

Charles Schwab Challenge

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

Kevin Na

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome in the defending champion of the Charles Schwab Challenge, Kevin Na, who's wearing the proper attire to our virtual press conference today. Kevin is making his 14th start at the event, where he owns five top-10 finishes, of course highlighted by a win last year. Kevin, welcome back. How have the last couple months been and how excited are you to be back competing?

KEVIN NA: The last few months has been difficult, obviously with what's been going on in the world. But at the same time it was a nice change for me because I was able to spend three months at home with my family, and I've never spent three months at home straight, at home, just because of my job. So I was able to spend some nice quality time at home. In the beginning I really missed golf, but by the end of this three-month stretch, I got comfortable at home.

But it's really nice to be back, nice to see my friends and colleagues and fellow competitors back on the golf course, and we're really excited. We're disappointed that the fans are not going to be here, but we're really excited that the PGA TOUR is back.

THE MODERATOR: You're the only player to have three rounds of 62 or better at this event. What makes you play so well out here?

KEVIN NA: It's something about Colonial Country Club that fits my eyes. I feel really comfortable here. I think -- shooting those low numbers gives me some confidence more and more in the future, and obviously that win last year is going to give me more confidence years down the road, and to see my name on the Wall of Champions on the first tee every time I tee it up here will be great, too.

THE MODERATOR: It's definitely going to be a strange title defense coming back this year. Can you talk about the process of coming back and what it was like to come back here.

KEVIN NA: Yes, I mean, after winning last year, you think about the following year when you get a chance to defend, and to be defending champion at a tournament is very exciting, and to show up and have your name as the defending champion, pictures



everywhere, it's very cool.

But it's obviously an interesting situation. We have three months off. I haven't played any events. I haven't really practiced much. I don't know what to expect. I feel good about my game, but at the same time, I'm going to be a little bit rusty, so that first round is going to be important.

Q. Can you talk about the next kind of four weeks; if you look at the way these golf courses set up, they set up for guys who aren't particularly bombers, but it seems like this is an opportunity for a player like you and a couple other guys. When you looked at the way the schedule was going to play out, did you get a little excited?

KEVIN NA: I did get a little excited. Yes, these first few events are set up for players like me who are more of an accurate player, rely on short game, and I was very excited to see that schedule. We've never seen this many golf courses that fit my game in a row. It's a nice change, and we'll see what happens, but you know what, it wouldn't surprise me, even though a bomber can win at Colonial or Hilton Head, it doesn't matter who you are, if you're playing great you're going to win, but it's nice to see a little bit of change on the PGA TOUR golf course schedule.

Q. Can you talk about trying to get -- can you simulate at all what you're going to experience over the next four days, over the last three months? How did you try to simulate a real TOUR round with a card in your hand?

KEVIN NA: It's very difficult. You can practice all you want at home and play all you want at home, but it's just not the same feeling of competition golf when a three-footer really means something and you have to putt out.

The Sunday before I left for Colonial was the first time I played 18 holes since THE PLAYERS Championship. I played three nine holes with a couple of the members, played by myself, and then the day before I left, I played with a Buddy of mine that plays on the Korn Ferry TOUR, John Oda, and besides that, he was the only competition that I really got. We played heads up. Like I said, I don't know what to expect. My game feels pretty good. My body feels, uh, okay, but like I said, first round, to get off to a good start is going to be very

important for me.

Q. You kind of mentioned being the defending champ and whatnot, but here at Colonial Ben Hogan is the only guy who's defended his title in consecutive years. What makes it so hard to come back and repeat on the TOUR?

KEVIN NA: There's a lot of reasons. Obviously I think it's the added pressure of being the defending champion and trying to perform and trying to repeat what you did the year before. But at the same time the field is that strong, and you just don't know who's going to win, and there's so many guys that can contend, and to be able to beat all those --

Q. You were saying the competition is so good and to beat all these guys.

KEVIN NA: Yes, I mean, the depth of the field and the competition is so good that it's -- you just don't know who's going to win, and to be able to come back here and beat all that competition, it's very difficult. Obviously not for Tiger Woods but for the rest of us, yes, it is pretty difficult.

Q. One of the big story lines was Kenny Harms getting the car, your caddie. What's the latest on that? Has he taken it for some joy rides? Have you been in shotgun or anything there?

KEVIN NA: You know, I have not had the opportunity to ride in that car or drive it. I'm very disappointed. I'm sure I will get my chance. He's loving it. He takes it for a joy ride on the weekends back at home in Orlando. People ask me, this year if there's a car, if you win, what will you do with it, and I said, you know what, I think I deserve one for myself, and I'm going to keep it, and I come in and I find out there's no car this year. (Laughing.)

Q. I was just curious, I think one of the things I've read is while you were at home was that you taught your three-year-old daughter the alphabet, and I was just wondering how that all went and how enjoyable it was for you to spend time actually home schooling along with your wife, your kids.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, I started sitting next to her for some of her zoom classes, and I saw what the teachers were teaching, some songs and the alphabet and numbers, and the school when you go to school, you're there for most of the day, but in zoom class it was only maybe an hour, so we felt like it wasn't enough, so we tried to do a little bit more ourselves at home, and teaching her the alphabet, the numbers. I learned that teachers have a very difficult job at having patience with kids. It wasn't easy. I mean, we had fun, but at the same time, it wasn't easy. She's getting better. Her alphabet is getting better. Her first language is Korean, which we wanted it to be, but it's been a fun ride.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about just the dynamic of no fans and what you feel like the vibe is going to be like out here? Obviously you had one of your great career moments here a year ago, and I'm sure the element of the fan excitement was pretty cool for you. What are you expecting this week? You have the potential of maybe somebody dropping a 30-footer on 18 on Sunday to win, and it's going to be dead silence out there.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, this is very different for us. We're not used to playing without fans. We're used to -- we're more used to ropes, grandstands and fans down the ropes. The golf course looks empty. I mean, obviously it is empty. It's such a different look without grandstands and fans.

I don't know, I think the players are not going to be as pumped up in some situations because of that, because of the atmosphere, but I think once you tee it up and you're focused, you're still going to feel a little bit of the jitters and you're still going to be so focused and into it you kind of forget about it. We're disappointed there's no fans, and we hope to get to have fans soon.

Q. When you drop a putt are you going to be kind of going to your hat out of habit? I'm sure we're going to see a lot of guys doing that this week.

KEVIN NA: I'm sure you'll see guys dropping putts and they put their hand up and realize there's nobody there.

Q. With regard to Kenny, can you talk about your relationship with him and how special that has been, and obviously the bond that you guys have had? It's kind of rare these days that guys stay together for long periods of time in the business.

KEVIN NA: Yeah, he's been caddying for me for 11 years, and obviously last year was the 10-year mark. He got a nice 10-year bonus. He got the '73 Dodge Challenger as a gift. We have a great relationship. We're like brothers. We travel a lot together. If I ever rent a house, there's always a room there for him, or vice versa.

I think good teamwork has helped us be successful on the golf course, and because there's trust, the information he gives me, I trust him, and he trusts that I will be able to pull off a shot, and that has been the key to our success.

Q. How many times have you been wearing that blazer this year? Is this the first time since last year?

KEVIN NA: This is the -- obviously I wore it in the ceremony last year, I wore it for the TikTok video that I posted on my Instagram with my daughter, and this is

the third time.

Q. I was wondering if you could just discuss the role you think golf can play here with all that's been going on with these social justice issues and if golf should have a role and players should have voices and what they should do to help aid what the issues that have come to light here recently?

KEVIN NA: I mean, every player has an impact, I guess, to their -- can have an impact to their fans. Every player can have an impact to their fans or followers, and everyone has the right to express your opinion, and I respect that.

Yes, I mean, you can, I guess, but it's not an easy role for a player or an organization, and I respect every decision and everything that the TOUR is doing. But on the brighter side, it's about golf right now. Right now we want to focus on the return of sports and return of golf, and we're really excited to have golf back, and I think the fans need sports and need golf to be able to get excited about something and to relieve stress and to be able to cheer for something and be happy about something.

So I think golf will play a big role in people's lives. I have fans that tell me and friends and members at the Golf Club of Southern Highlands, they always tell me, when are you guys playing again, I'm tired of watching reruns, I want to be able to watch golf. Golf is my life, and I turn on Golf Channel for golf 24/7, and I can't have that anymore, this is frustrating. So I think that the fact that the golf is back is going to make a lot of people happy.

Q. I wanted to know how comfortable you were with what the TOUR was putting in place in regards to the social distancing, all the programs that they need, and then secondly, there's been some reporting out of Colonial this week already about how some players and caddies are like, I'm not really worried about it, I'm just going to do my thing. Does that concern you?

KEVIN NA: Well, they're telling us to do social distancing, practice social distancing, take every precaution possible. And some of the players are. But you've got to remember that all of us tested negative. We just took two tests to get here, one at home and once we got here, so I think guys get a little comfortable. And at the same time, you see your friends and your caddies and other TOUR staff members, and we're friends with them, and you just kind of start talking to them, you get closer and closer and you kind of forget because you're so happy and excited to see them that you forget about social distancing.

I think, yes, we still need to practice social distancing, but like I said, we all tested negative. I don't think it's too big of a concern.

Q. If, in fact, you started to see some movement where players or caddies or staff became infected in some way, shape or form, would that concern you, and at what point would you say we need to go back to taking time off again?

KEVIN NA: I asked that same question to the PGA TOUR, and I think the answer I got was we hope it doesn't happen, and we don't think it's going to happen because with all the testing that we're doing and the precautions we're taking. But if it does, if it starts spreading, then they will reassess and they'll most likely start having to have to cancel tournaments.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Kevin, for your time, and good luck this week.