

# The Memorial Tournament Presented By Nationwide

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

## Jack Nicklaus

### Press Conference

JACK NICKLAUS: I've been hosting for 45 years, and this is the first time I've hosted half a group, just players. Players and press. Anyway, it's a little different, obviously. We prepared the same way. The golf course is good. Most of the guys probably played here last week. The golf course will be a little different this week. Greens will be a couple feet faster. Rough will be a week older and deeper. Be pretty dead, as they say. And greens should be firmer unless we get too much rain.

But you know, outside of that, it's -- I know that the TOUR did a pretty darned good job from what I could see going around yesterday. They tried to spread the divots as much as they could and tried to use some different tees so they didn't have the same landing area all the time as the things we'll have at the Memorial Tournament. We're looking forward to it. We're delighted to be just playing the golf tournament.

We didn't have live sports there for a long time. Now we've got live golf, and we've had it, what, five, six straight weeks.

THE MODERATOR: Yes, sir. It certainly is a little bit different, and it's going to be different for you this year without the spectators at the event. Can you address how difficult of a decision that was for your team.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, we didn't make it. You made it. The TOUR made the decision. We didn't have anything to do with it. We were approved by the state; Governor DeWine actually liked our proposal. He thought that we had really set out every safety issue that we could, and we were going to give it a shot.

You know, I think it's not so much -- I don't want to put it on the TOUR's back, but really, I think you really have to look back to the players, and the players I think had objections -- if they happened to contract COVID-19, they've got two to three weeks mandatory that they have to leave. They're trying to make a living, and that makes it very difficult for them.

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In this particular time and what's going on, I don't blame them for wanting to make sure that they can stay safe and stay in a bit of a bubble and make sure that the whole world gets to watch good-quality championship golf.

THE MODERATOR: It was certainly a valiant effort on your team's part to bring that back to the TOUR with spectators, and we understand why that didn't happen. We'll take some questions.

**Q. How much energy did you gain from having galleries? Did they help you? Just curious your thoughts on that.**

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, I enjoyed playing in front of people. I think that I had played in front of people since I was probably 11, 12 years old. 11, the galleries weren't very big; 12 got a little bit bigger; 13 we actually had followings, and that just continued, so I got used to it. I played high school golf where we didn't have anybody following. Played some college golf where we didn't have anybody following. We played -- once we started playing significant amateur tournaments, we always had people. So I grew up with it. But I did play some without it. It really didn't make a whole lot of difference to me.

I think as evidenced at Oakmont when I played against Arnold in '62, I didn't know anything that was going on. I always had my mind so focused on what I was trying to do that I didn't really hear a gallery. I was really more interested in what I was doing, my game, concentration, playing the golf course and shooting a score. That's what I was out there for.

Did I enjoy having people out there and applauding and admiring what you're doing and congratulating you? Absolutely, everybody has got an ego towards that. But did it make any difference to my game? Not really.

**Q. Can you imagine the '86 Masters, though, without having those fans there on the back nine for you?**

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, the fans were great, but I don't even know how much -- I got a nice ovation, nice applause and everything else, but I was really into trying to play golf. The people were fantastic, there's no question about that, as they were in '80 at Baltusrol, they were fantastic, '78 at

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

St. Andrews. I mean, you'd had a few times in your life where the galleries just are unbelievable, and they were unbelievable at all those three tournaments particularly. And quite a few others.

But it's still a game to the player, and maybe some players handle it differently. A lot of times I would walk up at about the -- when I get a little bit nervous coming down the stretch, 15th, 16th hole I just stop and look around and look at the excitement that was there. There I did play to a gallery because there I could stand around and say, gosh, look at this, this is what I'm here for, this is what I play for, this is what I got myself into this position to do. I'd look around and sort of feed off of that and say, okay, now, this is why I'm here, this is what I'm trying to do, have fun, go enjoy it, go win this thing. That would sort of get me pumped up, and actually it was looking and feeding off a gallery at that particular time.

I suppose I used them at times for that kind of a situation. I just looked at a picture just before I came over here, I think it was last year on the 18th hole, and the sea of people. I mean, just every inch of the 18th hole covered with people, and I'm sitting there saying, wow. You just don't realize it when you don't see it how many people really actually came out and watched.

**Q. And for this tournament, did you get the sense that you were going to have fans and then no fans and that some players maybe would have been hesitant to play the Memorial if fans had been here? Were you hearing that just because of the safety or not?**

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I think it was the players' choice and the TOUR's choice at this point to say, we would prefer not to have fans, and because of the issue that they had, if one of them got sick, then not only were they exposed to the caddie, then exposed to players they had played with, they'd have to go sit for two or three weeks, and the TOUR is shortened already, so it makes it harder for them to make a living. I understand that, and I think that the TOUR probably made the right decision as it relates to The Memorial tournament. Maybe we are a little too early for the galleries. We didn't have a problem with it. We would have loved to have -- my goal putting on the golf tournament is to bring major championship type golf back to Columbus, Ohio, where I grew up. That's why this whole event is being played. It's not being played for the players, it's being played for central Ohio.

But I understand it, and I actually think it was the right decision. When you're not really -- even the governor liked our plan and went along with it and was going to allow us to start to have a gallery and open it up to spectator sports. I applaud the governor and thank him very much for his

great efforts to try to help us and the work put in by Dan Sullivan and his team here and all the things they put together to set up a plan that would work and was passed by the state of Ohio.

But in the end, the players -- you know, you can't have a dance without the dancing girls, and so you just -- and I can understand where some might be very hesitant. I think we're probably doing the right thing right now, and we're going to have a good tournament either way.

**Q. Two questions, unrelated: One is we spoke to Tiger a little bit earlier today and he pronounced himself more healthy than he's been in months during the period of time he's been off. He hasn't played in five months. Just kind of curious with your experience how difficult that is to come off that layoff and maybe what you might expect after five months of no competitive play from him this week.**

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I don't know. I've seen Tiger play very well after long layoffs. I used to lay off early in my career, I'd stop playing in September, and I didn't start playing again until January. And I played nothing in between, and quite often I'd start out and then a lot of times the Crosby was my first tournament, and I won that several times. I won three times, I think.

So I won immediately coming out of a winter of not playing golf. So you never know what to expect. I don't think Tiger will be as sharp or as ready as he normally is, but Tiger is Tiger. He's a pretty darned good player, and my guess is he played quite a bit of golf at home, and he doesn't want to come here and not play well and not do his best. So he's going to give it his best.

**Q. Unrelated, I'm curious, Bryson DeChambeau obviously has been kind of all the rage the past month and change; what's your impression as to what he has done to his body with the working out, the distance he's taken? I know you've talked about the ball a lot over the years, but is there a concern? Maybe concern is not the right word, but what's your impression? Do you have a fascination about where he's taken this so far?**

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I personally have not seen him in person. I've seen him on television, and he's a much bigger man. But he was tall to start with, but if he's carrying 250 pounds, that's a lot of weight for Bryson. But Bryson, he doesn't look heavy, he just looks big. The places that he has been hitting the golf ball -- and he's not -- Bryson's golf swing is not a fluid golf swing that really whips the club into the ball. Bryson's golf swing is pretty much pretty firm going back and firm coming through with a

lot of body rotation. It's a little different than a lot of guys. And can you believe the power he's getting from that? I mean, it's unbelievable.

You know, I for one, I want to watch a little bit, watch him play a little bit. I'd like to see what he does and how he's actually doing that because he's obviously doing something right. The ball is going a long way. And he's playing well with it.

**Q. This is really the first big ballpark he's going to have faced, so to speak, comparatively. Obviously Colonial and Hilton Head are pretty tight, Travelers similar at River Highlands. This is the first place maybe he takes advantage a little more of that if he's still hitting it straight.**

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, this golf course you can only go so far off the tee before you start getting in trouble. I give you a fairly generous area to hit it into if you're going to hit it 260, 270, but if you're beyond that point I try to make you hit the ball pretty straight. It's going to be a combination. There's going to be some holes. I mean, 13 goes over the break of a hill, and the bunker is a little over 300 yards, but it's downhill, downwind, so he probably won't have any problem carrying that. Most of the guys carried it last year when they were here.

**Q. 14 and 17 would probably be similar to that?**

JACK NICKLAUS: 17 is a little longer -- well, it's not that much longer. 17 is probably 320, 325, 322, something like that, to carry the bunkers. Yeah, he could probably take them over those if he's carrying the ball that far, but both are downhill, downwind under normal conditions. Wind turns the other way, I don't even think Bryson is going to be hitting it over those.

**Q. Did you have a chance to watch any of the action last week? I'm curious what your thoughts are on how they played 14 specifically on Sunday with it shorter, and would you ever consider doing that for the Memorial?**

JACK NICKLAUS: I did not see virtually -- I didn't see much of the golf tournament. Never saw them play 14. I know they played it up three of the four days. They've asked me if we could play it up one day this week, and I said, sure, I have no problem having that being a drivable par-4 if that's part of what you want to do in the round. It's okay with me.

The hole is probably my favorite hole on the golf course because of how you really have to play it. I've actually made three 2s on the hole, so I've had a little bit of

success. But I made one 2 from the fairway, two from driving the ball up off the side of the green. Not in a tournament, but I have done that.

I don't know, I think 14, it's a little different. And the distance these guys hit it, they've been hitting it at the green from the back tee, so I don't know.

You had a two-part question, I think. Oh, how much have I seen of the guys that played last week? I had a little bit of an "oops" last week myself. We were getting up here, we scheduled our flight to get up here because I wanted to see -- congratulate the winner in the locker room at 6:00, and of course then they moved up the tee times, and that didn't work out. So we were getting on an airplane at 2:00 which is when we were coming up here, and just as we were getting ready to take off, the first hole of the playoff, Justin Thomas holes that big long putt. Well, I saw the putt. We didn't see Morikawa's putt.

Barbara and I both texted Justin and said to him, wow, what a fantastic putt, unbelievable fantastic super putt, can't believe that you made that putt. Now you've got the chance to win two in a row. And then we got up in the air, and we picked up wi-fi after 10,000 feet, and we found out Morikawa won the tournament, and so I had to send him another text and say, Oops, a little premature.

He was good about it. He texted back and he said, All's good, it's okay. He was good about it, and Morikawa, what a pretty golf swing he's got. You know, obviously to hole that putt behind Thomas was something pretty special. But I didn't see a lot of it.

**Q. Just to follow up on that, what would your advice be to J.T. to get over something like that?**

JACK NICKLAUS: He won't have any problem getting over it. He's got his head screwed on properly and his feet on the ground. He knows that you get beat sometimes even when you play well and do the right things or even when you make a mistake. He knew he had a chance on the second playoff hole, what did he have, about an eight-footer, something like that? So he understands that. And sometimes you give your best effort and you just get beat, and that's about what looked like happened. I think J.T. will be right there again this week.

**Q. Just following up on the fans question, do you think not having fans at majors this year will or would affect the competition in terms of the pressure and who can win?**

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't know. Have all the majors declared no fans? I don't know.

**Q. Not yet.**

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, okay, because I hadn't heard that. Will it make a difference? I think it always makes a little bit of difference. It depends on the individual. Some people do feed off of people. Some golfers do. And I said earlier, I said, it was part of me, I was so used to it. I never really fed that much off of it, but sometimes you get a gallery that sort of pushes you on like at Masters in '86 or Baltusrol in '80 or St. Andrews in '78. The gallery was part of that for me.

But still, I was working so hard on trying to do what I had to do and concentrating on my golf game that that's where my focus was. It was not on the people.

But I think fans do make a difference, but yeah, we played a lot of college golf and amateur golf where we had some exciting matches and exciting tournaments without anybody watching.

**Q. Jack, a lot of the players have told me one of their favorite memories was shaking your hand after they won the tournament, but in this day and age have you thought about what you might do instead of the handshake?**

JACK NICKLAUS: I'm going to shake their hand. I going to walk right out there and shake your hand. If they don't want to shake my hand, that's fine, I'll give them a fist bump or an elbow bump, but I'm not going to give them COVID-19, so that's -- I wouldn't put anybody in that position. I wouldn't do that, and if I was in any danger of doing that, I wouldn't shake their hands.

And incidentally, I like shaking their hand, too. I think that's a great tradition, but it was as much fun for me as I hope it is for them.

THE MODERATOR: That's all we have for now, so I appreciate your time coming in, and thanks for hosting us at the 45th edition of the Memorial. Look forward to a great tournament.

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