

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 20, 2019



BROOKS KOEPKA

MARK WILLIAMS: Welcome, Brooks Koepka, to the interview room at the 2019 World Golf Championships Mexico Championship. Brooks, you're back here after a couple years. You played the first one and sat out the second one with a wrist injury, but after that you went nuts and won a couple majors and did all sorts of good things. So, just your thoughts being back here at Chapultepec.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it's nice to be back. I like this golf course. It makes you think a lot off the tee and really position your ball where you want it to be. You can hit driver and be very aggressive, a couple flip wedges in, or you can play it safe and you're still going to have some wedges, short irons in. So, it all depends, a little bit of the wind direction, and in trying to keep out of these trees.

MARK WILLIAMS: We haven't seen you on the PGA tour since the Sentry Tournament of Champions, but we know you played in the Middle East a few weeks. What have you been up to in that time period and how are you feeling getting ready to get back into it this week?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, obviously didn't play as well as I wanted overseas. But I came back, worked hard this last week and a half, and the game feels in good shape. Got everything squared away, and excited to start playing. Got four weeks in a row here, so it will be nice, and kind of build some rhythm going into Augusta.

Q. Stricker was named the captain this morning.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Was he?

Q. Officially named the captain. Why is that a good selection, and what makes Stricker make you want to play more?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Strick is awesome. First off, being in home state, everything, I think that's -- it's really cool for him. It's got to be super special.

I mean, he's a great captain. Every time we have been around, he's -- it's fun to see. He's very emotional. I think most people know that. But he's very involved. He's very -- he's followed me in a lot my matches over the last two, three years. And he's high energy. He's always there cheering you on. He's one of the biggest cheerleaders. And I think he will do a good job. I'm excited to play for him.

Q. How long does it take you to adapt? And what's the most difficult thing for you to adapt to the altitude. And do you ever, ever want to see how far you can hit it and just

unleash and go at it 120 percent?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it would be fun to just unleash one. I don't know. I don't have TrackMan with me, or anything like that, so just go off visual. But I'm sure if you swing hard and put it up in the air, it's going to go forever. But it doesn't take long. We're just calculating everything back to what sea level would be, playing it at a certain percentage, and then going from there.

So, I mean, if you hear us talking all week, it will all be at sea level numbers. It won't be, dial it back from 230 to basically close to 200, it would be like 200 shot, something like that.

Q. A little bit more on Stricks. Were you in his pod? Is that the way that worked out?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I guess so, yeah. I guess I have been in the east -- I mean, he's followed my match when I played with Tony the first day. He was in and around a lot at the President's Cup, kind of following around there. And then the '16 Ryder Cup, I felt like he was -- yeah, I guess he was part of my pod, or whatever you want to call it. I guess fire squad, or whatever Tiger called it. So, yeah, I spent a bunch of time with him. It's been fun, because coming out five years ago, it's kind of on the tail end of those guys's career on the PGA tour. And so you don't get to know them as well. And then when you get to know them personally, it makes you want to do a lot better and play for them.

Q. I think Tiger just mentioned in his press conference he's a nice guy, everyone knows that, but there is a competitive fire. Have you seen that? Can you talk about any instances when that came out?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah. I think the Ryder Cup this past year, I remember me and Tony were down -- like one down, with like -- right after he hit it off the plank on, what was it, 16, off that plank. And I just remember leaving that hole, and he was -- I have never seen someone so excited. He couldn't have been more fired up, like let's go, let's turn this thing -- this is going to be the turning point in the morning matches, your match is important, you're going to have to lead this team if you want to really progress this day. Unfortunately, we didn't do it for the whole day.

But he makes it -- he makes you get fired up, makes you feel like everything you're doing is very important. And I enjoy that when someone's in my ear chirping like that. I think it's fun.

Q. Brooks, after you have a season like last year, where you win Player of the Year and do as well as you did, do you reassess? And what are your goals for this season in particular?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Just stay healthy. I think that's probably No. 1. If I can stay healthy, I feel like I'll be fine. You know, trying to get into a rhythm. There's a lot of goals I have: Not miss a cut. I don't know why, but missing a cut just really bugs me. I try to finish top-10 about half the time, if not more, and then win multiple times. I think that's the key at this

stage. You see all the best players in the world, they're winning multiple times. It's not just one time a year. You need to compete in majors and make sure that I bring it those weeks, because those are the most important weeks.

Q. What are the second most important weeks?

BROOKS KOEPKA: These, WGCs, PLAYERS.

Q. Seriously I was going to ask where you place WGCs in relation to some of the other tournaments you do.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Obviously, the majors are -- you plan your schedule around the majors. And next it would be The Players and WGCs. I mean, I enjoy the smaller fields. I think it's a lot more compact. And I love the match play part of it, too. I think that's fun.

Q. So, you're not skipping Austin?

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, I like that. I know a bunch of guys are skipping, I think, right? I don't know, it's fun for me. We don't get to play it that much. I didn't play it that much growing up, so it's like a little different mental side of it, where I enjoy that part of it. But these and THE PLAYERS, absolutely.

Q. When you look at these and you mention the compact field, and apologies if this sounds like a lot question, but you're top heavy with some of the best players in the world, but they're also 78-man fields. Does that make it easier or harder to win? And the fact that you don't have 78 other guys who are good enough to have a Tour card who might have that one great week of the year and you lost 78 of those guys.

BROOKS KOEPKA: You look at it -- you go play a regular Tour event, you might have five guys inside the top 12 to 15 in the world. And then here, I think other than -- what, Rosy's not playing? Day. So, basically we've got, what, at least 10 out of the top 12, 13. I mean, that's what you want to play against every week. So, it's exciting any time you can tee it up with those guys, because really the only other time other than WGCs is majors, where you're going to have all the best players playing that week. So that's what makes it so enjoyable, the competitiveness, especially if they're on, you know you've got to bring it.

Q. (Inaudible)

BROOKS KOEPKA: What? Hero? I skipped that one.

Q. Is Augusta a good course for you, or should it be? I know you missed last year. But how has it been, and where do you need to improve there?

BROOKS KOEPKA: First off, I just need to be healthy. I haven't been healthy once since I have played it. I have had back issues, been sick one year. I mean, sick is not really an

excuse.

I haven't played going into it. Like, the whole week prior, two weeks prior, I haven't touched a club. And so I'm excited to actually, hopefully, stay healthy and be playing going into it. Because you can't go to Augusta and try to find it. That's the trouble. I have been trending better and better every year. I like it. It suits my game. I feel like you need to be -- have great touch around the greens, clutch putting inside five, six feet. Putts break a lot. And setting yourself up off the tee. I feel like I'm starting to drive the ball a lot better. That's one part of my game I really improved. So, I'm excited to get there and to play and hopefully compete this year.

Q. You said you were going to keep it simple this week. How's Rickey's math?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It's one, two, skip a few. Not very good at it. It's that Irish math.

Q. Actually, I had a follow-up. Do you plan to going to Augusta to get a scouting trip in this year?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think hopefully the week before go up, kind of midweek, maybe early on after match play, maybe Tuesday, Wednesday, something like that, go play. Just make sure everything still feels the same, check it out, and know where you're hitting it, make sure your lines are dead on. So when I get there, all I got to do is focus around the greens, if -- the pin locations, where I want to miss it, things like that. But usually when I scout a golf course, it's just to make sure the scout lines are the same lines around where I'm still seeing it visually. If the winds -- sometimes you can play it in a certain wind and see a completely different club off the tee. So that's why I like going there early to every major championship and just going and checking it out.

Q. When you look at your tendencies schedule-wise, there's usually a Middle East swing, one or two, Dunhill on occasion late, or something like that. Do you not consider at all taking up European Tour membership again, with The Race to Dubai, where you only need to play four events?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, we've thought about it. The only thing I'd say, I have turned it down. I like my breaks. I like my time off from golf. And I think, if I did that, it would just end up being the longest season for me. I need time off. I need to get away, get relaxed, and really kind of assess where your game's at. And if you're playing all year, you can never feel like you change anything. If you want to improve on driving the ball, short game, putting, whatever it is, you need like a month to really fine-tune it. And especially usually late in the year, you're going overseas right around that time. Just before that is the Race to Dubai, Turkey, all that stuff. But -- and then you think about it, the best chance you probably have is the Scottish, but I like to go over early just to get adjusted. And I don't really want to play a golf tournament the week before, especially at the British. Everything else I like to play the week before, just to get a feel. But I don't see why -- I just don't see why it would benefit me. That's just my personality, I guess.

Q. When you consider that you actually had a European Tour card before a PGA Tour card and have thusly won three majors, were you surprised Patrick was offered lifetime membership?

BROOKS KOEPKA: He's a member. He won a major. I'm not surprised. If I would have been a member, I think I probably would have gotten it, but I'm not surprised at all. I think that's a cool honor. If we would have -- I think if we just would have taken up membership the last two years, I think we would have finished second in the Race to Dubai. I think that's where we would have finished.

Q. Maybe gotten lifetime with Jack and Arnold and Tom and --

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, stuff like that. So it has crossed my mind, but at the same time, he's a member, he deserves it, he won the major.

Q. Did you watch any of the West Coast Swing, which was particularly rainy? Did you talk to any of the guys about it? And was there a little part of you that was kind of smiling at having missed it?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yes, I did smile that I missed it. It's never fun to play a couple weeks in a row with a bunch of rain delays. But I did not watch any of it. I was busy doing my own thing. And I just saw some of the scores on Sunday. My buddies had a big group chat, about 10 of us, and they were all telling me what was going on, because one of them just finished watching the NASCAR race and was updating us on that, and then he was updating us on the golf. So I knew what was going on, I just wasn't watching it.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right. Brooks, thanks for your time.