

# U.S. Open Championship 2018

Sunday, June 17, 2018

## Brooks Koepka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good evening. From the 2018 U.S. Open Championship at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, it is my pleasure to welcome the 118th U.S. Open Champion, Brooks Koepka.

Brooks becomes the first repeat winner of this championship since Curtis Strange in 1988 and '89, and the seventh repeat winner in the 118-year history of the Championship.

Brooks, can you quickly reflect on, certainly, the win but also what it means to become the first double winner in quite a while?

BROOKS KOEPKA: It's incredible. I looked at all these names a million times, it felt like, last year, just looking at everybody. To have my name on there twice is pretty incredible, and to go back to back is even more extraordinary. It feels so special. I'm truly honored to go back to back.

THE MODERATOR: What was the key for you today?

BROOKS KOEPKA: I felt like I made those clutch eight- to ten-footers that you need to make to kind of keep the ball, keep the momentum going. And I felt like, you know, we didn't drive it that great, but you can make up so much with a hot putter, and I feel like that's kind of what I was doing.

Starting with the great bogey I made at 11, I think that was big because, from where we were, I want to say I would have taken double when we were in jail. You can't miss it there. To make that big of a mistake, you just want to walk away with bogey.

Luckily, that putt went in, and that built some momentum coming down the stretch and made me feel a little bit better with the putter.

THE MODERATOR: Brooks with a 2-under 68 today, finished at 1-over 281 for the championship. We'll open it up for questions.

### **Q. Brooks, just a couple. What was the most important shot for you today?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I got to go with that -- the putt on 11 was pretty big. The six-footer on 12 was pretty big, and then 14. I can't really pick one of those because they were all kind of at different times.

I felt like I could have been very easily derailed, making double or triple. You've just got to keep plugging away. 11 was -- I watched guys in the morning hit that putt, and I knew how slow it was. And I watched, I think, three guys leave it short. I just told myself just to give it a little extra.

And then from there, once you see one go in, sometimes it feels like the hole just opens up for you.

### **Q. And you said all week long that you were as confident as anybody here. How confident are you now?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I feel pretty much the same way. Yeah, I felt really good. You know, I talked about it with Claude over -- I think since Colonial. I felt like we were going to win either Colonial, Memphis, or the U.S. Open. And we were lucky enough to win this thing again, which is pretty incredible.

### **Q. Brooks whenever the topic came up on the U.S. Open last year, it wasn't so much about you as much as it was an easy golf course of Erin Hills with wide fairways. Not that you cared, but did you think you got overlooked? And secondly, what does that say or show about you to win a U.S. Open on an entirely different style and different course?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, I always feel like I'm overlooked. I could care less. It doesn't bug me. I just kind of keep doing what I'm doing, keep plugging away, kind of hide behind closed doors sometimes, which is nice, kind of the way I'd like to keep it. Sometimes it's kind of impossible.

But I enjoy -- I've got my group of friends. Some of them are here this week. It's special. This really is, to have everyone here this time because last time no one saw me win it. Nobody was here. To have my family and friends here this week is really special.

### **Q. And to do it on such a different course?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think -- I mean, completely different, to be honest with you. I think this whole thing of everyone said Erin Hills was set up for me. It was set up for a lot of guys that bomb the ball. I just happened to play a little bit better that week.



This week is just back to a typical U.S. Open, where 1 over par wins the golf tournament. It's just a lot of grinding. But I couldn't be happier with the way I played.

**Q. Brooks, was it a little weird to have the guy who last repeated in your group the whole day? And did you realize that was the case, that he had done that last? And did you talk about it together ever?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: We talked about it when we were done. It was a pretty cool moment to have Curtis there. It was pretty neat. Calling the shots, I obviously can't hear what he's saying. It was cool to have him in the group. And to him right there when I walked up 18, it was pretty special.

**Q. He wasn't coughing or sneezing?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No. (Laughter).

**Q. Brooks, how different are the emotions this time around, as opposed to winning it the first time?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: It hasn't sunk in yet, to be honest with you. I didn't -- I don't want to say I didn't think I could do it, but I knew that it was going to be that much more difficult, and to finally do it, it's much more gratifying the second time. I can really appreciate how hard it is to win a Major, and to win back to back is special and my second Major, it's cool.

Hopefully, there is or there will be a few more.

**Q. Brooks, what did you do when you were on the shelf injured for 3 1/2 months or 4 months, whatever it was? And how did you hit the ground running so fast when you came back? Because there are some guys who saw you right after you came back after the Masters, and, geez, it doesn't look like he really missed anything.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I think the first day I hit balls, everything came out exactly the way it should have. It felt like I didn't miss three months.

It was very frustrating, sitting on the couch, not doing anything. You know, I couldn't pick anything up with my left hand. I was in a soft cast all the way up to my elbow. It wasn't fun. A lot of TV. I don't wish it upon anybody.

**Q. Were you surprised that you just came right back like that after that long on the shelf?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No. I mean, last year at the British, I think I played once from the U.S. Open to the British Open and then came out, and I think I had a piece of the lead. I don't need to practice every single day. It's the same game I've been playing for 24 years now.

I know what I'm doing. I know how to swing a golf club. It's just a game that I've been playing my entire life. So one week, one month isn't going to make a difference.

**Q. Brooks, what was your reaction when you had some of your fellow pros complaining about the setup this week?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Everybody's got to play the same golf course. Yesterday probably should have been like it was today in hindsight, but it is what it is. You got to keep going, keep plugging away, and don't get caught up in all the talk and just keep focused on what you're doing.

You can't get away from it and start being negative. I feel like it gets some negative thoughts going. If you start complaining, you're looking for excuses. I'm not really one to make excuses.

**Q. Speaking of that, was there anything that Ricky said to you, either when you were 6, 7 over on Friday, or at some point today when things were tough that really helped you?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Not really. I mean, I love the guy to death. I think we -- when we were 7 over, he told me get it going, get it back. We're not out of this thing. He was right. And just keep plugging away. There's a lot of golf left. You never know what the conditions are going to do. I think he told me it was going to get easier, so just hang in there, and it did on Friday.

But as far as today went, Ricky is honestly one of my best friends. I love the guy to death. He's an incredible caddie.

**Q. When you were out, you talked a little bit about this, actually watched the Masters, but you really don't watch much golf. You kind of watch other things. Did you miss it when you were out? If so, what role did that sort of play getting to this point?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I didn't miss it until I knew I wasn't going to be at Augusta. When I knew I wasn't going to be at Augusta, probably about a week to maybe a week and a half before, I really did miss it. I missed the preparation. I missed the competitiveness.

I miss competing. That's really what it is. I've got to be competing at something. It doesn't matter what it is. I just feel like I need to be back out grinding.

I felt like I was missing so much. I mean, to be honest with you, I think the only people I ever saw were Dustin, obviously, seeing him quite a bit back home, and Bubba and Phil. Those are the only guys that texted me.

You make a lot of friends out here, and you feel like a lot of them, you just get forgotten.

**Q. Did you ever miss it before at any point in your life?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Not really, no. But then again, I haven't had that much time off, to be honest with you. I think when you're off for three months and you know you can't do it, it makes it a little bit worse.

**Q. Brooks, when were you aware of the round that Tommy Fleetwood had posted? Can you speak a little bit about how impressive that round was today?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: 63 in a U.S. Open is always pretty impressive. It was hard not to miss. It was the lowest red number up there. 7 under is incredible. Hats off to him. That's some golf.

He seems to bring it every time it's a U.S. Open. Last year, playing with him in the final round, it was pretty impressive. He played very well. He's a great player. I mean, I've known him for maybe five years now, going on that roughly. But he's an incredible player. He'll definitely be holding some Major championships here soon.

**Q. Was there a specific hole where you knew it was a finish (no microphone)?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think walking to 10 tee, maybe I saw it. Or maybe walking back to 14 or something, I saw on the big leaderboard back there that he had posted that. I knew the golf course was a little bit tougher, and if we can make -- we had a par 5 coming up. If you can make a birdie there and squeak one out and keep parring it to death, we'd be fine. As long as you beat that 2 under, I felt like it was going to be good enough.

**Q. You talked earlier about what it meant to have your family here. It is Father's Day. I guess your dad was not in attendance last year. So just to have him here specifically on Father's Day and what that means to you and to him.**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Two years in a row, I haven't gotten him anything. (Laughter). Next year, I'm not going to get him anything either. It might bring some good luck.

But, yeah, I mean, it's incredible to have my family here, and my dad loves golf. To be here, he loves watching. It's incredible. To share it with him this time, it will be a little bit sweeter.

**Q. Brooks, along those lines, he was extremely calm out there. I'm curious what influence he's been on your career as a dad and just as an**

**example for you?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, he's the one that got me started in playing golf. Me and my dad and my brother. It was kind of a family thing starting off. It was enjoyable. Then all of a sudden, I realized I was half decent at it and got very competitive at it.

And then when I got competitive, Chase got very competitive. Then it was just, once we started beating him, it was me and Chase going at it. I think that's why he's so good now, the competitiveness that he's had to go through with myself and my dad.

No one's going to let it -- nobody wanted to lose, let's put it that way. There were times where I came home pouting, and Chase did too, getting beat by him. It's a very competitive family. It's fun, though. I enjoy it. It's so cool to have him here this week. It really is.

**Q. Brooks, Curtis Strange talked about coming up 17 and 18 in '89 with a two-stroke lead and sort of having to talk to his caddie and just keep putting one foot in front of the other and not letting that fact interfere with what he had left to do. What was it like for you to do that? And what was it like for you to play with Dustin Johnson and try to beat a very, very good friend that you've known for a long time and is very close to you?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah. I mean, I love Dustin. He's one of my best friends. To play alongside him, it was fun today. I was excited about it. I figured he would be the guy to beat. I'm sure everyone in here probably had him favorite; and rightfully so, he should have been, being No. 1 in the world.

But I didn't talk to him today. Maybe I said something on 3, and that was about it. We really didn't speak that much. We're both competitive. We both know we're trying to beat each other and trying to win a golf tournament, trying to win a Major. There's a little bit of stress.

But, I mean, I'm sure there's nobody happier for me than Dustin. I'm sure he's happy. When I get back home, he'll be the first one I call to go hang out. I look forward to doing that.

**Q. Walking up with a two-shot lead, what's that like?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I felt like all I had to do was hit the green on 17. Beyond that pin, I felt like I was going to be fine and have a good chance.

To be honest with you, 17 was a great number for us. Just draw a little three-quarter 9 iron in there and put it just past the flag.

But the shot we had on 18 was pretty bad, I'm not going to lie. But I knew that left was okay. I knew right was dead, and as long as we just kept it left, it would be okay because you had that little backstop where it would feed back towards the hole. You just would be left with a little bit of a downhill tester.

Obviously, making those putts on 11, 12, and 14 built some confidence, and I felt like all I had to do, sometimes, if you have to, you've got to take two.

**Q. First of all, what was your club on 11 off the tee?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: We hit a little pitching wedge, but I was trying to just start just left of the pin and let it leak a little right. I just -- my body stopped and just shut it down and hooked it, just straight pulled it.

**Q. What did you have over there? What were your options, and what were you trying to do?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Long left in that fescue, whatever it is. Our first thought was how are we going to get it out from beyond this hole? To be honest with you, we were trying to put it in a bunker. And if it happened to stay on the green, great. That was an added bonus. But I was always going to hit that way too hard. I didn't want to have to do that chip again. Watching guys be there, it's not a good place to be.

But I knew the bunker, as long as I kept it below the hole, I'd have an uphill putt. I don't know how fast it went in the bunker, if it was steaming in there or not but, I mean, we played the hole exactly how we wanted to from there on out.

**Q. The list of Major champions is pretty long, but the list of multiple Major champions is sort of 80 odd. Can you speak to how this affects your legacy going forward?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I haven't really thought about my legacy. That's pretty cool. I remember Rich Beem at The Open Championship was talking about how there's only 280-some guys that have ever won a Major. And once you keep doing it, once you win the second one, he told me it goes down a lot lower.

What did you say, 80? Yeah, I think that's pretty incredible to be a two-time Major champion. I think that's neat, man. It really is.

**Q. Brooks, the course conditions were far better today. Yesterday Zach Johnson was reported to have said they've lost the course. Did you agree, at the time yesterday, with any part of that sentence that Zach Johnson said?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, it doesn't really matter to me whether they lost it or not. If you were above the

hole downwind, you had no chance. But that's part of golf. You've got to understand where to leave it. Put it under the hole sometimes with an uphill putt and make sure you're always leaving yourself an uphill putt.

Yes, it did get very difficult. There wasn't much grass on the greens. I think everyone will say that. And it did get very tough. It was very borderline. Depending on the gust of wind, sometimes you felt it maybe wasn't, and whatever. I got this thing, so I don't care.

**Q. Erin Hills, you made the birdies late to kind of take control, and here you grinded out pars to stay ahead of Fleetwood. Which one's more gratifying, making those late birdies or grinding out pars to win?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: This one. This one's a lot sweeter. To go back to back, I mean, that's -- I really can't even put it into words. When you look back at history, it's incredible. It really is. I really can't even put words to it.

To win on two different styles of golf courses, I mean, I think I came in here on Wednesday and or whatever said the golf courses kind of played very similar, as far as shot shaping and the way they kind of look, and I still think that. But I mean, obviously, Shinnecock plays incredibly tough, and you knew that going in even par was going to be a really good score, and it turned out it was almost impossible to shoot even.

**Q. Do you remember what you said to Dustin on 3?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: No, I don't remember what I said to him. I think I said, man, that putt really breaks or something like that. Other than that, we didn't really -- or thanks for the read or something like that.

But I think we were both so focused on what we had to do, we were grinding away. But I'll talk to him when I get home.

THE MODERATOR: I think we have just a few more questions.

**Q. In this back and forth between you and Dustin, who's ahead now?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I mean, he's won every year he's been out here. That's incredible. I don't know long he's been out here, 11 years? 11 years maybe. How many wins has he got? 18, right? I mean, that's pretty good. I've got some catching up to do.

**Q. Does this even it up?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I don't know if it evens it up. When we're all done -- he's going to win another one. I mean, we all know that. Everybody sitting in this room knows he's going to win another one. How many more

he wins, we don't know. There definitely will be one more at least. He's one of the best to ever play the game. He really is.

Going to the gym with him, starting training, you see how hard he works. You see how talented he is. He's physically gifted. In my mind, he's probably one of the most talented guys to ever play the game. And the attitude, the work ethic, everything that he brings to it, I mean, in my book, he will, when he's done, probably go down as one of the best of all time.

**Q. You looked very healthy playing last week and this week. Can you talk a little bit about Mark, your physio, who lives just a few miles from here?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah. Mark kind of keeps me in check. He does an incredible job, ever since -- I think I met him at The Open Championship, maybe 2013.

All the work he does with me, when my rib popped out, I think at Arnold Palmer, just to get me playing was incredible. He does such a good job. He actually does take the time to really get to know your body and know how it works.

You know, my rib kind of came out last week. It bugged me a little bit. Right when we got here, he worked on it, knew what it was. It was pretty sore, but I had no problems since then.

**Q. Brooks, you're obviously very adept at winning U.S. Opens. Do you feel your game is suited to any other of the particular Majors, or does it suit all time zones, as it were?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I think all time zones. I mean, a U.S. Open is always going to be a tough test of golf. I enjoy that. That's fun. The Open Championship, I think, suits very well, and we always seem to play good at the PGA. The only one I haven't figured out is Augusta. Hopefully, figure that one out soon because I'll be playing there for a while.

**Q. What's your experience at Pebble Beach, feelings about the place, and as a venue for a potential three-peat?**

BROOKS KOEPKA: I've played it once. I think two years ago maybe, I think I played it. That's the only time I've ever played it. It's an incredible golf course. You can get caught up in the views there, just looking around. I know it's a year away, but I'll be excited when we go play there.

To be honest with you, I don't putt that well on poa, so it will be quite interesting. I struggle reading the poa greens. The consistency, they bounce a little bit. So I don't know why I've never been -- that's kind of why I don't play the west coast that much, I struggle with it.

I'll be raring to go that week and hopefully defend it again.

THE MODERATOR: Well, we'll certainly be excited to watch as you go for back to back to back. Brooks Koepka, 2017, 2018 U.S. Open Champion. Congratulations. Thank you for being with us throughout the week. Thank you for your coverage of 118th U.S. Open Championship. Look forward to seeing you next year at the Pebble Beach Golf Links. Happy Father's Day, everyone.