

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Collin Morikawa

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Collin Morikawa to the interview room here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Collin, you're making your sixth start in this event where you have a couple top 10s. What are you looking forward to this week at Bay Hill?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, just another good week. One of the most more challenging golf courses we have all year. It's nice to come off a couple good finishes and see how your game stacks up. But this course, you just could never let up, and it's going to be a grind starting tomorrow morning all the way through Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: You just mentioned difficulty of the course. Just finished up your pro-am here. What are you seeing out there so far?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, they have changed a lot of rough areas into some tightly-mown areas, some fringe areas, and some holes play easier, some play tougher, but the greens just, when they start getting dryer as it goes on through the week, they're just very, very difficult to hit. You just have to really, really be patient out there because you might not have a stretch of holes where you're making a birdie, but pars are really good for essentially throughout the end of the week. If you're under par you're going to be probably near the top of the leaderboard.

THE MODERATOR: T-7 I believe in your most recent start. Feel like the game's kind of in a good place right now before this busy stretch?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's frustrating because you're always trying to work on things, and you're always trying to find little things on how to get better, but you also want to keep what you're doing really well. For me it's just to continue the mindset that I've been having, really good head space, and just being able to hit the shots that I know I've been able to hit before.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll open it up to questions.

**Q. I'm sure you saw the news, but Luke Donald has been named the Ryder Cup captain for the third consecutive cycle for Europe, which is a big departure from how Ryder Cup captaincies have gone before. What do you make of a guy captaining a team for the third straight time?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. I know there's precedent set ahead before. But I know personally, through Luke Donald, he's an amazing human being. It sounds like their team loves him and they have kind of found that groove. So good for them and they're going to be great team come next year.

**Q. You touched on head space a minute ago. Last year when you came in you were trying to break a drought. Now you come in with a win just a few weeks ago. How does that change maybe the way you walk into Bay Hill and approach this tournament?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think just overall mindset, I've been a lot -- happier is not the right word -- but just in a lot better of a head space to trust my golf game. I put in a lot of work over the off-season to get there, a lot of work into the body to make sure I could go and hit those shots and execute those shots. The first couple events of the season didn't see the results, but you just know you're going to keep working at it, right. That's part of what we're doing is that, even though you finish T-50th or you miss a cut, it's a couple shots away from doing great and essentially contending. It changes a little bit, but at the same time, I know how difficult this golf course is, you feel good, that doesn't mean you're going to play well. That's, this is a golf course, and even next week, like you just have to stay on top of everything and just not get too complacent with anything. I've been really focused over this last week to really make sure to just tighten everything up out here and off we go tomorrow.

**Q. Your ball striking always of course always grabs the headlines, but for those two top finishes on the West Coast Swing it was your putter that really was a huge asset towards giving you the win and the T-7. Talk about the freedom you feel on the greens right now and how you plan to translate that as we go to a**



**different part of the country, of course fast Bermuda this week at Bay Hill.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I would say over the last three years I've learned a lot about putting, I've learned a lot about the mechanics of putting, where things need to be. And I just lost a lot of the feel aspect. There's that fine line. Again, you have to balance doing the right things, but also just playing golf. I hadn't been playing golf, especially on the greens. So even those good weeks that felt okay and I was making putts, I wasn't able to just turn the switch on and say, Man, putts are going in. I think we saw that at Pebble where you just have a slight mindset adjustment, a slight feel adjustment and it's just, you just, you're on repeat. Those are the weeks you have to capitalize.

But obviously at Riviera I felt good going into that week as well. So just kind of sticking to the same things for this week. A lot faster greens. They look a lot different. You got a little bit of grain, but they're going to be very, very dry and baked out by end of the week. So you kind of have to just manage that on how you play your putts.

**Q. Two things: If you had a one-shot lead that you were trying to hang on to, would you rather, would you feel more comfortable standing on the 16th tee at Bay Hill or Sawgrass?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: You love hypotheticals.

**Q. I love your answers. Make it a good one.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, 16th tee here?

**Q. Or Sawgrass.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Or Sawgrass. Where would I feel more comfortable? I think, comfort-wise, I would probably take here. I would probably take here. I mean, 16 at Sawgrass. 17, middle right pin, you're going to hit it to 25 feet left. 18, you just have to hit a good shot off the tee. If you have a one-shot lead, like you're not bailing out, you're not playing safe -- that's not the right word -- like you are committing to your shot.

So I would say probably Bay Hill, just because 17 here is so tough that birdies aren't really happening that often. Birdies are happening a little bit more often probably at Sawgrass. 18's probably very similar between the two.

**Q. Was that a bad hypothetical?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, no, but you love hypotheticals.

**Q. Secondly, Joel Dahmen last year finished at 122 on**

**the FedExCup, and he's playing in this Signature Event. Is there a message in there somewhere?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I think there's different lenses you can look at it. I don't know if I've thought about it, but I think it just shows the strength of professional golf, right. That's kind of part of why people love seeing maybe slightly bigger fields, seeing the underdog story come up, is that on a given week there's a lot of guys in the world that can play golf. But at the same time opportunities aren't just handed out to everyone, you have to go and earn it. If you are given an opportunity -- and that's how I looked at it when I first turned pro -- these are opportunities that sponsors are giving me, I have to take advantage. And if I don't, you know, who knows what's going to happen or who knows what path you're going to lead down. But Joel was given an opportunity, I think throughout this year, a couple sponsor exemptions. He's taken that opportunity and turned it into something great. I'm pretty sure he's kind of set on a full schedule, I'm assuming, for the rest of the year. But it just shows that, you know, there's a lot of good golfers out there and it's just, you just can never, you know, put your, or let your foot off the gas, essentially.

**Q. You mentioned a couple minutes ago talking about getting into the right head space, improving your head space, and also on the West Coast this year making a little more putts and having a little bit more success with that. I saw that some guys brought you some different putters to try and test this week. Is there ever a point when you sort of say, like, I'm shutting it down as far as the equipment stuff goes, I'm focused on my game and what's there is what I've got to focus just on this. Or do you need to sort of always be open to, like, if somebody who knows my game well brings me something, I need to go through and give that a little bit of time.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I'm the worst. You should see my house and you should see my conversations with the TaylorMade guys, they're really fun. I'm sure they hate me by now. I do a lot of testing based on feel. And feel's very hard to explain to people, and then to club fitters and even other players because everyone's different. So I brought up to James, who, James Holley, who has fitted nearly all of us in our Spiders, and I was like, Look, we're going to be going on a lot faster greens, they're going to look a lot faster, they're going to play faster, they're going to be baked. There's a certain ball speed I like off the face. So the insert I'm using I believe is the same insert is like what Scottie, Rory, Tommy, it's kind of the stock insert that a lot of people use in the Spiders. And for me it's just like, let's just check a box. So they were great. I gave 'em a couple weeks, they put up a few putters, I hit putts for maybe 10 minutes with those and then I was done.

Because it was something that, like you're going to know in an instant. It's like for us when we hit drivers and we test drivers and even though the head and numbers look good, you just know that it's not right. Similar to that, like that's kind of what I go through. So I do that a lot, not necessarily on irons, when I find my woods I leave my woods alone. But wedges I tend to mess around with a lot, 60s, and putters. But I'm very, very happy, I'm sticking with the same one I've been using, and it's just, and it's nice because it just confirms that like what I'm feeling over this putter is kind of what I'm looking for. I just wanted to test other ones to make sure that.

**Q. There's never a time when like the tinkering around just stops.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No. No. Sadly not. At least not for me.

**Q. Two things? First, did you ever want or desire to chase speed?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean I've been close. I've been close to thinking about it. I put on, like I said at Pebble, I put on about 10 pounds, probably netting out around eight being on the road so much. That's probably given me a little bit of speed. The tough thing is is like if I do -- I've thought about it. If I do go down that road, more of the, more often than not guys are just chasing speed with their driver. So then they forget their swing with their irons. For me, honestly, I kind of have different swing thoughts for a driver and an iron. So if I try and work on the driver, who knows how that's going to affect my irons. And that's essentially what I rely a big chunk of my game on. So I've thought the narrative back and forth. I don't know. I mean, I saw what Pebble was at, I think I'm a little faster this year. If I'm swinging 75 to 77 I feel very, very comfortable out there.

**Q. Second, I just didn't know, do you ever remember watching this tournament as a kid, any of Tiger's kind of iconic putts or anything?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I've definitely seen Tiger's putts a lot. I mean, I think every time you step on 18 and you hit a couple practice putts you're hitting that swinging left to right, you know, just kind of essentially envisioning yourself making it come Sunday. So, there's some good memories throughout the years, for sure.

**Q. Couple weeks ago I read about the shot that Scottie Scheffler has. It's kind of like a gap between two numbers, and he chokes down, but it still goes high and spins perfect for a place like this. I'm interested, was that a shot that you've been cognizant on working**

**on, and have you mastered it, and if not, is there another shot that is kind of your go to in a place like this with hard firm greens?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, like I control a lot of my distance with curve. So instead of like choking down and slowing anything, essentially I'll speed things up and make it curve more. The problem with that is sometimes you can't curve it in as much. So I wouldn't say I've mastered that shot, but I would say a lot of my distance control comes from how much cut and spin I'm putting on the ball. Spin's key. I'm not someone that hits it that high and compared to some guys, like Rory. I just know there's some pins and some greens that I just can't go after. I just take my medicine, I try and be really diligent about picking the right spots and numbers and go from there. But I wouldn't say it's something that I like have to go and master. Just because I know my game. If I start adding in that shot I don't really know what my misses are going to be and who knows what's going to happen.

**Q. How long did it take for you to get over not closing last year and what did you learn from that final round that's helped you move forward?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I don't know if you really get over any of your losses. I think whenever you show up at a certain event you just, you think back at a lot of great shots and then you think back at some shots that you kind of let slip away, right. I think the biggest thing for me is I've just put a lot of focus, especially into the last couple months of last year just into doing the right things with the body, doing the right things with the swing, kind of going back and taking a step back and into what really built my golf game. It's not because -- I mean, shoot, I remember that Saturday I think someone told me like how many days I had not won and I'm like, Thank you (laughing). I didn't need to hear that. But at the same time in the end it doesn't really matter. I'm still going to go out, test new clubs, I'm still going to go out try new shots, try and play better golf. I think the biggest thing, you just keep going and looking at your self is just saying, hey, like we're going to keep knocking at the door and hopefully we just knock it down at some point and be able to build off of that. Like I said, Mark O'Meara offered me a lot of great advice, and he says there's a lot of ups and there's a lot of downs, you just have to be able to just kind of mellow those out and enjoy the process, enjoy the ride. And it's easy to say enjoy, but enjoy is not really how it's all through and through, right? It's a grind. But you have to be present in that grind. I think I've done a decent job of doing that. But trust me, it's never fun.

**Q. What's your favorite Masters tradition?**



COLLIN MORIKAWA: I don't really know. Like what? Like what? Can you give me examples?

**Q. Could be having a pimento cheese sandwich.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Like going there?

**Q. Watching the ceremonial first shot.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I take their pencils every year. I probably shouldn't say that. They have gone too longer pencils, so now I'm screwed.

**Q. What about all those Pebble ones?**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Pebble's are staying in the bag, but, you know, I always take a couple, I guess, pencils.

**Q. I don't know if you saw the end of Cognizant, I'm sure you've probably heard about it. I'm just curious, what could you -- what do you think -- and I could ask this directly of you, but I would be more curious from a TOUR player's standpoint, what they see compared with what the public sees, because I'm sure you have all been through that.**

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean golf's just tough. Golf's tough. I mean, I'll brief on like Hawaii three years ago, me against Rahm. I made the turn six shots up or something. Cruising, making birdies, doing fine, like not thinking. Sometimes it just hits you. Like you just run into a wall. And it's hard to explain how that wall shows up, but, and it's not about not being present, it's not about doing this, doing that, but like I compare what Pebble was like, and I make a bogey on 5, and I'm like, Man, I've got the rest of the day to go out and win this golf tournament. And yet I had maybe a four-shot lead when I made my first bogey at Hawaii and I'm like, holy, I was like, uh-oh. And you can't, you can never predict that. You can never practice that. You can never talk yourself out of that. Sometimes it just happens. It's very hard to get out of it. So what has happened through that, it's just golf. Like there's so many shots that are needed to be executed. Sometimes numbers work out. Nico, the shot he hit on 17 was, I wouldn't say perfect, but it was probably just a perfect number to where he just slightly missed it right and it covers, right? Maybe for Shane it was just a little bit of a tweener, and he just kind of fanned it. So it's amazing how certain events just kind of roll like that. And I mean, I feel for him. It's amazing golf from Nico. But I've gone through it, it just sucks. It's just part of golf, unfortunately, and Shane did a great job handling it.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thanks for the time, Collin.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Thanks, everyone.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports