

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW: HIDEKI MATSUYAMA (-16)
August 6, 2017



MICHAEL BALIKER: Like to congratulate our 2017 World Golf Championships Bridgestone Invitational winner Hideki Matsuyama.

Hideki, you mentioned on the green you played with Tiger in 2013 when he shot his 61, and then you made history yourself today by shooting your own 61. Just talk about how special this day was.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I did play with Tiger four years ago, watched him shoot 61. I just couldn't believe it that anyone could shoot a 61 on this golf course. And then from that point, to work hard and to be able to do it today is a dream come true.

MICHAEL BALIKER: Before we start questions, Hideki, the win puts you No. 1 in the FedExCup standings. Where does winning the FedExCup rank in your goals for the rest of the year?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I'm thrilled to be No. 1 on the FedEx list right now, but in order to win the FedExCup, you have to win one of the playoff tournaments and hopefully I can do that and keep the momentum going.

Q. Hideki, congratulations. Given how you were hitting it on the range during warmups, what was your level of concern and how did you turn it around on the course?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Last night after the round, I went to the range and hit it really well and had a lot of confidence. Then I came to the golf course this morning and I don't know where it went. It was probably the worst warmup I've ever had on a tournament that I've won. I was shocked, and The First Tee shot showed it. I hit it left, but something about that shot, something clicked and from that point on, I was able to find it again.

Q. Hideki, just wondering what do you think the reaction will be like in your home of Japan to this stunning victory?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I'm not sure, but hopefully there's a lot of celebration going on.

Q. And do you think the entire nation will be tuning in to hopefully watch you become its first major champion next week?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I hope their expectations aren't too high, but my expectations really at the beginning of this week weren't that high, either, and here we are. Maybe I'll try that next week, just not have too many -- too high of expectation, not set the bar too high and hopefully we'll have a good outcome.

Q. You mentioned it briefly a minute ago, but a little birdie had told me you closed down the range last night basically. Do you pride yourself on how hard you work because they had said to me that you just outwork everyone and that might be why you are so successful.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I always want to be able to do my best. In order to do my best, I need to work and if I'm not at my best, that's why I'm at the range, trying to prepare that I can do my best.

Q. Is it the greatest yet?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I don't know.

THE INTERPRETER: He thought there was an article about LeBron and Kobe and Michael Jordan, who is the best. So can't compare, yeah.

Q. What did you say, Kobe or LeBron?

THE INTERPRETER: He's not sure. Wait a minute. This is Cleveland, isn't it? LeBron. Yeah, LeBron.

Q. Over the years that you've been here competing a lot in the U.S., can you discuss just the difficulties that you have faced in spending a lot of time in a new country, adapting to a different culture and language, and how much did that impact your ability to play good golf?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: There's been a lot of different things. The English especially is -- I would love to be able to speak with all of you right now and I wouldn't need Bob and I could -- every day would be no stress and I could enjoy life and everything and get to know everybody. How that converted over to good golf, I don't know if it helped or not, but I do look forward to the day that I can converse with all of you in English.

Q. Hideki, why were your expectations not high at the beginning of the week?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I went back to Japan after the British Open, didn't touch a club all week, and so probably that was the main reason my expectations were low. But I worked hard early in the week and every day I seem to get closer and closer to where I wanted to be. Never thinking I would be sitting here right now talking with all of you.

Q. You obviously at every tournament spend a lot of time speaking with the media from Japan and obviously that's going to be a lot more comfortable than thank you with us. But do you enjoy that part of it? Obviously you're very famous at home and there's a lot of interest in you, and do you enjoy speaking about yourself and going through it all every day like you do?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: That's a good question. Is there any Japanese media here? I wouldn't call it fun. It's something I don't look forward to, but I played in Europe three weeks and there wasn't any Japanese media, not many there, so it's nice now to be able to speak with the media again and I'm enjoying it more and more, and I'm sure I'll enjoy it even more later on today after this interview.

Q. A couple questions but to follow up on that, as much time as he spends with Ryo, did you ever talk to him about how he handles the media or even ask to borrow his chair?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: No, he hasn't given me any advice and I don't have a chair, but he speaks a lot better English than I do, and so hopefully some day.

Q. When you started that really nice stretch from the Japan Open really all the way through to Phoenix, why is it hard to maintain that level of play, and is it hard to kind of get back to that?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: It's tough to be able to putt well and hit good golf shots all at the same time. Even after that good run, I hoped I could continue on, but it didn't happen and I was hoping to do better. But I think this week especially the mental aspect of the game played a big part in my victory. I was able to control my emotions, I felt calm, peaceful, didn't try to get too high or too low and I think that was one of the major reasons why I was successful this week.

Q. Off the back of that, just how elite do you feel? Clearly elite, but how elite do you feel and how comfortable do you feel amongst your peers now?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Elite, again, it's difficult to compare my game with the game of my peers, number one. They have majors, I haven't won a major yet. I have a lot of work left to do. But that's not to say that I don't have confidence. I'm going to keep working and keep preparing and doing my best and hopefully some day I can reach that level that my peers have.

Q. I have to ask him not only obviously about being on the Presidents Cup team but more importantly how he should now be seen as the leader of that team. He's the No. 1 in that group, is he prepared to take that leadership role?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I might be ranked on top, but I've had three wins and that has put me where I am on the list. However, there's some great players on that team, so to be the leader, I mean, there's Jason Day. Jason hasn't had his best year maybe, but what a great player he is. There's some great leaders on that Presidents Cup team and hopefully we can gel together and bring one home.

Q. Considering all the challenges with the language and everything, is there any part

of when you play in the U.S. that you feel more comfortable with?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: I guess one of the most comfortable things is my relationship and camaraderie that I have with my fellow players. Like you said, hopefully my English can get better so I can converse with them more and get to know them more, but that's the one thing that I really enjoy about playing here on the PGA Tour in America, is the association that I have with my fellow players.

Q. The calm, peaceful feeling you had on the course today, how hard is it to have that feeling in the majors when there is this expectation that you can do something that nobody, no man in your country has done before?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: That peaceful and calm feeling that I had today, hopefully that's how I play, and hopefully in the weeks to come I can continue that demeanor. Someone like Jordan Spieth, who is more exuberant, more -- shows more emotion than I do, if I did that, I don't know if I could play my best golf, but for Jordan, that's who he is and it works well for him. Hopefully, being calm and peaceful and not getting too high, not getting too low is who I am and hopefully I can continue that and people will understand that's who I am.

Q. That was a wonderful round of golf, by the way. I was wondering, was there one shot out there today that you could pick that made you happier than any of the rest?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: The tee shot at 18. That was a perfect tee shot for me.

Q. What club for the second?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: 56-degree.

Q. Not to end this on such a high-tech note, but where do you keep all your trophies?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: At my house.

Q. Where, I mean where in the house and why did he choose that spot?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: They're just around. I like to see them.

Q. All together?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: No, they're all throughout the house.

Q. Where does that one go?

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA: Not sure, maybe in the dining room.

MICHAEL BALIKER: Hideki, congratulations.

