

Fort Worth Invitational

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Jordan Spieth into the interview room here at the Fort Worth Invitational. He's making his sixth start at this event. He is out 2016 champion. He comes into the week never having finished worse than 14th at this event.

Jordan, obviously a place that you love here at Colonial. If we can get your thought on being back.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it's a place that's special to me. I received a Champion's Choice back my rookie season, and was able to play well then and work my way into Jack's event the next week and helped propel that rookie year that was really memorable around this time of that season and eventually led into a win later in the year.

So a place I feel like I owe a lot to, and certainly have a fun history coming back. It's one that fits my eye, too, so I'm very excited for the week.

THE MODERATOR: I know it's a big stretch for you coming up. Currently No. 31 in the FedExCup standings. Just comment a little bit about your season up to this point and your goals heading forward.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, just progressing. I feel like the best is yet to come this season. That's how it feels for me. Striking is on point, and starting to dial things in going to courses and greens that I've been successful on in the past coming up here.

So all signs are leading in the right direction. Just stay the course.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Clearly we know the Nelson in kind of your hometown event. You still haven't had the kind of finish you want there, but you've come here and had a second, a first, and a second the last three years. Is there something about getting here the week after that to maybe just relax and play golf and not have some of the distractions you have playing over there?

JORDAN SPIETH: Maybe a really small piece of that, but I think the majority of it is the golf course itself fits my game better than TPC has in the past.

And then I think Trinity will yield similar results than

Colonial has for me in the future. Just this year couldn't quite get the ball in the hole, but that happens. I think it's more, yeah, this golf course in general more than any extra side stuff from last week.

I still feel like this is a hometown event for me, too. I been coming out here since I was six, seven years old, too. It was always a fun couple weeks. School was letting out into summertime and the PGA rolled through Dallas and Fort Worth way back when I was just falling in love with the game.

Both places have the extra aura too. Obviously there are more things going on last week, and it does feel a little bit more relaxed this week.

Q. Jake Owen's playing on the Web this week. Can you give a scouting report and what you expect from him and the what are the challenges of going into that realm as someone that doesn't do it normally?

JORDAN SPIETH: We texted a bit yesterday. I was just kind of asking how things were going. I missed a message; he wanted me to get on his Podcast maybe Monday and I wasn't able to do it.

I kind of asked him the state of his game. He said he's been practicing a lot. He said the course is really hard. I mean, going into it with that mindset, like maybe he'll kind of play more conservative.

Fortunately I'm not there with him, because whenever I'm his partner I'm telling him to hit driver everywhere, even though he's talented enough to play the golf course the way it needs to be played.

So I think he'll get some knowledge on the golf course and play it a little than he plays Pebble Beach. He's certainly got the talent to be able to shoot a good round. Should be really fun for him. He's an entertainer at heart. He does a great job with that. He's just so good with people.

I think it's a great move by the tournament no matter how he plays, but he obviously wants to play well. He's been grinding for a while now and played a few tournaments.

Wishing him the best.

Q. Last week we had a 21-year-old shoot 23-under par and win the Byron Nelson. Last year we had a few guys on tour shoot 59. In your time as a professional, do you feel like the PGA TOUR, the field, has gotten tougher over time?

JORDAN SPIETH: I feel like it's pretty similar to when I started. But, I mean, in five years ask me the same question. I'll probably have a better answer for you.

But as far as the low scores are concerned, that has a lot to do with improved technology. The limits are just about reached with the ball, the driver, the wedges. I mean, everything is pushed right to the limit that allows us to hit whatever shot we want.

You can work it high, low, anywhere in between. The ball cooperates with heavy wind, it cooperates no wind. The technology is just so phenomenal that it makes the game easier to shoot lower scores than it would've been in the past, considering golf courses around stretched out longer and longer and longer.

Come here to venues like Colonial, though, where you're forced to play shots off the tees and hit to the spots that they were forced to hit way back in the day. Maybe with one or two more clubs, but they were forced to hit there.

Even though we typically just get hot temperatures and not really strong winds here in Fort Worth, the scores stay in a relatively mid-range of a winning score compared to the average winning score on tour.

That kind of speaks to the golf course here. Trinity will be a golf course that 8-under will win some years and 23-under will win some years. And that's a number of golf courses on tour. This is one of a few, like a Riviera or a Hilton Head. Sure, the conditions can change it, but for the most part you're forced to certain areas and playing the golf course from there. It doesn't change overtime. It's timeless.

I certainly enjoy that kind of classic aspect of this place.

Q. Mentioned a minute ago two runner-ups and a win the last three years. So when you come back, do you find yourself thinking more about the win or the two runner-ups finishes and what you could have done?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think of all three. Last three years I've put myself in position to win a tournament on a Sunday. That's all you can really ask for.

From there, the bounces go your way sometimes. Like catch a jumper, hits a grandstand, and I chip in. You

know, I had a putt on 17 that I just barely missed last year, and didn't play 18 the right way to give myself a real look at birdie.

But it's going to go your way sometimes and it's not. I kind of look at it as all positive from the three. You obviously want to capitalize on a win. If there were three seconds I would feel a little different. I look at it very positively as I've been in position a lot.

I'm looking to kind of have my first Sunday within six shots of the lead this year. I just want to give myself a chance when I step on the tee Sunday afternoon to see where things are as we roll into three more majors this season.

Q. You've been working with your putter the last few weeks. What will give you confidence on the greens this week?

JORDAN SPIETH: Making putts. (Laughter.) I mean, especially from the 10- to 20-foot range, kind of my go-to range, one that I've historically been really good at and just haven't quite gotten them to fall.

But like I mentioned last week, each day it's getting a little more comfortable, and I believe that they'll fall soon enough. Honestly, if they fall in four weeks' time, that's ideal. I would like to get in a nice little groove, get some momentum, have the hole look a little bit bigger this week.

That just comes from the putts actually falling. I may hit just as good of a putt two holes in a row, one goes in, one doesn't. That one that goes in feels a lot better.

I've just kind of hit a lot of lips. I'm ready for them to lip in.

Q. Interesting talking to different players this week on their strategy. It's so different. Like Jon Rahm, you know, driver; we saw that last year. What can you share about your strategy on this course?

JORDAN SPIETH: Justin Rose's caddie came up when we were hitting balls on the range yesterday and was kind of asking the same idea. He's like, I've heard always hit to the 150 markers and then work on your shots from 140 to 60 yards.

And I've heard you can be aggressive because the bunkers are so good it rolls back into the middle. As long as you're okay hitting gap wedge out of bunkers, play it more aggressively.

I've kind of done a little bit of both. It really depends on what condition the golf course is in. Then it really depends on the pin locations on that specific hole.

Like I could tell you on No. 6, you know, if you told me what pin it was I would tell you if I'm playing aggressively or not. It changes per hole per day based on hole location.

To feel like, Okay, this is not one of the more gettable holes today, or, yeah, you hit a good tee shot here and you can really knock a wedge in close because it feeds to the hole.

So just knowledge over the years that change the game plan each day and each hole out here.

Q. The Horrible Horseshoe always plays as one the tougher three-hole stretches on tour. Talk about some of the challenges that presents.

JORDAN SPIETH: Well it starts on No. 3 with -- I mean, if you hit that fairway 50% of the time you've done well. It's just a very difficult fairway to hit. You need the right wind, for one. If it's down of the left you almost can't hold it unless you lay way back just the way it's shaped.

I think it will be a prevailing wind, a normal wind this week, where it will be kind of off the right or maybe more straight in where you can hit the fairway there.

Yeah, you're just trying to make it through with even par through the Horrible Horseshoe and you feel really good about what you've done. You're never really trying to fire in at pins. I mean, No. 3 is the only hole where if you pulled off a fantastic tee shot, you know, maybe you're trying to get it in close to the front pins.

But middle of the green on all three holes is the idea every single time we play it, no matter where the tees are, what the conditions are. If you put the ball in the middle of the green in regulation, you're most likely going to play it even par or better for the week and you've gained a lot on the field.

Q. For those of us in the Dallas/Fort Worth media who only get to see you for this two-week stretch, we see you growing before our eyes year after year. When you take yourself back a couple years, what's the big difference in the way you approach the game, the sport, and life?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, 2015 I looked at things different than I did in '16; 2017 I looked at things different than I did in '16.

It's been kind of a crazy up and kind of rolling scale over the last three or four years. Just had a lot of experiences that a lot of guys have over the course of 25 years within three years. Ups and downs and everything in between.

The majority of it very positive, but also learning to live in the spotlight and what that entails and what to block out, what to embrace. It's still a learning experience.

I try and look at it from now I've found the most -- the easiest way to enjoy what you're doing is to try and look at it from a bigger picture and to look each challenge as an opportunity. It's cliché, but I've gotten pretty down on myself at certain moments. You know, say, after the '16 Masters as being like a low point in my golf career.

Even though it was still a tremendous week and still was a really good year in 2016, that kind of haunted me and all the questioning and everything. I let it tear me down a little bit. I kind of a lot a little bit of my own freedom, thoughts on who I am as a person and as a golfer.

I shouldn't let that happen based on an experience I've had happen to me many times. There have been a lot of tournaments where I've held leads and not won going back to junior golf.

Just because it happened to be on a bigger scale and I was thrown into the limelight based on 2015 and just interest in myself, it was created into a huge deal.

And then, you know, the same way it can bounce back off of like other wins. Like when I won here in 2016. Man, I remember sitting in here after that win, and the first question was, Does that -- instead of like congratulations on the tremendous finish and win, does this makeup for the Masters? I'm like, you know what? This was a totally different experience.

So I guess it sum it up, I've just tried to really be selfish in the way that I think and focus on being as happy as I possibly can playing the game I love; not getting caught up in noise, good or bad.

Because what I hear from the outside, the highs are too high from the outside and the lows are too low from the outside from my real experience of them. So trying to stay pretty neutral and just look at the big picture things and try and wake up every single day loving what I do.

There was a time I didn't necessarily -- I loathed going to the golf course for a while. I'm certainly not there now. I'm loving what I do. I'm loving all the challenges and the opportunities that I have ahead for the next 20 years.

Q. This may be a bad question in light of what you just said. I'm going to try it. The win in 2016 here came at a good time. You were dealing with the comparisons to 2015 and then the Masters. Been a

little bit of a frustrating year. Any parallels at all to coming in here when you came in in 2016?

JORDAN SPIETH: Not really. I mean, my focus this year was -- so far to this point was on the Masters. I performed at the Masters tremendously in my opinion.

So really, if I look at it from what were my goals starting the year and what are my goals going forward, I've actually checked off the boxes. I had a chance to win on Sunday at the Masters. Checked box. Next checked box, to have a chance to win the U.S. Open. So I've actually hit my goals.

I don't really look at it as -- although I did check those same boxes back in 2016 before winning here, but I don't really feel the same way whatsoever. Kind of speaking to what I was just saying, I mean, I'm waking up excited about -- anything that's kind of off in my game, I actually enjoy working at it and kind of being selfish about my work at it.

I'm trying new and improved ways to be a better player, and if the results come right away, great. If it takes a little while, then I'm okay with that at this point. I've kind of taken a more patient approach to peaks and valleys throughout my career.