

U.S. Open Championship 2020

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

Jordan Spieth

Flash Interview



JORDAN SPIETH: Try and finish even the rest of the round. So I ended up finishing even after the 2nd hole. So tough break early. All in all, shooting 3 over at a U.S. Open, feeling like I had no control, it's not bad. Really struggling ball striking. Found a way to kind of grind it out on and around the greens.

So a couple kind of nasty kind of lips, and then a ball that got stuck in a tree where it normally just spits it down and you hit it just short left of the green. Kind of after I hit the tee ball, I figured I'd just be playing for par. Yeah, I mean -- I think, 7 back after a round, if there's any tournament where that's okay, it's a U.S. Open, but it's just too many first rounds where I'm at least seven back after one. It's really frustrating.

Q. Jordan, did that feel like a typical U.S. Open round in the sense that you're taking a lot of punches, you're landing a few, but you're just trying to avoid the knockout blow or taking the knockout blow, just trying to keep yourself within range? Is that a strategy you have to take?

JORDAN SPIETH: No. The goal is to go out there and try to make the best score you can make on every single hole. Obviously, when you big picture it, there's going to be punches thrown at you from the golf course at a U.S. Open, but it's no way, shape, or form that I come out today saying I just want to hang in there. The goal is to lead the golf tournament and continue to lead the golf tournament.

There's definitely 4 under rounds out there. I certainly played with one. The pins are, for the most part, in easier locations than they will be the next few days. A lot of ones where, if you were just in the fairway and able to just kind of hit a straight one at the hole, it actually fed to it from either side on, I mean, six or seven different holes, which is unusual. They certainly were looking to have the lowest scores today given the conditions that we have as well.

But as the course firms up and the pins get thrown in other places, under par is going to be a phenomenal score. Yeah, I think I went rogue on that.

Q. Jordan, you mentioned setting a goal after the start. How did you steady yourself?

JORDAN SPIETH: I mean, through experience. I've had just about everything happen to me in the game of golf. So it's not very hard for me to reset after two holes of a 72-hole tournament. Certainly, I've been off to birdie-birdie starts, and I've been off to 3 over through two or whatever it may be. Just wanted to step up on 3 and make a nice 3. I finally got one in the hole with a birdie on 4, and I knew I'd have some chances as you get around the turn.

So there are holes that present themselves with opportunities to make birdies out here. These poa annua greens right now, on the 1st hole, I just didn't know if it would take a big hop or spin back. Unfortunately, I guessed incorrectly and suffered from it. From there, they were just a lot softer than I thought they'd be.

I understand, if they were firm on day one, it would get a little out of control, but I was a bit surprised by how you had to really drive shots low when you're used to kind of being able -- there's almost like on those holes, where those pins are in a bowl, it was almost an advantage to being -- not the first cut, but the next cut of rough. Then you can run it up the green. You don't have to worry about it spinning so much. I think today will be the last day that's the case, though.

Q. Did you have a view of Patrick's hole-in-one? It looked like it was kind of a delayed reaction.

JORDAN SPIETH: It was kind of hazy this morning. Like I would hit a shot, and I'd kind of like lean and look. So in the air, it looked like it was going out or left of the pin. If it gets any left of that hole, it goes off the green.

What I saw from it, it ended up going right down the flagstick on the tee shot, and it just kicked straight. When it kicked straight, it was like this is going to be good, and you could just hear the pin, and hands go up. It's just unusual to have that with a hole-in-one at a U.S. Open. Normally, the place would have been going nuts.

When it first happened, I was curious if it just hit the pin

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and went close because that's exciting too, but it turns out it went in. He said it's his second ever since he turned professional, maybe his third ever, which surprises me with how he attacks golf courses. So certainly pretty special. It turned around that hole before for him, or two holes before, and got him off to the races. When he's putting well, he's tough.

Q. I think you said yesterday that the timing and tempo was something that you've been trying to work on. Can you just explain what's either off or what you're trying to work towards?

JORDAN SPIETH: There's a lot that's off. I'm not really sure. If I knew, I'd fix it. So I'm kind of just -- kind of working through it and looking forward to having a little more time off to figure it out. I mean, yeah, I'm late behind it. The second I try to get back out in front of, it's hooking.

Standing on a tee at the U.S. Open and not exactly knowing where the ball is going to go is not a great feeling. I know you guys probably haven't experienced that before, but it's not incredibly enjoyable. But I'll grind it out. I don't ever give up. I have no reason to. I'm here.

I feel that, even with not having much tee to green, I can somehow still shoot an even or under par round on this course, and that's incredible self-belief in the grind.

Q. Jordan, you mentioned frustration finding yourself seven back too often in the first round. This seems to be a tournament where the lead often moves back rather than farther away. Is patience your key then for the next three days? Other than outside the swing issues, is there a mindset you have to adopt that's different than the one today?

JORDAN SPIETH: Now, instead of turning to -- when you're really in a groove and playing well and you're leading a tournament and you're just kind of -- now it's, yeah, I look to scenarios like Shinnecock. Those guys that went off early Saturday, there were two guys that were in the first group out and shot 2 under par and were in the last group Sunday, which is a bit absurd.

When you look to kind of that situation, where -- like I said when you first asked the question, if you're going to be pretty far back after one round, this is the best tournament to do that.

So you look at trying to make the cut and finding a softer golf course on a Saturday and just trying to progress the next three days. I mean, tomorrow is going to be a really difficult day with the forecasted conditions. So is Saturday. And I think those two, if I can hold myself anywhere

around where I'm at right now, I mean, I would say 3 over would likely be in the top ten going into Sunday easily. That's where I look at it.

Q. Jordan, when you're working hard on your game like you are and you play a demanding course, what do you do to get away from the mechanics and just play the golf course?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'd love to, but the second I try and just pick a tree and swing at it, the ball goes pretty far offline. There still needs to be focus on the mechanics.

Just trying to find the blend, trying to find the balance. Trying to pick really, really tight targets where you can just try and be an athlete if something feels a little off during the swing, being able to adjust with your hands.

I'm trying to take the hands out of it, but right now it's requiring a lot of timing. Unfortunately, I told myself going into the round that I would just play draws, just play draws.

The only shot you have to hit a fade out here is No. 8 tee, and I played four fade shots today, and I played those holes 6 over. 2 tee, one on the second shot. Then 10 I tried and made bogey, and then 12 on the third shot. I played them two doubles and two bogeys with the four swings I played fades on. So I was right. The problem was I didn't stick with that or I'd probably be at even par worst case right now.

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