

# Travelers Championship

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

## Brooks Koepka

### Press Conference



**TRAVELERS**  
CHAMPIONSHIP



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Brooks Koepka to the virtual interview room here at the Travelers Championship. Brooks, thanks for joining us for a few minutes, making your fifth start here at TPC River Highlands. Just a few comments on being back here in the Hartford area at the Travelers Championship.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it's good to be back. I like this place. I've enjoyed it. Obviously played the last few years. It's a fun tournament. I like the golf course. To me the sign of a good golf course is if you play well you can shoot quite a few under par, you can shoot 7-, 8-under par really quick around here, and if you're just slightly off, you can shoot even par, 1-, 2-over very quickly, and I think that's the sign of a good golf course. You've got to be able to strike the ball well, put it in good spots, and that's what makes this place so exciting, especially with this finish.

THE MODERATOR: And how about the state of your game; coming off a good week with 65 Sunday at the RBC Heritage. Bring us up to speed on how you're feeling with the game.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, game feels good. I've felt like this for a while, so nice to finally see something -- I don't want to say "pay off" because seventh place isn't anything to brag about, but it's nice to see -- I was excited to be able to hit the shots down the stretch that I wanted to. I don't want to say there was pressure, but you had to make birdies and you had to hit the ball close to the hole, and I felt like I did a good job of that and the shot shape was exactly how I wanted. I'm knocking on the door. I'm pretty close, so hopefully this week will be it.

THE MODERATOR: Familiar last name in the field as of yesterday. Just some thoughts on having Chase in the field this week.

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, that was awesome. It was pretty cool yesterday being able to go out and go watch him, watch him in the playoff hole, watch him on the last hole. It was pretty cool. I'm super pumped for him, probably more excited for him to play than myself just because the opportunity comes few and far between for him to be out here on the PGA TOUR. It's awesome. I'm super excited, and hopefully he has a good week and makes the best of it.

**Q. You spoke there about the course and why you love to come here, why it's an exciting course for you to come play in a tournament, to compete in. But what else do you think it is about this place, about the Travelers, that makes it so appealing to so many of the big names?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Well, Travelers has always done a really good job of I think promoting the tournament, what they do in this area, the Hartford area of Connecticut, is unbelievable. And then you look at how they just treat us players, they treat the caddies, they treat everybody here, it's so much fun. I know we don't have fans this year, but I would say that if you ask the fans, this has got to be one of the more fun tournaments that the fans are able to come to. They've just done a really good job with this tournament, the setup, the golf course, everything, the atmosphere here is incredible, and I think that's what -- as players that's what we want, and I know the fans want, as well.

**Q. In addition this week, you get to honor healthcare heroes who have been on the front line during this pandemic. How special is it for you to be part of that initiative?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it's awesome. Obviously any time you can honor somebody that's doing something important, risking their lives, doing anything they can to I guess stop or prevent COVID-19 from spreading, it's important. We do a lot off the golf course just for my charity and stuff like that, but it's nice to just show a little appreciation. I know it's not much, but just show them a little bit of our thank you.

**Q. This is the third tournament now since they restarted. Is it starting to feel more normal now as far as no fans and different changes, minor things about the changes? Since the restart has it started to feel more normal now?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: It doesn't feel normal at all. If you think about it, every time I've ever played, it's been in front of fans. I think the last time really we had no fans was on the Challenge Tour.

Yeah, it's a bit odd when you're playing. You make a 30-foot birdie putt, 40-foot birdie putt, and it's just like when you're playing with your friends. It's kind of weird. It's kind of hard to build that momentum, especially if you've got it going, but at the same time it's our job so

we've got to do it and just keep pushing through. But hopefully the fans are able to come back soon.

**Q. It's one thing to play a regular TOUR stop without fans. PGA announces yesterday that they're going to go ahead without fans at a major championship. How much different will that feel, to have a major without fans?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it'll be pretty different. Obviously if they can't -- we can't have fans at the PGA for health reasons, that's what we have to do. We've just got to keep doing what we have to do, protect ourselves, because otherwise we won't be playing. As players, caddies, everybody here out on TOUR, we've got to do what we've got to do and make sure everyone is as safe as possible. But yeah, it's going to have a different feel to it, but at the same time, it's a major championship, so you've just got to go out there and go do what you're supposed to do, and hopefully things pan out.

**Q. It's only been two weeks of being back; is there anything you'd change, anything that isn't going exactly how you think it should or you'd like to see that should be done differently?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, we had a guy test positive. I don't think anybody would want that. But at the same time, I think it would be unrealistic to sit here and say that these first five, six weeks we weren't going to have somebody test positive, whether it be a player, caddie, whatever it might be, just with guys -- they might play the first two events, three events, go home, come back. You never know. The odds are not with us that somebody wasn't going to test positive, so that's the unfortunate thing. But hopefully best wishes to Nick. I've texted him, talked to him a little bit, but hopefully nobody else gets it.

**Q. Regarding the Ryder Cup, there's a report out today that looks like they're going to postpone it to 2021. I think you've been pretty -- like a lot of players, have been pretty vocal about the fact that it just wouldn't be maybe right without fans. I wondered if indeed that is the situation, they push it back to 2021, how do you feel about that? Do you feel like that's the right thing to do given the circumstances?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, I think the Ryder Cup is so much different than any other golf tournament, it's a true sporting event. Yes, the majors are special, the majors are something that we love to do, and it's our focus, our whole year is kind of built around it. But at the same time if the Ryder Cup is put back to 2021 just because of fans, I think that's the right move. The Ryder Cup doesn't have the same feel. You see it out here. You're not going to see guys really fist pumping. You're not going to see that same energy

level. I know the fans think that it's going to be the exact same, but it's not. You're not going to have people cheering on the first tee. It's just not the same. You look at the soccer matches that are going on right now; the Premier League is back, everybody is back, it just doesn't feel the exact same as when you've got the whole stadium chanting or the first tee everybody getting riled up or you know exactly what's happening two groups ahead because people are screaming and hollering. It's a different sporting event than what we're used to, and I think the fans are a crucial part of that, and I think they should wait.

**Q. With regard to Bryson and what he's been doing, obviously guys like yourself and Rory are known as -- Dustin, bigger hitters on TOUR, and you've worked hard to get to that point, obviously. What do you make of kind of the new Bryson, for lack of a better term, and what have you seen out of him? Obviously he's been in contention the last couple weeks.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, it's good. He's been playing good. That's good. Good for him. I have no problem with it. If he's going to put the work in and go do everything, you can't sit here and bitch and complain about him hitting it too far. He's just taking advantage of technology. He's taking advantage of -- he's obviously had to put in work. I think that's what people forget. You've actually got to put in the work when no one is looking, no one is watching, and he's done that. So props to him, and he's using it to his advantage, and that's what he -- everybody out here is trying to do. Everybody is trying to get out here and figure out how to hit the ball straighter, further, all these different things. He's found his way. It's working for him, and I don't see anything wrong with it.

**Q. By comparison to the last two golf courses you've played, is this a course where maybe guys like yourself and Bryson and Rory can take advantage of the length a little bit more?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think so. I think the last two weeks they wouldn't be typical golf courses that I would play. I'm not a big fan of when guys shoot 20-plus-under. You can see it in my -- probably why I play so well at the U.S. Open. I love the fact when par is a difficult score to make on a hole. And I think out here, yes, you can shoot quite a few under, but everywhere you turn there's water here, so there's an obstacle you've got in front of you, there's a big number looking you in the face on almost every year.

Yeah, length is a big advantage here, but at the same time you've just got to go out and go shoot -- I'm not a big fan of those shootouts like the last few weeks. Just feels like you birdied two out of three holes and you really haven't gone anywhere, feels like you almost

have gone backwards. So I'm excited for this week to see what it's like. There hasn't been much rain, so it should be interesting to see how it plays.

**Q. Brooks, did you get your test back from when you arrived? And was there any more anxiety waiting on the result than there might have been the previous week just because of the activity and chatter at Hilton Head?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, I didn't have any concern about it. I've told everybody on my team they're pretty much on lockdown. If they don't want to do that, then they don't have to be with us. It's pretty simple. I told Claude, I've got my chef that's traveling with me, and I brought basically my own gym, I brought free weights, bands. Everything you see in a gym, we've brought. There's no reason that anybody should leave the house. The chef obviously leaves the house to go get food, but that's about it. But she's still using the best face mask, everything she can when she gets back, washing her hands, doing all these things, and just trying to limit our exposure. I think that's been the big thing.

I'm taking this seriously. I've had three months off with an injury, four months off with injury, three months off with sitting at home because of COVID, so there's no -- I've been eager to go play. I've been dying to get out here and do what I do, and I love playing, I love competing, and there's reason for me to go out and do anything other than come to the golf course. I mean, I don't come in the clubhouse at all unless for this interview. I've been staying outside, just going to my house and that's it. I'm not hanging around guys. I don't really feel like doing much, just hanging around my team.

**Q. If you look at the leaderboard going into Sunday the last two weeks, how much of that would you attribute to strength of field, and how much would you attribute to nature of golf course? Or was it just sheer coincidence?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, yeah, I think there's obviously a lot of good players that are playing these events. Everybody has been dying to go play the last two weeks. Yeah, I think a little bit of it is all the good players are playing, and then you're going to have a good leaderboard and then the golf course. I mean, when it's a birdie-fest and guys get hot, you're going to see a lot of people jammed up there at the top, and I think that's what you're getting. But also that's guys just being really good, so I'd say a combination of both.

**Q. Brooks, I remember when you won 2015, your first tournament in Phoenix, you made a comment that you thought your brother was going to be even better than you were. What do you think his slowed**

**his progress into achieving that?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, he's only two years into his career. I don't think it's -- golf is all about opportunity. Like I was talking to my caddie, he went out to go watch him, too, with me, and I said, if I had to go Monday, there's no chance I make it into four of these tournaments a year. It's just not in my nature.

He got to the European Tour, so I don't think that's a failure. But at the same time it's just so different. He didn't -- I don't want to say he didn't enjoy Europe, but he didn't maybe embrace it as much as I did, where I was, hey, look, this is all a stepping-stone to get over here to the PGA TOUR and start playing all these events. He kind of looks ahead a little bit, where he should be instead of where he's at. Maybe that's one of his downfalls.

But at the same time he's got just as much talent. I've played with him a bunch and I've played with guys out here where I've gone, he's 10 times better than these guys; he should be out here. But a lot of it is opportunity. He's got to strike at the right time. He's had his chances. Maybe he hasn't played as well. But at the same time, I don't see any reason why he couldn't be out here.

**Q. What is it you think in his game is even better -- what do you admire about his game, wish you had the same skills? Where is he better than you are or were at that point?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: That's a tough one. I mean, he hits the ball so straight. He doesn't really hit it off line. Maybe one downfall is he tries a little too hard, where I think sometimes you've just got to relax and let it come to you, and I think sometimes that's when you see it when guys, when the game comes easy, they're not even thinking about anything. It's just they get told a number and they just grab the club out, and it's not like, do you think it's a three-quarter, do you think it's a little bit off this, should I flight it. No, automatically you just know when you're playing good, and I think sometimes he might doubt himself a little bit when it comes to that. But at the same time, he's taken advantage of a lot of these opportunities. You look at Vegas, he was right up there next to the lead after two days, and that was the first time he's ever been in that situation. So you look at that, okay, all right, that's fine, you learn from it and move on, and I think you can't dwell on it. He went to Korea, he played all right in Korea. He just hasn't had as many opportunities as I had.

I don't know, he changed equipment, too. I think right when he got to the European Tour, went with a company he had never played with, switched the ball, 14 clubs -- you see it with guys out here, superstars that do that, and the game goes downhill. I don't know what it was -- what the problem was. I don't ask him

about it. I don't talk to him about it. Let him do his thing, let him be his own man. He's a grown-up, he can figure it out.

**Q. Do you think it's tough to play in your shadow?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, absolutely. Why wouldn't it be? Every time he comes in to come do an interview, 90 percent of the questions aren't about him, they're about me. That's frustrating. I have no problem if I'm being asked about him, I love it. It's one of the few times I get to talk about him. But even when he's playing golf at a course back home, 90 percent of the things are about me, and that's got to be annoying. It bothers me because at the same time he's a lot different of a person than I am. He's a little more quiet, soft-spoken, nice kid, funny, but I don't know, I feel for him. He's in a tough spot. It's a no-win situation because if he doesn't become No. 1 in the world, win four majors, he's never going to be as good as me, and that's not necessarily the case, but at the same time, it is what it is. Whatever his goals may be, I don't know what his goals may be. It may just be out here playing on the PGA TOUR for five years, for a year, maybe win one event. I don't know what his goals are. But he's got a chance this week to make those dreams happen.

**Q. Did you give him a pep talk before the playoff, and what was it like to watch someone else in that type of situation?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I was nervous. Dude, watching sucks. I've got to be honest. I feel bad for my parents that had to watch us all these tournaments that we're playing now to junior golf, things like that. That's no fun. I'm not a parent, but if I ever had a kid that's playing a sport or whatever, I'm going to be nervous as hell. It's not fun.

It was exciting. We had my caddie was out there, my best friend was on the bag for him this week, and it'll be exciting. I'm excited to see what he does. But I was nervous. I didn't know -- five for two -- when it was three for two, I felt a lot better, and then all of a sudden there were five guys at 5-under, and it made me a little more nervous.

**Q. Was there any pep talk, anything you said before he teed off?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, we just sat there, we talked. It was good to see -- I hadn't seen him in a while. Obviously with the pandemic I really didn't hang out with him, didn't see him. We'd text every once in a while, but didn't have a chance to see him, so it was nice to finally see him and get to watch him play because I don't get to watch him play. I figure a lot of times if he's playing a PGA TOUR event he's not going to be on TV so I don't get to see any shots, so it was just nice to watch him hit some balls. That was a thrill

for me.

**Q. As much as you don't like a shootout, what transpired last week, you almost went out and won the golf tournament anyway. I wonder what were the things that clicked for you last week? I know it's been a process trying to come off the injury and whatnot and obviously the pandemic. Were you getting some different feels last week, and did you feel like you were getting to the point where you want to be?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I mean, I felt like at PLAYERS I was really close to where I wanted to be. I was doing things where ball flight was back, the contact was back, the sound was back, all the spin. That's half the battle. If you can get those four things going, you know you're on the right track. All four are starting to click now, and I think it's exciting. I wouldn't say I had my "A" game last week. I wouldn't be overly thrilled about it, but at the same time, I view it as, all right, I'm knocking on the door, each week is getting better and better, and that's all I want.

**Q. To not have your "A" game and be that close to the top of the board, how encouraging was that for you?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, it was good. It was nice. It just feels good to -- I didn't really have a chance to win, but it was nice to actually feel something where those last six holes I'm going, I've got to birdie all six of them to really have a chance. I thought 21 was going to be it. Obviously Webb got to 22. When you're playing it's kind of tough to tell, especially two hours in front of the final group, so you're just kind of guessing. It just felt good to have something to really play for. When you're first off on Sunday, it's not as exciting.

THE MODERATOR: Brooks, we appreciate your time and wish you the best of luck this week. Thank you for joining us.