there a come back in your entire golfing life that you like think about like you never know, you could do it, you could go eagle, birdie, birdie?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Don't know. Nothing that comes to mind. I think a lot of my wins have kind of come around being right behind the leaders come Sunday or making the turn and there's like four, five guys. At that point you truly don't know.

You don't know how you're going to feel you don't know what shot's going to change and but you can't convince yourself that like today's the day or you can't tell yourself like, you know, we're going to make this happen.

Like for me I think that when I look back at all those days it's like I'm just trying to play golf, put together scores, and just kind of see where it goes and it's hard to get in that state.

Q. You always have been pretty open about being hard on yourself and how after a tough day you're not fun to be around. What are you like after a round right now when things are going really well?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I was out there tinkering again today. Yeah, I don't know. I'm always trying to get half a

percent better or a percent better. I think I always have to remember what the good is and what the good has gotten me here over the last month and a half let's say, and not forget about the basic structure and those practices and those routines.

But I'm trying to just find a little bit that makes me a little bit more comfortable on the golf course that you might not see you might never see out there when I'm playing, but it's just, you know, we're so good as pros to be able to get away with a lot.

I want to be able to get away with a little bit less and just have a little bit more control when I can.

Q. Say you're in one of your down runs and being really hard on yourself. Do you think the return to form is a result of like that being hard on yourself and pushing, or do you think it comes after a change up on that mentality?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: For me I think going through all this. A lot of it has just had to do with my body. It hasn't really been a mindset. I'm going to continue to be hard on myself. I'm going to continue to find the things I want to keep getting better at.

I do have to realize, like when I'm not playing great I can still put together scores. But a lot of it comes back after I peel the layers farther and farther back to where like from the time I step on property, like do I feel comfortable with my body and myself and going out and playing golf?

I think 2024 is the best example of that is where I put together a lot of great scores, put together a lot of great four-round scores essentially, but I just never felt comfortable because I always tried to Band-Aid things.

I was good at Band-Aiding them. I was good at finding ways. But for me to go out and try and win, I think I can only put so many of those little Band-Aids on. I really have to find the basic structures of who I am and how I golf.

Q. You just kind of talked about it there a little bit, you've been really good about this over not just lately but going back when you were struggling and trying to find this comfort level and trying to explain to us what you're searching for. Curious, have you ever talked to Viktor Hovland, who seems to be a little bit the same way? He won a tournament last year and he came in afterward and he was like sort of bemoaning how he didn't feel good about the way he was hitting it and yet he won. I just wonder if you guys ever compared notes or if you see any of yourself in that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I've spent a lot of time with Viktor and I think it was two years ago maybe when we were at Memphis and I think he needed a real good finish to at least guarantee himself in the TOUR Championship.

He sat there and he was like -- he was ready to just put the clubs away. Like he had no idea. I want to say he almost won that week.

And back to the earlier question, you just never know. And that's what's great about this game, is that for one week a lot of us can put it together. And unfortunately like I'm not -- I am looking for those one weeks, but I'm also not.

I'm trying to build a full career and a long career and just a long season of great golf. That's very hard to do. There's only been a handful of players that have been able to do that over their career.

But, yeah, no, I do see a little bit in myself in what Viktor does and hopefully he probably sees the same. But I'm going to keep harping on this, like I think I found my answer. The fall, November and December, October through December this past year was the first time I put enough time and energy into actually making an effort in fixing my body.

It doesn't mean I'm going to be the same as what I was when I was 22 when I first turned pro. It doesn't mean that I'm going to be the same as three years ago. But I made an effort to actually take care of my body, make it healthy, get out and make sure things are moving properly.

So when I did step out, I'm warming up and I'm hitting shots, I'm not trying to warm-up the body. I'm just trying to warm-up my golf game and just get in sync.

And there's just -- you know, even if it's five minutes less time that's thought about that, it made the biggest difference for me. I think that's been the biggest game changer.

Like even when I started off not great in the season I knew there were just pieces where I actually felt like I was making progress, where before let's say last year when guys are saying oh, you know, and your team is saying, oh, you're making progress.

It's like, you know, they're there to make nice comments, but in reality deep down it might not feel right. And then no player can explain that to anyone else other than yourself. It's hard.

Q. Did it feel right during that stretch 2021, 2020 and 2021 when you won two majors, you won a bunch of

tournaments. Did it feel good during that whole time or was there things wrong then?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, well, I mean, there's always things wrong. You're always trying to tweak things. You're always trying to improve.

I would say I'm still a much better golfer now just because I've learned a lot more and I think I know how to just manage myself.

But swing wise and body mechanics wise, like nothing got in the way. So there's -- I had my tendencies. I knew how to fix those tendencies; whereas last year, two years ago, three years ago, the tendencies were creeping in, but they were creeping in for maybe different reasons.

And then like all the things that used to fix it, let's say I had 10 things that I used to be able to go to, and if I could cross out all 10 of those things, my swing was fixed. Not all 10, but if I just tried one, okay.

That's like -- when those start not working, then you start thinking like, man, like what's wrong? And then you go down another rabbit hole and you keep going down these rabbit holes, and eventually you end up digging yourself a grave, unfortunately.

Q. Last fall the things that you worked on, is there two or three things specifically that you feel like now have come to fruition here in this run that you're having currently?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Worked on like on my body?

Q. Yeah. Exactly. You said you used that time for the first time to really work on your body and whatnot. What are a couple of the things that you think specifically have evolved in that?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: For me it's just getting movement in my lower back. I had a couple lower back stuff throughout the years. And the way I swing the golf club, like I have to be able to turn. I have to be able to separate my lower body, separate the upper body, stay in essentially that bend through the ball, and just kind of rotate.

And it might look fine from afar, it might look fine in video, but when it comes down to it, it might not feel comfortable for me. Not pain wise, but just being able to hit the shots I want and not being able to swing left and hit the cut.

So for me it's just a little more movement in the lower back and free it up from there.

Q. One other thing, players who have to done well here, it's usually taken a few years before -- the winners here, they have played a few times before they have gone ahead and won. How has your approach to this golf course changed over the last few years as you've been playing and getting more familiar with it? And I'm curious if you take a different approach to the course than maybe when you were a rookie?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't think my approach to the course has changed. Look, I think between the, you know, the caddie, my caddie and myself, like being able to navigate a golf course; I think we do a great job.

If we're not doing that, then we're really failing and putting ourselves behind the eight ball to start the week. But I think I've learned maybe around the green shots that I've really needed to focus on a little bit more. Maybe use a different wedge or maybe play a shot with a putter or a 5-wood or use the slope a little bit better.

Just I think over the years you kind of go into this week knowing that it's going to be a little different than other weeks, but from approach wise standpoint, nothing has changed.

Q. Two things: What is your favorite memory of this tournament for yourself, and what's the what's your favorite memory of watching on TV?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Favorite memory is probably JJ making the hole-in-one last year. Yeah, I don't think that will ever be topped, honestly. That was one of the coolest moments in a practice round, in a tournament, like that you could have all time.

TV? Honestly, like I think the most vivid one was probably watching Rickie win it in the playoff. I mean I've seen Tiger's putt a million times.

Q. We all have.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Right. And we've all tried it. Or players have. But I think just watching Rickie come down the stretch, go through that playoff, hitting the shots he did.

I stand on 17 every time and you look at that right pin and you just -- like the times I've played it with the winds we've had and the firmness we've had, like there's just -- I mean it takes a lot to hit that shot.

It's really, really cool to be able to pull that off knowing how tough final rounds are.

Q. Secondly, if you look at the seven or eight

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Signature Events, the four majors, the PLAYERS, the playoff events, 15, 16 tournaments scheduled that way, how do you decide -- and I'll throw the Scottish in there too since it pairs with the Open Championship -- but how do you decide where else to play?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I mean, there's a handful of courses that you really enjoy, right? That you might throw in the schedule.

For me I try and plan around -- like this year I changed it where I wanted to play in blocks. So I think as the season goes on you'll see me playing these blocks of like. Trying to build momentum, trying to use the previous week or the two weeks before and use that as a kicking start to say, man, this is how we're going to go and play.

I'll play Valero before the Masters to try and build off of that heading into Augusta. I did that two years ago. For me, it's just figuring out like what's a good cadence to the year. I think last year I didn't do a great job with that. I felt like I was playing a lot of one on, one offs, two on, one offs, and it's just hard.

It's hard when you go home because like a one off week is not seven day, like it is five day, you get home, you have stuff to do away from the golf course. You got bodywork, you got training. It doesn't end up being seven days and then you got to travel again.

So I'm trying to build in these blocks and that's just kind of looking at the schedule, places I want to play, places I've been before, and seeing how that kind of plays out.

Q. You play Rocket last year I think, didn't you?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I did. Yeah.

Q. Why?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Why not? (Laughing). I actually don't know.

Q. You have an impressive resume of wins. Where does THE PLAYERS rank in events that you would still like to win?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean, it's up there. I know this whole debate on major, not a major, I think, you ask any collegiate golfer, ask any junior golfer, like they obviously want to win the four majors, but you want to win THE PLAYERS.

Look I want to finish off my career and look back one day and say I won THE PLAYERS Championship. It's a

tournament you want to win. So I put it very, very high up there in the list of things I want to get done and I don't think anyone takes this week lightly.

If you see it -- today's weird. Today feels very light out there for the amount of guys that I'm used to seeing at a Monday at a PLAYERS. But I guarantee you tomorrow it will be rowdy, guys will be out there grinding away and you treat it like it matters.

I think you see it in the prep work that guys put in.

Q. And then looking forward to being expectant father, what have preparations for that looked like?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, a lot. A lot of navigating things to buy, things -- I got a lot of things to put together when I get back next week, which I'm not looking forward to. But a lot of exciting things.

I think just getting ready for fatherhood and, you know, just being a parent, it's just going to be the most exciting thing in the world so, we're very happy.

THE MODERATOR: Collin, thank you for the time.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Thanks.

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