

Travelers Championship

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP



THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome Jordan Spieth into the interview room. 2015 FedExCup champ, nine-time PGA TOUR winner. Jordan, we're nine weeks away from the FedExCup playoffs and you're sixth in the standings right now. So what is your game plan heading into this final stretch?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think working your way into the Top 5 is key as you go in, because obviously remaining in the Top 5 is the number one goal through the first three events. We've got three out of four similar locations, places I've played multiple times now in the playoffs. As well as the event -- this is my last new event other than well, I guess, now the Northern Trust.

But, yeah, just trying to get on and try to break the season down. This event for me will be the last of the first half of the season, and then I have at least a couple-week break and try to really grind for the year's last two majors before the FedExCup playoffs.

Q. And you're making your first start in the Travelers Championship, so what made you decide to play this event? And based on the practice you got in yesterday, what are your thoughts on the course and how it will play this week?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I've heard unbelievable things about this tournament. I've watched it, I've watched the exciting last seven holes where anything can happen, and that's always fun for us. When you get opportunities to make birdies or even make a couple eagles on a nine-hole stretch with just hitting good, solid shots, you can come back from anywhere. It's also a lot more exciting because you have to play aggressive, and I think that that's something that if I'm forced to do, helps us.

Backing off is a little tougher for us because it's just not as much in my DNA, but it's an extremely well-run tournament. I just haven't played the week after the U.S. Open, and thought, why don't I? You play a U.S. Open, any course you play right after should seem a bit easier and should be fun because of that.

So it's one that the only reason was just scheduling in the past, and I'm excited to add it this year.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JORDAN SPIETH: I started thinking about it a month back maybe. Then what put me over the edge was

other players' recommendations. It was, "What do you think about the Travelers?" Because I was kind of in between what I'm going to do scheduling-wise after the U.S. Open, before the U.S. Open Championship. "What do you think about the Travelers?" "I haven't played there," and it was universal. It was all positive comments from every player I asked.

Q. Now that you've had a couple days to sink in and so forth, what is the assessment from Erin Hills, from your play there and moving forward with obviously the British a month away?

JORDAN SPIETH: I didn't have to dissect too much into it. It was exactly how I felt going into the last round is how I felt after I described it right after Sunday's round. You just couldn't get the ball in the hole on the green. Tee to green everything has been there. I've been working on the putting, trying to develop a feel that I can use consistently and kind of not have to think about the stroke and setup and instead focus on the line and speed, which I just have not been comfortable doing.

But it comes from just getting one feeling, knocking it in, with 1,000 putts, then after that you can go off of it. I just didn't quite get to that level at the Open. I thought it was a great golf course. I thought it was an exciting U.S. Open. I thought you had a bunch of young players trying to win their first major, and you saw Brooks come through with just clutch shot after clutch putt. Congratulations to somebody who I grew up playing with. That's pretty cool to see.

But, overall, to answer your question, I thought Erin Hills, I thought they did a good job. I thought the USGA did a good job allowing it to go under par and have a little bit of a different U.S. Open without trying to -- if you try to bring that course back to par, you would have messed things up, and they didn't. And I thought they did a really good job of that.

Q. If I can follow going back to the putting. Is that more encouraging or is it still frustrating?

JORDAN SPIETH: Frustrating. It's somewhat encouraging when it's the beginning of the year, and I finished third in Hawaii, I'm striking the ball well and the putts just aren't going in because I take the confidence off of the striking, and I know that the putting is going to get there. I really only had, I would say, two solid

putting tournaments out of all the events I played this year where I would consider where I felt -- when I say solid, I'm not talking about the actual result. That just happens to come with them, and it normally does when you're putting well, but just my comfort level on the greens.

It only takes one or two events in a row before we're right back on track, and I know that, and that's what I believe.

This week, you have to make birdies. You have to convert. You're going to have plenty of chances. So going back to the way things have been the last few events, it will yield to even more frustrating week if it's the same year because you'll have so many more opportunities. So I just said that's my main focus is on the greens this week.

You know, you can't really make too many mistakes here. At the U.S. Open you can make a couple mistakes and get away with it here. Bogies drop you down. So don't try to force it and just believe that the putter's going to get there if I give myself enough chances. It's kind of stepping away from having to have it go in and more just I'm going to give myself enough putts to where they have to eventually.

Q. Kind of along those same lines, getting that feel back, do you revisit what you did maybe last year when you did have that feel? Do you go back to look at tape and talk to Cam about the way you felt?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, both. Cameron pulls it up. He's got all the logs, videos and SAM Putting Lab System information from my best to my worst weeks and everywhere in between. We've charted it down before and after my best putting weeks. He's got videos from all of it, and none of it looks any different. Couple of my best putting weeks, if you dissected the stroke down, they're actually very different strokes.

From Tour Championship in '15 to Masters in '15, very different strokes. You wouldn't necessarily look and see by the naked eye, but if you looked at the intricacies of the stroke and the way the putter traveled, they were actually tremendously different. But the one similarity and consistency in it was up at 95% or higher. So even with the stroke being off, my face control to that stroke was the same each time, and that's what I'm trying to get is that consistency level up.

I've been trying to make my stroke perfect with the perfect consistency, and there is really no point. If you're looking at a spot and you set up and you know you're set up there and you can consistently hit it there, then it doesn't really matter what the stroke looked like. So, in other words, it's there, it's just a matter of trusting

that it's there, seeing a couple go in, and then the hole starts to look bigger.

Just you go through spurts here and there, and I went through it in '13 and '14, and even '15 when I wasn't making as many putts for a week or a couple weeks. And you go through those kind of spurts. The hole looks a little smaller until you get, again, give yourself enough opportunities. If I hit 15 greens, I have to make a couple of them. You roll the ball near the hole that many times, if it's luck, one of them is going to bounce in. Or you just believe that's a good stroke, and the hole starts to look bigger.

Q. Russell Knox yesterday spoke about Tiger Woods and the influence he has on this current golf generation as far as training, conditioning, to raise the level of competition. What is your view of this opportunity generation of golfers that you are a part of?

JORDAN SPIETH: Seems to be more athletic. Seems to be athletes playing golf. Look at last week Brooks Koepka, that's a tolling golf course, and Brooks hits it really hard in the gym, and he's doing the right things as well. You don't see him out for injury. He's strong. He's got a lot of endurance, and he was able to play his best golf on the back nine Sunday on probably the hardest physical test that we've ever had, at least that I have.

It's draining out there. That's a long week in a U.S. Open. I would even think being in contention takes more out of you. But he was able to stay in there and hit shots that were on line. He didn't bail out of any of them. That's what you look for when you're fatigued. You see the body moving faster and out of sync, and he wasn't. It's a perfect example of what I think this generation's like.

You go into the fitness trailer, I just came out of it, and it's packed. Guys are in there doing anything from warm-ups to full workouts. There is certainly a fine line that I think it's still early in golf of figuring out, which is when do you back off a little bit? Is it the second, third, fourth week in a row? Is it how do you back off? How do you save enough energy on the course? Because it's not a basketball game where you know you just have to do a warm-up and it's going to be that kind of physical endurance every time. A lot of us can do full workouts and then go play a tournament round, but is that best for you? So that's where it's tough to figure out right now. But guys are in there using the gym, recognizing that if they want to be out here for 20 years without injury, you can play your best golf when you're 40 years old, and that's unlike any other sport.

But you've got to do the right things early enough.

Tiger certainly showed what changing his body could do in the way that he dominated.

Then look at what Phil did. I think it's underrated what Phil did. Phil put a lot of time in the gym. He put a lot of time in doing band work, and he got himself in the best shape in the last 10, 15 years within the last few years. I mean a guy who is -- what is he, 44? Mid-40s? 46, and he's had a chance to win. He really should have won three majors, two or three majors in the last three years, including winning one just a few years ago.

It's cool. It's cool to see. It certainly is confidence boosting for us knowing that we've got that long to be able to do it.

Q. In what you've seen so far, which holes do you think stand out on this layout? And why do you think so many guys like playing one of the shortest venues you guys have out here?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think 15 through 17 are the key holes out here. I think guys like it because it's fun and exciting. It's risk-reward. And the fact that when you hit a good shot, you get tremendously rewarded for it on the back nine. If you hit the shot where you're looking, you have a good look at birdie, and it's that easy.

But there is risk to it. Obviously, water left the 15. But if you hit it off the right side, you're in big trouble over there too. So it's a really good, short, drivable par-4. We had a great one last week at No. 2. It's fun when we play those types of holes. There are so many -- so many courses try to create them, and there's just something about it that isn't great. But for the ones that are, it's hard to beat little, short, drive building par-4s. Obviously the next couple holes with water around makes for an exciting finish.

I think those three holes, 18, you know, you can certainly birdie 18. Downwind yesterday was a driver-wedge, which also is exciting, but there are other few holes that have that other elms of trouble around.

Q. Now that you've been a pro for a few years, how would you assess your career as a pro and maybe assess this year as well?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think for the first four years I've achieved above and beyond what I could have set goals at, so that's pretty exciting when we look back like that. That also allows me to recognize where we can set goals for the next four or five years, what our capabilities are, what we've been able to do and how we've been able to do it. The good, the bad, and in between. There's been 90% good, and I think that's awesome. Coming out with no status and using

exemptions to get out here and having to play well in those events and then just kind of riding that wave, and hopefully that wave, I don't have to fall off for another 25 years.

I would assess it as better than I could have imagined for the first four or five years on TOUR. I'm really excited for what's coming up.

Q. Going back to Tiger for a second. Any thoughts about a tweet this week about going to get professional help with some of the issues he's dealing with. Any thoughts about that? You grew up watching him, how do you react to that?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think we all want him to do what's best for him. I think if he feels -- I haven't spoken much recently since probably the Ryder Cup here or there. But we all want him to be better. We want him to be healthy, and we want him to be back out here. So whatever needs to happen for that to happen, he knows and I'm sure he's doing it.

Q. Going back to what you said about drivable par-4s. There is so much effort with length and how far the ball goes now. Is that something you'd kind of like to see more of, these reachable par-4s out here?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, you have one of the best, if not the best short hole in golf takes place at a tournament where the winning score is with really good weather around 10- or 12-under, and that's 10th at Riviera.

So that one you wouldn't necessarily consider drivable. I think I've been on the green a couple times there out of 100 shots. But here we recognize that it's high teens that win this golf tournament, no matter the conditions. It's somewhere from 14- to 20-under, and you accept that.

Personally, I enjoy -- my favorite events when I look back are the ones where it's 8- to 12-under. But there's not a whole lot of those. That's just the caliber of players that are out here. But when it is 15- to 20-under, if you accept that and allow it to be that, and you just let the golf course play the way it's supposed to play, which I think historically this tournament has done extremely well, then that's fun. That's a lot of fun.

It puts a little bit of extra pressure on you because you can't get away with the 1-under round. You'd have to do something really special to win the golf tournament shooting under at a lot of rounds. You'd have to shoot a 58 or something like that, which can be done.

But it definitely puts pressure on needing to feel like your off day is still a few under out here. And holes like

15 out here, I don't think will play -- I mean, one of the pin locations will probably make it the easiest hole on the course that day, but there are a couple of them where it will be in the middle of the pack as a drivable hole and scored a par, and that's pretty cool. Does that answer your question?

Q. Yeah, seems like you're seeing more of those out there.

JORDAN SPIETH: Absolutely, I think guys would love to see it. And you can do it on courses that are difficult, and you can do it on ones that are more gettable.

Q. I think yesterday you said you were shocked by the news of Phil and Bones. You and Michael are so close, can you imagine the unique relationship after 25 years?

JORDAN SPIETH: I never thought Bones would be back on the market. I tease Michael about that. No, I mean, I'm not sure. I haven't spoken to either one. Bones was with us last week walking a few holes in the practice round. Would have never guessed it, but it's none of my business as well.

But in relating it to me and Michael, man, we've been through a lot. He's been there, my number one guy that's been through everything, every stage that we've gone through on course and has seen every shot, pretty much, except the Colonial when he tapped out.

But he's done an incredible job. I believe that he's one of the best in the world at what he does, and I think it's extremely useful, helpful, and an advantage for me to have him on the bag. So, no I hadn't even thought about any other scenario.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think it's similar to Bones and Phil. I would call our relationship, at least in the early stages, for sure. They're still going to be -- I'm sure Bones and Phil are still going to be fantastic friends. Their families are very close, and very supportive of each other and anything they've done off the course as well.

That's similar to Michael and myself. Michael's about to have a kid. He's going to be a dad this fall for the first time, and that's a huge step in his life that he's excited and a journey that he's excited to go on, and I'm excited to do whatever we can to help him in that process. That's unique, I think, in a player-caddie, for sure.

Q. (Asking about new drug testing rules).

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I did, yeah. I've got no problem with any of it. I think aligning along with the Olympic structure makes things a bit easier as far as

knowing what you can and can't do. A lot of that, when I say knowing what you can and can't do, not pushing limits. More of avoid this allergy medication is I think what golfers you're more inclined to see is guys have to watch out for that kind of thing. There are certain like Zyrtec, you can't take Zyrtec-D or something like that. You've got to watch out in that sense.

But I think it makes it easier as a hole when things align. And now you've got a similar program to what the other sports organizations do. I think for the most part, it's going to be urine testing still, and here and there, limited times it will be blood testing.

But that doesn't bother me whatsoever. The TOUR has wanted to do it, and if they want to, they do. We ran it through our pac meetings, and everybody was, hey, all right. If this is what should be done to make it easier and you believe this will be easier for players, then so be it.

I don't think it's going to be anywhere near as often as urine testing. I don't know. We get tested two to three times a year, randomly, and I think it will be maybe once a year. I'm not sure. That I don't know.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure. I remember, I think, watching other 20-something-year-olds. When I was just turning professional I watched Russell and Scott Langley battle it out at Sony, and I think Scott won. I remember -- was it Russell? Russell won, I'm sorry.

But it was an amazing putting performance battle. I remember watching it from home, and I didn't have any status anywhere, and I was getting ready to use some starts. And I played with and against both of them that previous year many times. I even was potentially going to be partners with Russell on the walk up team. We played a couple rounds together practicing, and I remember like, you know what, if they're winning, then not that it's that difficult, but you watch somebody do it and you're used to playing against and battling with, and you feel that you're of caliber with them, then obviously you just get yourself in that position too, and they seem to be approaching it like it was just another amateur event, even though it was three steps up on to the PGA TOUR.

So, I think watching that, and now you watch kind of the rainfall of all these other guys winning that players are sitting there that are younger than us that are saying I played against him in junior and amateur golf, I know I can beat that guy. Now that guy's winning. For me it was big watching that event and watching that start there. I think that's kind of what started to happen.

Q. (Asking about young guys on TOUR).

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure. It's tough for me to speak to that. I was very fortunate to have two by 21. So it's hard to speak to what they feel about it. But in my opinion, they shouldn't feel any because, again, you follow the process, you're good enough players, you're winning enough that it's bound to come during a major championship week when you win.

A major championship, we played a couple majors that are the same or even somewhat weaker fields than other PGA TOUR events that we play. So if you're playing, just you're playing a tough golf course against the same guys you always play against, well, that's every other week. It's just a matter of getting the whole major out of your head, and that's difficult. A lot easier said than done.

But these young guys, like you just mentioned, are all winning PGA TOUR events early, that could very well just happen in a major championship week because it's pretty much the same as other TOUR events if you look at who you're playing against.

The Masters is the Masters, and you understand what that can do. Winners get into the Masters; it's a tougher event to get into. And the U.S. Open being the toughest test in golf. Obviously, those two events, the Open Championship. The PGA is similar to a very difficult PGA TOUR event as far as the golf course is concerned.

I mean, you see like on courses like Congressional when we play out there, Riviera, these 8- to 12-under golf courses. I don't think it's out of the moon to say that you won't see maybe a first time winner be a young guy that wins a major championship. It's happening every week and those tournaments are no different. It's just mentally getting open.

Q. Winning golf tournaments, people say a lot whoever makes the least number of errors. For you, beyond your own internal drive, to get yourself back up after a four-shot, who in your immediate circle brings you what?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I think the easiest and most impactful is from Cameron, my instructor, because he can dissect it and pretty much say, look, this was all that was off, or he'll ask questions and he gets all the stats. And when you dissect it into the stats, you can really figure it out. Sometimes it's not the stats. Sometimes you were just tired or you just mentally weren't there. You kind of were, the mental game was off that week.

But I can find that out with Cameron by dissecting the stats. Then he's able to say, all right, this is all that's keeping you away. If you're really upset, you can say

why aren't I doing what I did then, and he'll pull up and show you the similarities and differences to some of your best weeks.

Michael does a really good job with the mental side of things. Being able to kind of calibrate where I am compared to other weeks, and Cameron can't do that because he's not on course. So those two combinations.