

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Friday, March 3, 2023

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Kurt Kitayama

Quick Quotes



Q. (No Microphone.)

KURT KITAYAMA: I think both felt amazing, really. Felt like I was just hitting the ball really well. Obviously today with the conditions it was a lot to tougher. You're still playing away from the pin. Definitely helped that they were not as fast, not as firm. Especially in the morning at least.

You can tell they're starting to get baked out a little bit with the wind. But both felt very similar in how I hit it. Just kind of where I put myself.

Q. Do you seem to enjoy tougher tests and if so why?

KURT KITAYAMA: I don't know. It's just a challenge. It's always a fun challenge keeping yourself in the moment. I feel like when you get conditions like this it's easy to kind of let things get away from you. For me it's just keeping myself focused the entire way. There's no, you can't let up at all mentally.

Q. You put yourself in head-to-head spots against some big players out here on this TOUR. You played around the world. Do you feel like you've pretty much done everything to put yourself in position to win out here?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I think I've put myself in good spots. Right now I feel like I'm just trying to get that win is, you know, it's tough, especially with the guys I've been against. So just got to keep putting myself in that position to give myself a chance.

Q. Am I missing somebody? You had Jon in Mexico and Rory in South Carolina. Was there one other close call you had?

KURT KITAYAMA: Xander in Scotland. Scottish Open.

Q. Even though not winning is not winning, you at least had a good week, but how much confidence does that give you, knowing that you're going toe-to-toe with some of these guys?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, definitely a lot of confidence knowing that I'm able to stay with 'em. You get a couple good breaks and it's your tournament, really. So I just got to try to be right up there until the end.

Q. Your finish, I was curious about the bunker shot on 17. Was that simple? Because it didn't really look all that simple.

KURT KITAYAMA: I had a good lie. Just a little downwind. So get it just running and it would release towards the hole. It wasn't crazy.

Q. What was the club on 18 with the wind?

KURT KITAYAMA: Gap wedge.

Q. Wind was at your back on that one?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah.

Q. Gap wedge?

KURT KITAYAMA: Gap wedge.

Q. You've won in Asia, Europe, Sunshine Tour. Looking for the PGA TOUR win. What's just kind of that journey been like for you?

KURT KITAYAMA: It's been really cool, honestly. Not finding success early here was, yeah, it's disappointing, but it took me somewhere else to grow. And it was growing more than just in golf, really. You get to experience the different cultures, travel. I mean, you find yourself in some interesting spots. Places that you probably wouldn't ever go. So I think just as a person I was able to grow.

Q. How is that going to translate maybe to help carry you to the finish line in a tournament, do you think?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, just dealing with adversity, really. When you're in a random country in Asia and you don't know what you're doing or where you're going, it's pretty frustrating and honestly kind of scary a little bit. No



one speaks your language. So I think that helps you just kind of, I don't know, just grow, just kind of learn from that experience of being in an uncomfortable situation.

Q. You become self reliant.

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, definitely.

Q. I was talking to Taylor Montgomery earlier and he said it's been an awful winter in Vegas, a lot of wind, a lot of cold temperatures. Did that come into play at all for you today? Have you been practicing in bad conditions and maybe did that help you today?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, actually I was playing with Collin last week and it was probably like 40 degrees and blowing 20 or so. It was actually snowing. It was crazy. Yeah, definitely. We were talking about it, it was like, now we're prepared for anything (laughing.) Whatever comes at us, we'll be ready.

Q. You were playing with Collin?

KURT KITAYAMA: Collin, yeah.

Q. How did you end up working with Tim?

KURT KITAYAMA: My brother caddies up at Bandon Dunes. So they built a relationship over the past, I don't know, a long time. So they have always stayed in contact and this was just an opportunity that happened to arise.

Q. What's it meant to have him on your bag?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I mean, he's got a lot of knowledge, a lot of experience. I think that's definitely helped a lot. It's been great just kind of seeing his side and how he works and just kind of getting used to it, really.

Q. You pounded a driver way down 12. What did you have left in there? Also maybe a couple other highlights on the birdies.

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah. 10, I just hit a little cut with the wind. I walked up there and I was like 210 out or something. Ended up hitting like an 8-iron in. Gave myself a good look at eagle.

Then the hole before that, 11, I hit it to like six inches. But I was trying to hit it 20 feet right of the pin and just kind of turned one over a little bit with the wind and it ended up perfect there. That was a good one.

Q. How many languages do you know how to say hello and thank you?

KURT KITAYAMA: I don't know. A lot. A few. A decent amount at least.

Q. The two words you got to know. And then I'm trying to think or -- I'm drawing a blank. You told us at Congaree, one of your earlier wins, pretty small tour, pretty small purse and you got, feel like you got paid in cash?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, that was the Asian Development Tour.

Q. ADT. Okay.

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah. So I had just gotten my Asian Tour card. And then I went down to Singapore to play -- I Monday qualified into the Asian Tour event. I had like a week off where I could play on the Development Tour. And I won that.

Q. Where was it?

KURT KITAYAMA: In Malaysia. And they paid me out in cash.

Q. What did you do with it? Was it like in a bag or a briefcase?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, pretty much. Yeah. It was quite -- I forget what the currency was. But it was a lot of cash. I made paid my caddie off and then took the rest and --

Q. Looked over your shoulder the whole way?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah. (Laughing.) Pretty much.

Q. It's different now.

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah.

Q. What have the games back home in Vegas with Xander and Collin, what have they done with your development? How have they affected that?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I mean, I think just playing with players that are better than you, either you're going to just lose a lot of money or you got to step it up and play -- even if you lose a little bit you're still trying to get better and keep learning from them and just get better, really.

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