

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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KURT KITAYAMA



MODERATOR: Like to welcome Kurt Kitayama here to the interview room at the 3M Open.

Kurt, defending champion, I guess I'll just open up with how are you feeling coming back to this tournament and how does it compare to other events being the defending champ?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, come back as the defending champ always feels good. You don't get to do it that often. Take it in, just recall the memories that I had last year.

MODERATOR: When you think back to the win last year, what are some of those first couple memories that come to mind?

KURT KITAYAMA: Probably the third round 60, that was a big memory of mine. To have a round like that in general is pretty special.

I feel like the front nine on the weekend, it was like 29, 28, that was really good. Just hope to kind of fall back on those memories.

MODERATOR: You mentioned the third round 60 last year. In your eight rounds at TPC Twin Cities you're 36 under, so obviously it works for you. What about this course meshes well with your game?

KURT KITAYAMA: I'm not sure. Since I first came here two years ago and last year, just seems that the course just kind of fits me. I'm not sure what it is, but just have played well on it. Nothing kind of sticks out.

MODERATOR: And then last one from me before we open it up to media, coming into the week 32nd in the FedExCup standings, I think four top-10s this season, can you kind of assess your year and how you feel like you performed up to this point?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, overall I'm really happy with where I am and how I've played this year, especially more so the beginning to middle part of the season. Just want to keep up how I'm playing and finish strong.

Q. Is there anything you're trying to do different this year going into the tournament? Are you trying to keep everything the same?

KURT KITAYAMA: For the most part, everything's the same. Go through the practice rounds, see how the course is playing, the conditions, how the greens are. You check out the past pin locations. Feel like overall the prep stays the same. Might get different wind, but



looks like it will be somewhat similar to last year. You kind of take it day to day when you come to preparing for the week.

Q. And regardless of form, whatever year it is, when you stop at a place like this or Bay Hill, a place where you've won before, do you have a different feeling when you're on site? Does it give you a little boost, I guess?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, it's nice to know that I have good results here. To come back to a place that I've played well at definitely helps to fall back on what I've done in the past and know that even if the game doesn't feel that good, that you can still play well.

Q. Kurt, you said on media day that Friday when you went to the range, just barely making the cut, you found something. Can you describe what it is you found and how did you know that that was going to translate?

KURT KITAYAMA: Go to the range and search for something that will help and you get one feeling that kind of sticks all of a sudden and you kind of take that to the next day. Just happened that that weekend it worked out. Not necessarily something that's like long term. But I honestly didn't know that after the range session on Friday, I didn't know that was going to be something that was going to stick. Just something that happened.

Q. Kurt, where's the trophy? Where do you keep the trophy? What did you do with it?

KURT KITAYAMA: It's at home. It's on a nice shelf right next to my Bay Hill trophy. It's in a good spot.

Q. Your brother said you guys didn't really celebrate that night, but was there ever a point where you did kind of celebrate what it meant to get a win?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, I think when we got home. We had a long stretch I felt like right after, we went straight to Wyndham, then we got into Memphis, got into BMW, so didn't really have time to celebrate until after that. I think we probably went out to a nice dinner in Vegas when we got home and got to take it all in.

Q. You're in great shape for the Playoffs this year, but when you came here a year ago you were 110th. What was the pressure like feeling like your season's running out of time?

KURT KITAYAMA: I tried not to put any pressure on it because I knew like at that point I still had my exemption from Bay Hill for like my Tour card. So it was more like just go out there and try and figure something out really, have a good week. I think luckily I was able -- you know, wasn't worried about my Tour card so I could just kind of go out there and play. Not as much pressure as you would think.

Q. And when you look back at what worked for you last year, how did that translate



into this season and being 32nd?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, just being able to finish the season that well and having that kind of roll into this year definitely helped because all year last year I was struggling. Felt like I was close though. Then for it to finally click after this week and then onwards kind of rolled into this season and help me get off to a good start.

Q. What do you feel like you've done well this year?

KURT KITAYAMA: I think my putting's improved quite a bit from last year, two years. Ball-striking's been similar, but I think just been making a lot more putts this year.

Q. Is there any reason you feel like you had so much more success on the front nine versus the back nine on this course?

KURT KITAYAMA: I feel like I had a few more wedges maybe on the front nine. I hit those close on the weekend. Back nine maybe playing a little tougher. You know, coming down the stretch, maybe a little more conservative.

Q. Kurt, from a fan standpoint, Scottie being here's obviously created more of a buzz and excitement. I'm curious, when he's in the field is it any different for you guys or is it just business as usual?

KURT KITAYAMA: I think it's cool that you get the No. 1 player playing a tournament that you're playing in. I think it's great to have a strong field having -- being able to have those guys. You want to play against the best, so it's great to have him in the field when you're playing.

MODERATOR: Kurt, first two rounds grouped with Billy Horschel and Jackson Koivun. Jackson's caddie, David Flynn, who you played with in college. Can you talk a little bit about what that experience will be like?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, we went to school together, so when I got out here, got to see him more because I think he left early. Should be fun. It's fun, he'll be walking around the course when we're playing a practice round, hang out, so looking forward to it.

Q. And then with Jackson, have you played a round with him? He's kind of in this group of the young up-and-coming players. Can you kind of talk a little bit about this surge of these new younger players coming up whether that's through PGA TOUR U or Korn Ferry Tour?

KURT KITAYAMA: Yeah, definitely seen his game, kind of watched it on TV. Great player obviously. I'm kind of excited to see that firsthand.

I think with the new PGA TOUR U, such a good opportunity for the college guys to get out



here. and they've had a lot of success, so great opportunity.

Q. Going back to Scottie, what do you admire about his game? Do you have any fun stories of playing with him that you can share?

KURT KITAYAMA: I don't know if I've actually ever played with him, maybe like once. Obviously you watch on TV and his demeanor's really good. He, you know, seems like one shot at a time, doesn't let it affect the next shot. Just how he goes about attacking a golf course, how his ball-striking's obviously unbelievable. Yeah, I mean, just all around just fun to watch.

Q. Anything from his game that you try to take away?

KURT KITAYAMA: I mean, everyone wants to hit it like him, but no one has a swing like he swings it. I think his whole demeanor and the mental side of it, how he handles the pressure I think is something to admire.

MODERATOR: Any more questions for Kurt? All right. Thanks for the time, Kurt. Best of luck this week.

KURT KITAYAMA: Thank you.

