

Travelers Championship

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Viktor Hovland

Matthew Wolff

Collin Morikawa

Justin Suh

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Like to welcome everyone to the 2019 Travelers Championship. As you all know, this tournament has a long history of giving sponsor's exemptions to up-and-coming players. This group that's here before us today, what a bright future they have. The fact that they're all friends, as you can see, makes it even more special to have them on the stage with us at one time.

We are joined by Viktor Hovland, Collin Morikawa, Justin Suh, and Matthew Wolff. Before we open up to questions, just get some opening comments from each guy.

Viktor, Oklahoma State University, making your professional debut here this week at the Travelers; coming off a T12 last week at the U.S. Open; first low amateur at the amateurs and the U.S. Open in the same season since 1998. What a resume. If we can get some comments on being here this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, obviously had a really fun amateur career. Had some of the best years of my life at Oklahoma State. Excited to kick start my professional debut here this week at Travelers. Yeah, hope for a fun summer.

THE MODERATOR: We have Collin from Cal making his third professional start. Recently had his professional debut in Canada. Collin, if we can get some comments on the week ahead.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, it's been a very busy month coming back from Pebble on Monday, couple days ago. You know, really excited to be here. Every single week I think we're given this opportunity to be out here and we're so thankful to be out here and really just prove what we have to the professional game.

We're just really excited to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Justin joins us. University of



Southern California, so we have a Trojan here today. Fourth PGA TOUR start; making your professional debut at Memorial. Comment on being here at the Travelers.

JUSTIN SUH: Yeah, I mean, this is always known to be one of the tournaments all the young guys turn professional. To be up here with great golfers like this these guys, it's going to be a fun week and we're just looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: And then Matthew from Oklahoma State University, your professional debut this week. Some thoughts on your goals ahead.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, it's been a dream come true to turn professional. It's something that I worked really hard on. I'm sure we all have. Going to Oklahoma State was the best decision of my life. I feel like I grew as a person and player.

But I felt like my time was up there and felt like my game was ready and potentially can be one of the best players in the world, like I'm sure all these guys do. Just happy to get a spot here. I know that we'll be seeing a lot of each other this summer, and just looking forward to the opportunities ahead.

THE MODERATOR: Open up to questions now. Direct your question to a specific player. That will help our transcriptionist who is listening in on a conference call.

Q. This is actually for any of you guys. I spoke to all three of you guys in Arkansas spent NCAAs. You were very complimentary of each other. I think you know how good you guys are. Comparing that to some of the other great classes we've seen come out of college, like the Spieth-Thomas class. What kind of mark is this class going to leave on TOUR and how good can you guys be out here?

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, I mean, obviously I believe that we can be the best players in the world. I believe that in myself and I think that's the most important thing. To start with that belief, like I'm sure Justin and Jordan and all of them thought when they came out on tour as well.

I think the most important thing is that just seeing all the success we've had in pro events as an amateurs, I

mean, he gave a very, very nice introduction to Viktor and all his very great starts as an amateur. And Collin, his first three weeks as a pro. Well, made the cut at both the (indiscernible) U.S. Open and then Justin made the cut before in a couple pro events. I made the cut at Waste Management. So just knowing you can kind of play out here is pretty exceptional. We kind of all beat up on each other in college, and it's just cool to see. Gives me confidence that all these guys can play at the top, and I know I can as well.

JUSTIN SUH: It's pretty unique that our class, we have four completely different players. Our swings are not remotely close to a classical swing. We've got Wolffy here with his swing and Viktor has his swing. Everyone has their own game.

I think our class especially, we make it unique. We make it our own. I think that's what separates us between all the years before us. I think it'll be exciting to see how we just adapt to the professional life and move on from the college career we had.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I wish we could predict the future, and I'm sure Jordan Spieth and those guys back then said that they could do it. I think we're going to say the exact same thing.

I think what brought us here is that we all love the game so much. It goes way past what else we get from this. We all love the game and are out here to compete. I think that's why it's so exciting.

Past couple weeks for me, and I'm sure Justin felt it in his first professional start, is it feels right. We want to be here; this is what we've always wanted to do, like Matt said.

So I think there is endless opportunities for us to keep reaching the top, and hopefully in so many years we'll all be here together. I wouldn't mind doing this with them and have a little bit of a resume kind of built up for all of us.

I can definitely see that.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, we all have a lot of cool battles down the stretch in college and it's been really fun to compete against these guys. They're all great golfer and great guys off the course. I sure hope that we can continue to do that on the professional tour. That would be something that would be really sweet to do. Kind of walk up the 18th hole being even with either Collin, Justin, or Matt, or all, even before Sunday or something.

But it's not only just us four guys. There are a whole lot of other guys. I'm just going to try to play as well as I

can, and I'm sure the other guys are going to do that as well. Then we'll just see how it ends up.

Q. Viktor, if I could start with you and ask the same thing, have you solicited any advice about turning professional from any touring pros? What was the best advice and who did you talk to?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I would say I talked to a lot of people. At Oklahoma State we're fortunate to have a very long running tradition with alums reaching the PGA TOUR after and being very nice to offer some advice.

I've talked to Charles Howell a lot. Rickie has always been very easygoing with advice. Kind of been able to pick his brains a little bit. But then my coaches have been a big part of the decision. I kind of just thought -- I just mostly thought, Okay, what do I want? There is no real rush about going out of here, but just kind of -- I'll let the game, my game, be the driver of the decision.

I just figured after the years that we've had I thought it was about time. I was really excited about turning pro.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: For me after my first round at RBC I had dinner with Justin Thomas. I told a couple people this. It was kind of just eye opening. Like getting comfortable, I think that's what helps when we're all together. It makes it a little more comfortable.

Gotten to know a lot of the Cal guys out on tour. Max Homa, Michael Kim, Brandon Heggie, Ben An. But when I had dinner with Justin Thomas, just turned out to be a normal guy. I was able to talk to him and feel relaxed, and that has made the transition so much easier.

So what he offered was literally just you have so many expectations out there. You don't know how it's going to start. Like I said, we're thankful to be out here and get these starts every summer. So let's just have fun, learn from it, and move on. I think we're all good enough. We're going to be out here at some point whether it's really quick or takes a year or so, so that's what really matters.

What I didn't know was that Justin Rose, when he first turned pro, he missed 20 something cuts. I don't know if it was in a row or in a large stretch, but look where he is now. It's a long journey. We're not just here to play for a couple years. We're here for a lifetime. This is what we love to do. That's the best advice I've gotten so far.

JUSTIN SUH: Coming from SC we don't have the alumni list that Oklahoma State does. I think we only have a few guys on tour. The man that we got to know as a team is Jamie (indiscernible.) He's come back a

few times and played with the guys.

As far as advice, like it wasn't something that he said. It was just more so how he played with us. It was just nothing different. He just got some matches going and he played his game and we played our game. The way he carried himself on the course just resonated to us. At the end of the game it's just a -- or at the end of the day it's just a game.

Just kind of spending the afternoon with him, just kind of the message I got. I don't know. We just don't have a lot -- our alum wasn't strong enough to reach out, and I've only played a few events on tour and most of them were -- I mean, I haven't been able to reach out as others may have.

I think just keeping in mind that you're just trying to play your best out there, like Collin said, week in, week out.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Going off what Collin said, I think we're all good enough and I know I feel confident that I'm good enough to be out here at some point. I've heard so many times with -- I didn't know that Justin Rose missed his first 20 cuts, but I've heard before that Justin Thomas took a year on the Web; Matt Kuchar, Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, went to European Tour and Challenge Tour. You see all these guys at the top that might have started off a little slower.

One of the best things I've heard is not from a player but from an agent. He kind of told me, It's not a one-year career. It's a 20-career career, 30-year career. You're going to be playing this game for the rest of your life because that's what you love to do. I am sure all these guys do as well.

It's something that you don't feel added pressure, don't put expectations on the first five or six events that you play to get your tour card, because you know you're good enough. You know you're going to be out here eventually.

Just like you said, you'd put in a lot of work in your amateur career, but more importantly, you've worked to get the exemptions to have this notoriety and publicity coming out, so why wouldn't you enjoy it and just make the most of it and do what you've been doing for the last 15 -- not 15, but 10 years, 5 years of your life, playing in tournaments, competing, and having fun.

Q. Just judging from the hats and shirts, looks like some of you guys have signed equipment deals. Congratulations. Matt, I know you were already playing TaylorMade. No equipment change there. Maybe start with Viktor here on the left. If you did have to change equipment, can you talk about the

process of trying to do that while also learning to adapt to live on tour?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I tried out some few different clubs Callaway, TaylorMade, and Ping, and when Ping came over for a fitting I really liked their stuff. Just the fact that they had Norwegian roots and big ties to Oklahoma State, I thought that sounded really cool.

The more I picked up the clubs I just felt they were really good. Put a driver in last week and have been playing the irons for a couple weeks. I don't really go about things very methodically. Just kind of put them in the bag and I'm like, Okay, this kind of feels good. Put it in the bag and play it. But I wouldn't have done the move that I did unless I felt like it was better.

In terms of coming out here, how is it kind of adapting to things, to be honest, it's been a little bit different. You have more time because you're not with the group the whole day and you don't have to kind of, okay, wait around for your teammates to finish practice.

You're a lot freer in that way. Then again, there is a whole lot more people that want a piece of you. You have to almost schedule your whole day. You're almost busier than before. So it's a circus out here. There are so many people out here. I'm just trying to take it minute by minute.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I've actually played TaylorMade for the majority of my life. I have a little bit of a mixed set, but I'm going to end up putting a lot of clubs in. I've been lucky enough to kind of stick with them and use what I've been using in my transition.

I think for transition into professional golf, you're on your own. You don't have a group to book flights or you show up and everything is there for you. You have to do everything on your own. I'm lucky enough to have my girlfriend travel with me the past couple events and be here for the summer. Just makes things easier and a lot more comfortable.

You know, I think that's it for us, especially for me. If I feel comfortable out here, just going to be so much easier for me to not worry about everything else.

JUSTIN SUH: I went on a little different route than these guys. I didn't sign an equipment deal. The only deal I went with is with Puma for apparel. The big deciding factor for me in the whole transition of turning professional I wanted to be as comfortable as I could looking down at each event at the clubs that I was using for the past couple years, and Puma allowed me to do that.

For like the branding side, I've seen the stuff they've

done with Gary and Rickie and it's pretty outspoken, loud. It's very client surrounded. I felt like clubs-wise I wanted to use the clubs that gave me the success in my college years and proceed to do that in my professional career.

So I didn't do the equipment deal. I just kept the clubs I've been using for the past four, five years.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, Waste Management was an unbelievable experience. I heard so many times if you can handle that you can pretty much handle any event out here. It was really wild. I mean, 16 was awesome and, you know, just being able to go through that and experience that, all the people yelling at you and the pressure, it's just good learning experience for me.

But like most of these guys said, just being comfortable out here. I think that's the biggest thing. We've all played pro events as an amateur or a pro before this week, and I think it's nice to have that experience in your back pocket, knowing that you've done it before, made the cut, you've had success out here.

So it's not anything new. Just stick to what you know. That's why I stayed with TaylorMade as well. I've been playing them since probably seventh grade, 12 years old, something like that. That's what I love to use and I feel most comfortable with.

So there are a lot of things that are changing in my life and with these guys, too, a lot of things changing from amateur golf to professional golf, so like to keep as many things as I can under my control. That's one thing I would like to do with TaylorMade.

Q. Viktor, could you just tell us, what did breaking Jack Nicklaus' record at the U.S. Open mean to you?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I haven't really thought about it that much. I had no clue after I finished the round. I was just really happy that played sweet that Sunday. And then, yeah, I was told I beat his record. Obviously he's the GOAT, and to beat one of his records, that means you've done something really special.

I'm just really proud to be a part of history and a part of the wall at Pebble Beach.

Q. For the three of you who grew up in Southern California or California, could you talk about maybe the first time you ran across paths with each other? And then Viktor, if you could tell me how growing up in Norway wasn't like growing up in California, what junior golf was like for you?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: What are you saying?

JUSTIN SUH: I'll go first. I met Collin through our AJGA circuit. I didn't play too many events, but I met Collin through that association. And Matt, actually I didn't get to play golf with him until I think last year, last year or maybe even this year.

But we all crossed paths through events in our collegiate or junior careers. In California we have a very strong junior program, and just, I mean, it's kind of a very -- it's a hot spot for golf because you get sun throughout the whole year. You don't get that very often around the States.

I don't know. Just grew up seeing these guys play week in and week out and we just learned from each other and now we're here.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I mean, I grew up 30 minutes from Matt. Yeah, roughly. It's crazy. I've gotten to know him for such a long time. Went to West Lake High and I went to La Cañada. Our two weeks had nothing to do with each other. Had no business even playing with each other, until I got to know him, Sean Crocker who went to USC, Spencer Soosman who is at Texas right now, and we just all became really good friends. I would see them in the AJGAs. Pretty much see them everywhere. It's good to see his mom back here. Haven't seen her since I think Cabo where she rode in the cart with us. That was a great week for both of us.

But, yeah, I've gotten to know Matt for a long time and kind of it's crazy to see. I mean, when I was a freshman in college, you kind of -- it's just like professional golf. You almost forget everything else that happens below you, which sucks, but obviously I want to keep up with the Cal golf team. I'm sure these guys want to keep up with their teams and coaches. It's just kind of hard to keep up with everything else because you have so much on your plate.

When I was a freshman I really didn't see Matt. I didn't really talk to Matt. I didn't know how he was doing. Obviously he comes freshman year and makes a statement. But, know, it's really cool to kind of see both of us out here now and see us from California, Southern Cal. L.A. is always going to be my home at heart growing up there, my parents growing up there. Yeah, no, it's been cool.

And then Justin, I remember the day he committed to USC. We were in San Diego at an AJGA. Just really cool to see us grow even though we switched paths from Southern California to Northern California. I think it all brings us to the same point.

We've all learned so much and been able to kind of grow our games the past few years, whether it be one,

two, three, or four.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Yeah, I think the first time I played with Justin, first time I really played with Justin we went to Australia. Was it winter break? December? Yeah, of last year. We played the matches of the amateurs down in Australia, and that was the first time. I knew who he was and obviously he had an amazing year my freshman year winning five Top 10s. It was just really cool seeing all the success. That's when I really first got to know him.

And then ever since then we began to be a lot closer. Every time he see him at tournaments we talk and we'll catch up. I'm sure I'll be seeing a lot more of him, which will be really nice.

But Collin, I mean, he's two years older than me, so when I was, I mean, freshman in high school he was a junior. I think the first time I saw him play was -- I saw him play the Toyota Tour Cup, which is a tour in Southern California, but I never really remembered that much about that tour.

Just the first time I saw him play was at North Ranch about five minutes away from my house. He played a high school tournament and shot 70, and I think I shot 75 or 76. It was a hard day. I was just kind of blown away by it. I thought it was an incredible score. I heard about how good he was. I don't know if you were committed to Cal yet.

JUSTIN SUH: No.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Just really cool to see that. And then I kind of looked up to him as is player from Southern California who was really good, him and Sean. Went to high school with Sean, so both him and Sean were people that I really admired in the game and kind of just wanted to be like, I guess.

Then we got to college and it was the same thing. I felt like I was still younger. He was a junior when I was a freshman. We met in Cabo and we were either tied going into the last day, but we were both in the last group together. I played solid; I shot 67, 4-understand, and he shot like 63, 8-under or something like that, and so he clipped me again.

Just, yeah, just always one step ahead of me. But finally sophomore year at Olympia Fields in the fall we were tied -- or I think we were tied going into the last hole and you gave me that one, but it was nice to finally beat him. And to see how far we've come from high school golf to the highest level of junior golf to the highest level of college golf and now obviously the highest level in all of golf is really cool.

I don't want to leave Viktor out because I met him at Thunderbird in like 2015. It was a long time ago. No hat. Just Oaklies on. Yeah, just a really European look. It was cool to meet him there. All those guys I've known for quite a while now. It's cool to see them sitting next to me and making our pro debuts. Some of us making our pro debut; others getting acclimated to the pro ranks.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Growing up in Oslo, Norway, or California 2.0 as we call it, it's a completely different situation. We had kind of a national junior league. It would be the same kids that played every time. Probably be handful of players that were pretty decent. The golf community is so small over there and you do well and you think you're big time because everyone is talking about you.

Then you play in Europe, start playing European tournaments, and, again, there is a bunch of good players, but you do well there and then you think you're really good.

Then you come down to college for -- I saw Matt at Thunderbird and then I played the U.S. Junior Am at Carlton River. Never even heard of Justin or Collin. Matthew was the only one that I really -- I met him that week, and, yeah, just didn't know anyone.

Then I figured out, wow, there is a bunch of good guys out here, bunch of good players. I had a pretty solid amateur or junior career in Europe, and then I came to Oklahoma State and I figured out very quickly that I had to play really well just to make the lineup on the team.

You know, you start realizing there are a lot of good players out there. It's been fun to kind of get acquainted with that and get acclimated to the fact. Yeah, getting to know the American culture a little bit better than I did before.

Q. Viktor, I was just wondering, what has being low amateur in the Masters and the U.S. Open done for you? I think you've made some decent checks in your first two starts making cuts and decent money. What has that done for you?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I would say it's given me TV, time I guess. (Laughter.) Been nice. Other than that, it's given me a lot of the confidence that I can play out here, and to compete in majors is really, really fun. It's the highest stage, and to perform at that level was really cool.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: It's crazy you ask me that question, because all my friends that text me, they look up how much I made too and they ask for me to take them out to dinner. It's changed a little bit, but not

anything much.

Like I said, I've been able to travel with my girlfriend, and my parents raised me to just know what I believe in and how I want to live my lifestyle. Obviously being out on the PGA TOUR you do make some nice checks and it has been very nice. I'm just trying to play good golf out here.

I have other goals other than that just making a check for the week and staying alive. I've got a lot more on my mind that I want to do. It has been a pretty good two weeks. Last week I saved myself the back nine, but it's a new week. Brand new things can happen. I feel good. I'm sure all these guys feel good. Excited for what's to come.

Q. Couple things. How much have you considered your brand, the marketing, in the same way Rickie Fowler has nearly successfully done it? Simple question: Would any of you guys been surprised if you won this week? Two parts.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Marketing and all that stuff, I know zilch about marketing and all that stuff. Just gotten into the golfing business side of things. It's been interesting. I haven't really, again, gone very methodical about it. Just trying to see what's on the table and see if I like it or not. It's not anymore complicated than that. If I like it, yes, we would use it.

I would say I think I have the game to win, but you still got to do it. There are so many good guys out there. Yeah, I would be surprised if I won, but I wouldn't say there is a zero percent chance either. Yep.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I think when it comes to marketing, branding, it's got to start early and you got to just use that for the rest of your career. You obviously want to be on the good side, not the bad sides of that.

I don't think I've kind of put myself in a certain spot yet. It's not like I've played well enough where I get a lot of TV time and then media kind of established me as something.

But I've always been known to smile out there. I think I have a decent smile. Yeah, yesterday making my little registration card they said I had terrible handwriting, but I think I have great handwriting.

No, but, yeah, for me, my smile has always been everything. That's been who I am and I kind of what I want to do something with that, whether it be for some charity or something down the road. Obviously it's very early, but I do want to put my foot in something and just be a part of something else.

I think all these guys have kind of done something, whether it's one or multiple things. We see Gary Woodland with the girl, Amy, and that has been amazing. I met Gary the first time at the U.S. Open. JT loves him. They're great friends. Hopefully I'll kind of join that group and get to know those guys a little bit more. What he has done with Amy is awesome. He kind of ties himself with that. It's really cool to see what he's done, and interesting to see where I align myself. It's still early on, but, yeah, we'll see.

And then I think when it comes to winning, I wouldn't be surprised. I don't think any of us would be. But like Viktor said, it's golf. It takes four really good rounds out here. You can't just be on your off game. The best players out there, the top guys in the world, can play on their off days and compete.

I think that's where all our games in college, we were able to compete on a bad day. It's a little bit different out here. We are going to have to find that one little thing that's going to change us to make us be able to compete every single day.

JUSTIN SUH: Like the marketing and branding side of it, I forgot who said to this to me, but it's something that's always in your mind, but once you start thinking about it and trying things like to create a brand, I think that's when it becomes less you. It's not very true to who you are.

So I felt like as a marketing and branding perspective, I'm out on the golf course to play golf. How I am on the course is going to look differently to someone on TV or someone watching me on the golf course. I think just how I carry myself on the golf course and what I've done to be at the level I am now, it's something that just carries on with you as a person.

I've never put too much emphasis on like trying to create a brand for myself. I just play my game and do what I think is right for me and to succeed. But that's kind of why I went with an apparel company and not an equipment company. I want to play my best golf, and like you said, like Rickie, they've done a good job of creating a brand for him. Gary with his brand.

Hopefully the way I play and the success I bring on the golf course can hopefully create a brand of my own one day and branch out. As of right now, we're all focused on just trying to play golf and be out there on the leaderboard. Like you said, would we be surprised? I don't -- I mean, it would be a great joy, but I don't think we would be surprised because we've all put in the hours of competing and getting better. That's something that we've had in our minds for a long time. I think it's just a matter of putting good shots after good shots. If you end up winning, you end up winning.

As Collin said, he's had two great tournaments the past couple weeks, but he's on to a new event and it's at the Travelers Championship. That's what we're focused on now.

MATTHEW WOLFF: Going with what these guys are kind of saying about on-the-course things. I feel like there is a couple components to building your own brand. There is the social media component that some people do very well. Rickie is one of them.

But there is also the TV time and the air time and how you carry yourself and how you play and how you interact with fans. I think that is the most important thing. Because going out there and having a temper and always being mad, you know, being down, not signing autographs or not giving other people the time of day, is kind of the things that would hurt your brand.

I think you can really build your brand by being really good to fans, always having a smile out there, interacting with people, cracking jokes with your buddies. I think you're prone to get more TV time. Obviously play fuels everything. If you play well you're going to get more TV time. But all that other stuff goes into account with that.

For me too, I feel like when I do that, when I have fun out there, smile, joke around and laugh, just make sure to have fun, that's when I play my best golf anyway. I feel like this is what we've been working all of our lives for. This is what we went to college for, building our game.

Like Collin said, the bad days aren't as bad. This is my opinion, but I feel like I wouldn't have turned pro if I didn't feel like I was ready to come out here and win. I mean, if you don't feel like -- I feel like Tiger said that, too. There is no point of coming out here if you don't feel like you can win. That's the main goal. That's my main goal: to win out here, win majors, become No. 1 player in the world.

I feel like if another year of college would've benefited me I would've stayed. My time is up, and I'm ready to come out here and compete with the best.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, we appreciate your time.