

Zurich Classic of New Orleans

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TPC Louisiana

Collin Morikawa

Kurt Kitayama

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Collin Morikawa and Kurt Kitayama to the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. You paired up together last year, so running it back this year. I think it's probably the definition of a comfy pairing, both being in Vegas and playing together a lot off the road. Open us up and talk about your excitement for the week.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I'm coming off my best finish with Kurt here, T23 last year. But no, look, part of this week is having fun. At the end of the day, we still want to win. You have a little bit of a balance of both.

Kurt and I play pretty much every day we're home, not just against each other, with each other, and it just makes this week more enjoyable sometimes to just go out -- we've kind of had some mixed results recently, and for us I think it's how do we relax like we do at home and feed off each other, and we know how to feed off our energy, and as long as one of us hopefully takes charge and makes a few birdies, then you can pull away from that, and that's what we're looking for this week.

THE MODERATOR: Kurt, being able to play with Collin, obviously very familiar, but just on this stage, talk a little bit about that.

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, definitely. It's fun we get to battle at home, and then now we get to pair up. We've had a couple good team matches at home, as well, so hopefully we can do that here.

Q. Was there anything you guys learned from last year, your strategy on this golf course playing together that you're applying to this year at all?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: For us, it just comes down to making putts. We hit it really well. We kept it in play last year. The tough tee shots that you do have to put it in play, we did. It just always comes down to putts.



I think when you see the format and certain teams and certain players that play really well this week, it always comes down to making putts, but it's because they're just a little bit more relaxed, and it's how do we get that setting and just say, okay, we're just going to go out and freely play. There's a freedom to that, and when you play really good golf and when guys are winning tournaments you're playing free. Sometimes this team format allows that.

Q. Kurt, you guys play a lot at home. How important is it do you think in a setting like this and a format like this that you have a really good relationship with your partner? How many strokes would you say that's worth?

KURT KITAYAMA: I mean, I couldn't put strokes on it, but it definitely helps when you kind of mesh together and you kind of feed off each other's momentum and someone is playing well and can kind of pick someone up. Having a good chemistry like that will definitely help.

Q. You're the highest ranked player here in the field amongst the Americans in terms of Ryder Cup point. You're actually the only one in the top 10 on the point list that is here. Does that surprise you, or is it the fact that when this event happens to come on the schedule that this would be a logical time when a lot of players who might be in that position, they're going to probably take this week off?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I think more to your latter point. It's a tough part in the schedule, but I think it's drawn a solid field the years I've played, and that shows it, too. But you look at the Europeans and they've got four or five Euro-Euro -- four or five true Euro pairings that you could potentially see guys making the team.

But back to your question before, you can play really well with someone you've never met before and you can play really well with someone you play with at home every day. It just comes down to you playing good golf. How do you do that the best? Sometimes you play more relaxed when you're in a comfortable setting, and for me that's playing with Kurt every day when we're home.



Yeah, I do wish you saw a few more players out here, but we're still, what, months away from really trying to figure out and dialing in team golf in September.

Q. Obviously the format, we're not going to be playing singles out here and such like that. The format is very similar. How do you even compare the pressure that you would face if you're in contention here Saturday, Sunday to Ryder Cup, Presidents Cup which is ratcheting it up? Is the experience that you would get here as a team as valuable as people would think, or is it maybe not quite because the pressure is so different?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: There's a little bit of both. You can't take away just experience being with someone else that might be on that team, just playing in formats like this. Now look, at home, you're playing a lot of best ball. You're not really playing a lot of alternate shot, but you do play a lot of best ball at home and that's a format in the Ryder Cup.

But going back to that point, it's so far away that at the end of the day, you just -- I think when you talk about pressure, pressure of winning a golf tournament is a lot different because you feel a lot of that pressure coming down the last stretch of golf, the last nine holes, the last three holes, the last hole.

At a Ryder Cup, you feel that on the first tee. You feel that before you even get -- warming up you're feeling your hands and you're feeling your body just in a different position. You have to learn how to take that on the first hole and play that all the way through, versus winning a tournament there's waves and there's kind of ups -- there's ebbs and flows of your energy and how you feel throughout that round.

Q. For both of you, people always talk about coming here and the food and New Orleans and everything, the cuisine. I imagine everywhere you guys go the tournament organizers and people try and lavish nice food on you. Do you really have to watch it here? You don't want to go out there and feel, oh, I just can't -- I don't feel good swinging the club the next day after a big meal.

KURT KITAYAMA: I mean, I think that's one of the best parts about this tournament is the food. Being Collin's partner, he knows all the spots. So we get to have some really good team dinners, and it's a lot of fun.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah. I mean, I always take people to go to Shaya. It's Israeli/Mediterranean food. I could order anything off that menu and be happy and be satisfied

and just say I want to come back.

Obviously we're here in New Orleans, a lot of seafood, a lot of Cajun, a lot of fried food. I did that my first year and I did not feel good, so I try and stay away as much as I can, maybe do one night. We have our team dinners. We go out with other friends. It's a fun week to go out and have food because there's so much, and every year you kind of try something new essentially.

Q. Could you sort of explain how you create your schedule? Collin, you've got your schedule sort of made up, Kurt, you've got yours. Could you talk about how you go about it and when you create your schedule? Is it something that's done in November and December a year ahead of time you map it out or is it quarterly you decide this is how I do it?

KURT KITAYAMA: I'd say more quarterly because you get off to a really good start, get in the Signature Events, take some off. If you're not playing how you want to play, you might add some more events in to try and get into a rhythm.

I think for the most part, you can kind of see what you're going to play, but then as you play throughout the year, you might want to add some, take some off, and that's kind of how it goes.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I'm a little different. I'm in the bigger events, so I pretty much by December -- once the schedule all comes out, we're looking at it, once I have time to settle in. Everything is pretty much set in stone. There's always maybe a change one tournament here or there, maybe you fill it in, maybe it fits -- you're not playing well, whatever. But for me it's pretty much I've got it all highlighted out, that's what I'm going to do, and you go out and play some golf.

Q. Collin, earlier today Zurich announced they're extending their title sponsorship of the Zurich Classic of New Orleans through 2030. As a Zurich ambassador, how exciting is that for you, someone who's been associated with them and their brand for such a long time?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, look, I think as professional golfers you don't realize the impact sometimes a tournament and the sponsors make on these cities, and Zurich has been an amazing partner to the city of New Orleans, to the state of Louisiana.

I think when you think of the team event, you don't just think of it as a team event in New Orleans, we think of it as the Zurich Classic. That means a lot. You think of certain



things that we play for, the FedExCup, we play for the FedExCup. We don't just play for the season end we all want to win the FedExCup. Zurich Classic is very tied into this team golf aspect, especially now since they have changed the format to the city of New Orleans. To see another partnership, a renewal another five, six years is amazing and that means a lot to us players because look, this is a tournament where a lot of guys are getting an opportunity say on the bottom half of the TOUR to go out, have a lot of fun, but also just play well.

You always see a team -- shoot, what was it last year, I think it was Chad Ramey and Martin Trainer, right, in a playoff against Rory McIlroy and Shane Lowry. You're going to have teams in the top 10 I think make a name for themselves or give themselves a chance to, one, keep their card, make the Playoffs, and maybe kind of kick start their season if they haven't had what they want. Thank you to Zurich for doing that because it means a lot, and the players definitely appreciate that.

Q. We're at a Pete Dye course and a lot of people have strong opinions about Pete Dye courses. Do you like them? Have you made yourself like them? They're visually intimidating shots out there. Is there as much of that here as, say, Sawgrass or some of the other ones you play?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Not as much. Look, my favorite are Alister MacKenzie golf courses. I grew up on a 10-hole Alister MacKenzie course, Chevy Chase out in LA, where I grew up. Not many 10-hole golf courses out there.

But different styles -- as you play a lot of golf, you get to learn the styles and how architects see the golf course and how they play out.

There's really not many better courses than Sawgrass, like just from a design aspect and the conditions. You add everything about that week, THE PLAYERS, it just makes it a great week. But this is a great golf course.

I was sweating out there, and it wasn't even that sunny. So humidity, temperature-wise changes it, but it's a very good golf course. It's not as challenging off the tee for some, but there are tee shots where you just have to put it in the fairway and you have to stay away from the trouble. You've got hole 4, water on the right; hole 6, water on the left; hole 9, water on the left. There's holes where you just have to play away from the hazard. That's what it's going to take this week.

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