

ROUND 4 QUOTES
June 2, 2024



KAITO ONISHI (-8)

Q. Kaito, win No. 1 for you on the Korn Ferry Tour. How are you feeling right now?

KAITO ONISHI: It feels awesome. It's been tough. All the players out here are all great, they all can win each week, so it was a battle, for sure. To be the last man standing feels awesome.

Q. At what point during the round did you kind of think that you had a real shot at winning?

KAITO ONISHI: I wasn't certain until hole 17, that leaderboard on 17. I didn't know that I had a couple shots leading, so I was thinking please hit the fairway on 18.

But no, it was definitely a battle the whole time.

Q. The course obviously challenged the entire field. What was working for you most this week to come out on top?

KAITO ONISHI: I think really it came down to staying patient. There are a lot of pins in the corner and you want to make a birdie, but oftentimes out here that doesn't work very well. So I stayed patient, made a couple putts and here I am.

Q. Last win for you was in '22 in Japan, I believe, right?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah.

Q. At any point this season or last season did you feel that you were kind of on the cusp of getting back in the winner's circle?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, obviously last year was very tough. Different environment and every week is a different type of grass and a lot of adapting. You know, very difficult.

But no, just kept working on it. Missed a couple cuts last year -- not a couple, but I learned a lot from it and I think from all those mistakes, all those, yeah, mistakes, but I learned a lot from it so I think that's why I was able to get the win today.

Q. What is it I guess specifically that you did learn last year and that you brought into



this season?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, I think it came down to a lot of preparation. Coming into the week, it's kind of like working a lot on my putting, right-to-left putt, right-to-left putt, a lot of short game. Yeah, a lot of short game and kind of putting more hours into it before Thursday comes.

I think it really came down to the preparation and I think I prepared really well this week, so I'm happy with it.

Q. And then last season I believe finished 100th on the points list, so entered this year with conditional status. What was your mindset when you came into the year? The first start I believe was in --

KAITO ONISHI: Colombia.

Q. -- Colombia. Can you just take us through the beginning of the season when you didn't have guaranteed starts?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, so I didn't have a guaranteed start and my first one was in Bogota, Colombia. Didn't really know what to expect, but I felt like I was putting good enough work during the offseason during workouts, kind of adjusting my swing here and there. I was like, just go out there and have fun.

And I finished top-10 there so it was a great way to start the year, kind of assured me that what I was doing was on the right path. I kind of kept my head down and kind of kept working on the weaknesses of my game and today it all worked out well.

Q. So with the win now, start of the season no guaranteed starts, you're good now for the rest of the year. How much of a relief is that knowing that you have a set schedule?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, it's awesome. I mean, yeah, coming from Japan and just it's very far from home. My parents are back in Japan and everyone's back home. So it's been tough, but I'm happy that it really paid off.

Q. During the wait there we saw you on the phone on the range and putting green. Who were you on the phone with and what were those conversations?

KAITO ONISHI: I was talking to my mom. No, she was -- she couldn't believe it. I don't know, when I first moved here when I was 9, I came with my mom. My dad was working in Japan. We spent a lot of time together. We both didn't speak English at the time and that was very difficult. I went to a boarding school when I was 13 until I graduated college.

So I'm very grateful for my childhood and everything that my parents gave me, but it's



surreal and it's awesome that I can kind of give back to them like this. Yeah, it's been good.

Q. Was 17 the first time you looked at the leaderboard all day?

KAITO ONISHI: I have looked at the leaderboard I think at the turn, but then I knew it was like 8 or 9 under, so I knew I needed a couple more birdies and get the momentum going. But I didn't know going to 17 I had like I think a three-shot lead then and I didn't know I had a three-shot lead at all.

Q. You finish your round and then you finish your scoring and then you start preparing for a potential playoff.

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah.

Q. Can you just talk about what was going through your head at that time? What you were preparing for and just what was going through your head?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah. So obviously I really wanted to make the putt at 18, but I had two thoughts in my mind today and yesterday, really committing to what I've been doing because that's what got me to the place today and really executing that.

Yes, I did not make the putt at the last, but I really, you know, I tried to execute it and tried to commit to it. Yeah, just practicing. I have no control over what the other guys do. Kind of warm up and hopefully don't have to get into a playoff, but even then I knew I'll be fine regardless of the result because I did what I could do.

Q. And then when you were told that it was official, you're the winner, can you talk about just you and your caddie had a great interaction?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah.

Q. What has that relationship been like for you?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, I mean, Scottie's been very helpful. He's very calm. Coming down the stretch he was very calm. It was kind of like any other hole. It's like Thursday, ninth hole or tenth hole, he was the same, he was normal. I think that kind of kept me focused. Yeah, it was awesome.

Q. And what did he say, Kaito's what? Or can you not say it?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, yeah, no, it was -- it was about jewelry, I don't know what it was, about jewelry, I have no idea. But he said that and I like laughed. It was on like a Friday and he just kept going with it and every time he said it I laughed, so it was kind of a good way to kind of get my mind off and get back into it.



Q. He's had a few taglines for you; the "baddest man from Japan."

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, no, it was awesome. I loved it, it was awesome.

Q. I know you mentioned it in the speech, but can you talk about what UNC Health, Raleigh Country Club and all the volunteers meant for you for this week?

KAITO ONISHI: Yeah, first of all, UNC Health and Stitch and all the sponsors, without them this tournament wouldn't have been possible. The opportunity to compete wouldn't be possible. It's awesome that they give us a place to play, a place to host. It's been wonderful.

And Raleigh Country Club, the cut line, I believe it was a couple over par, which is definitely not what I'm used to. And again, all these guys are really good at golf, so that shows how challenging it was out there.

And the food was incredible all week. My God, it was awesome from breakfast.

And the volunteers, the people that walked with me all four days and all the people that were kind of cheering me on, I mean, without them, right, the tournament can't happen. So very thankful for them, very thankful for them spending their time to come out and support and help. Very nice of them.

Hopefully, yeah, hopefully this tournament goes on, keeps going, and hopefully I'll be back next year. I'm not sure, but I love it, I love this place, so we'll see.

Q. How mentally taxing is it to play a golf course that's this challenging?

KAITO ONISHI: Like this course?

Q. Yeah.

KAITO ONISHI: Very challenging, especially 18. There are a lot of things you could do. You could hit -- I hit a 3-wood on the last hole or you could try and hit a driver, it really depends on the wind. Until the end you really don't know because you hit one in the fairway, but then like the pin's tucked in front left so can't chase it, but if you miss it left you can make a bogey. So just a lot of things going on, but it's really about staying patient and committing to your shots.

Q. You have to think your way around a lot?

KAITO ONISHI: Yep, yep, a lot.

