

AT&T Byron Nelson

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McKinney, Texas, USA

TPC Craig Ranch

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference

HALEY PETERSON: We would like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview here at the AT&T Byron Nelson. You're making your 16th start here with six top-10s already, including three consecutive, and this is your first tournament back since the Masters. Tell me how your game has been feeling with a little bit of time off from tournament play.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I'm not exactly sure yet. I took kind of a week off, and then I ended up, actually, getting COVID, so then I was out for a little while. And then so I'm just kind of starting to get it back the last week or so and kind of get back on track. And so I've only played a couple rounds and so I'm looking to kind of maybe knock a little rust off that I didn't think would necessarily be here. But, yeah, I feel good. I feel strong. I feel ready to go for a good stretch of golf coming up.

HALEY PETERSON: First time the tournament's been held here at TPC Craig Ranch. But being a Dallas native how familiar are you with this golf course.

JORDAN SPIETH: Not as familiar as most in the area. I played Q-School here and I think I played one or two junior tournaments and that's about it. I played last Wednesday, just came out and played with my dad and my agent and just to kind of check it out. I mean, I obviously knew all the shapes of the holes and stuff like that, but it had been really nine years since playing in a tournament. So it's in great shape. The greens are beautiful. They're rolling way quicker today than they were last Wednesday, as you would expect it. And then it looks like, as bad as the weather is yesterday and today, we're going to get a really good four days for the tournament, which is not always, it's a little rare in the springtime to get four good ones. So hopefully this course should drain better than just about any in town and that should make it pretty, get pretty kind of -- it will change from Thursday to Sunday quite a bit.

HALEY PETERSON: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Are you a hundred percent?



JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I feel good. I've been able to do everything I can normally do the last week or so.

Q. Going back to 2012 Q-School here you missed it by three strokes and as it turns out 2013 was a pretty good year for you. I just wonder, reflecting on that, was it a bit of a blessing in disguise?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, I don't think so. I would have much rather gotten my card and played the entire season on the PGA TOUR. It would have been a little easier, I think. Clearly, 2013 went well, but it was also kind of the springtime on, so I missed the first three months of PGA TOUR events that I would have been able to have had I gotten through final stage. Obviously that's more challenging than second stage. So I remember hitting like 65 out of 72 greens and just couldn't putt it in the ocean. And then worked a lot on my putting that off-season and then started to really make some and have some good finishes the next spring and it got me status and running on the PGA TOUR.

Q. You've obviously been really one of, if not, the staple name for this tournament for many years on end. I'm curious your perspective, the field this year is obviously substantially improved than maybe what we saw the last couple years at Trinity Forest, even going back to Los Colinas. What is it, do you think, that is leading to such an improved field. Obviously a week before a major has something to do with that. But what kind of improvement do you feel like it is or what kind of difference do you feel like it is to be at Craig Ranch?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I think most of it has to do with the week before the major. I think it has to do with maybe a familiar golf course. A lot of guys have either played in the Korn Ferry TOUR Championship going back for a number of years, and/or second stage of Q-School it's a popular spot. So I think whether it's word of mouth of guys saying, okay, yeah, it's good prep, to, we liked playing there, whatever it may be. Yeah, I mean, the last couple years in Los Colinas were really, really good fields, and then it's exciting to see so many top guys coming back to Dallas. Obviously, as somebody who plays it every year, I



would love for all the top players to come here. So it's good, obviously, for, from a World Ranking perspective, but more importantly from the way I look at it, it's just nice to have people come to the tournament that I grew up going to and seeing the best players come in.

Q. What do you like about this course? Are there certain things about it? I mean, 17's been made to be a big deal with the amphitheater that can be. What are some of the things that you really like about this course?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I think that when the wind blows it can be a significant -- it can play very different based on the conditions. You can say that about any golf course but really even more so out here. You've got, if the wind doesn't blow, you really are kind of looking at trying to go score. Then when it does, you're almost kind of holding on and saying, all right, I want to take advantage of the par-5s but the rest of the course is going to be really tough. It's got really hard par-3s. 17 being kind of the outlier, the kind of shorter one. So I think there's, you just, you got to have really -- you step up in a lot of these, where these hole locations will be, you got bigger greens but they play effectively smaller and it's really hard to kind of get your mid irons to long irons into kind of the sections of the greens where the pins will be. So I think it's going to be more of like a second shot risk-reward golf course to try and go low, but you can also play it smart and really hang in there if you're able to putt well.

Q. Could you give a few more details on the COVID. When did you get it, how bad was it, are there still any lingering affects of it, and when did you start getting healthy?

JORDAN SPIETH: Not really sure when I got it, to be honest, because nobody I was around ever got it. And, then, yeah, it was the Wednesday of New Orleans, I think, when I, when it -- or Tuesday of New Orleans when I started my symptoms and it was bad for a day and a half and then it was just kind of annoying for the next five days, kind of lost energy, and sinus stuff. And then after that I started to kind of get full strength back and I would say the last week to week and a half now I've been acting as if it never happened. I've just gone about my days and doing, feeling full energy and being able to hit kind of full workouts and practice sessions and all that kind of stuff. So just kind of set me back a little. It was actually, I guess, if there's ever a good time during the season, it kind of worked out okay. But I was planning on continuing to play. I wasn't planning on taking a month off in the spring. So at this point it's get back to playing golf and try and get in the same rhythm I was in and just kind of be patient with it.

Q. Curious if you loss taste buds or your sense of smell?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, I didn't lose taste or smell and I didn't lose appetite, which was nice. But I had to quarantine away from my wife, which was -- in the same house, which was interesting. So that I know a lot of people have had to do that over the years or over the last year or so. So, yeah, so, anyway, I guess it certainly could have been worse and so I was lucky with that.

Q. I was thinking some of us would like to quarantine away from our wives at times but that's another story. Two random ones for you. This will be next week will be the fifth time you've gone to a PGA with that being the missing major. If you're being honest with yourself, did you give it much thought up until the time you got ready to tee it off? Did it weigh on you and is it any different this year?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think 2017 was really, the first time, was really the only time where I, where it may have weighed on me, only given it was coming right off of a major win, and then I was playing really well kind of week-in and week-out there. So I felt in form. I felt like I was -- I felt a favorite going in and it was the last major. And then the years after, I just didn't really feel in great form in PGAs. I mean, it's going to pick you apart if you're not driving the ball straight and far and then -- for the most of the golf courses, and then it's normally narrower fairways, thicker rough, longer golf courses, and so that's really the only year I felt that. I mean, even in contention in 2019 I was certainly trying -- I knew -- every year I go into that tournament it's like it's the one that if I could pick one more to win I would pick that one. But it doesn't really -- while I'm playing the tournament, it hasn't really hit me and added any pressure or anything like that. It just kind of excites me a little bit more going into it.

Q. The other one, which is really out of left field here, but what's one or two things that immediately come to mind if I mention the name Jason Dufner?

JORDAN SPIETH: We have had a lot of good times with Jason. I mean, I guess, first off, I think of just watching him walk. He normally falls pretty far behind his group. He goes about things at his own pace. He plays fast, but it takes him awhile to get to the ball. He just kind of loves to just walk slowly. And then just very entertaining.

Q. We're not getting any stories out that have one.

JORDAN SPIETH: No. I mean, that should be funny enough, right?

Q. Next week's PGA, it's going to allow rangefinders, obviously. I'm curious two things from your perspective, what's your opinion on them being allowed, and secondly, if you and Mike plan to use one or not use one?

JORDAN SPIETH: I didn't even know -- I mean, I guess I remember someone mentioning that a long time ago, but I had totally forgotten until right now. So, yeah, I don't see why you wouldn't, but I also, I mean, we have been checking our yardage books and cover numbers and back of green numbers for eight years now. I think shooting the pin is just a confirmation of what we're doing elsewhere. So I have a hard time seeing it speed things up, unless you get it way offline or you're out of contention, but I don't think it speeds -- I mean, yeah, I mean, we'll plan on using it, but I think it will be more confirmation than anything. It's not going to be we just step up, shoot it, and go. I mean, these pins get tucked and the wind's blowing and you got to figure out a few more things than just the number to the hole.

Q. You use one at home when you practice at all?

JORDAN SPIETH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, but we don't have TOUR pins and green speeds week-in and week-out at home, so it's a little different.

Q. I was wondering, how did you know you had COVID? Were you tested? Did you go to a clinic?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I had a positive test and I took two more and they were both positive as well, so I thought at that point it was probably correct.

Q. This was a home test, not a PGA TOUR test?

JORDAN SPIETH: Correct. Yeah, I did it rapid and two PCR tests at home.

Q. Was that a surprise to you? Because COVID's been going on for a year now and a bunch of guys have gotten it on the TOUR. Were you surprised that it's been a year now, really, with COVID and you finally got it?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I've been careful. Anytime I'm around a group of people I've been trying to be outside for really the reason being, one, I don't really want to get it, and two, I don't really want to miss tournament weeks. So, yeah, it's just kind of odd that it -- but, I mean, there's been -- like you said, there's been a lot of people that have gotten it. It's not really, in my opinion, it's not really a big deal. It's certainly been a big deal for a lot of people. I'm not downplaying that. I'm just saying as

far as the PGA -- me getting it, you know, I'm one of very many of who have gotten it and you just go about the process of what you're supposed to do, stay home, stay away from people, wait until you get cleared, and then go back to work.

Q. And you said Annie didn't get it; is that correct?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yes.

Q. So you were the only one in your household, I guess.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yes.

Q. And you just stayed at home and kind of just kept to yourself. Is that, was that your routine?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yep. You're not allowed to go anywhere, so I upheld that.

Q. But you weren't going to play New Orleans either. Were you entered or were you thinking about playing at Charlotte?

JORDAN SPIETH: Tampa.

Q. Tampa?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah. Because this is four in a row for me, and so that was going to be a nice -- and I've had a lot of success there. I like the golf course there, so I was really bummed. It was tough watching it knowing that I had been playing well and I would go to a course that I like a lot, but that's unfortunately part of the world we live in right now. So I don't think I would have been a hundred percent last week, so decided to wait until this week.

Q. Wondering, have you had a chance to witness the popularity of Hideki Matsuyama in Japan? And also, what advice would you give him on what it's like to be Masters champion?

JORDAN SPIETH: So, in 2019, the first time the TOUR event was there in Tokyo, I was paired with Hideki and Adam Scott, the first two rounds. I remember walking off the first tee talking to Adam and being like -- and Adam is someone who has spent a lot of time in Japan. He's loved going over there. He's seen a lot, and he's played probably more than just about anybody not Japanese in Japanese TOUR events as far as a name that you would recognize. He said -- I remember him saying, I've never seen anything like this. I mean, it was six deep the entire first fairway, people on, they bring little stools, they would bring like stools and then have the -- what are they called

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

that you look through? I mean, it was just, it was probably the biggest Thursday crowd and most like, maybe most exciting, most nerve wracking crowd I had ever played in front of on like a Thursday and Friday. It was bizarre. And then I can only imagine, obviously, what this Masters impact has had over there. I haven't seen anything from when he arrived there or anything he's been doing. But, man, it just, it's got to be the coolest feeling for him. I mean, I felt like it was the coolest feeling for me, but I didn't have a whole country that lives and dies with each swing that I make, and for that to happen, I mean, it was, I was obviously wanting to win, being in contention there. But, I mean, I could certainly relate to how he must feel to an extent. But, I mean, over there, yeah, I've seen him over there and it's next-level stuff. I mean, it's like playing with Tiger at the U.S. Open at Pebble. And I know this is not 2000 or even the mid-2000s, but I thought that was next-level stuff playing there with Tiger, but it was -- it was wild. And then obviously he was, he and Tiger were the ones that went at it, and Tiger ended up winning there, and so even though Saturday and Sunday I was not at the same score to par as they were, it's a smaller golf course, you can see, and it was just, I mean, it was just crazy.

Q. Rory talked about changing his ball flight from a draw to a fade off the tee. Considering how great he hit that draw or, what do you make of that decision, and how much has technology changed your philosophy on how you shape it?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure it's going to really matter for him. He's such a good driver of the golf ball, whatever he does, I think he'll still be in the top-10 driving. And I haven't talked to him about it and I haven't really seen much of him talking about that. I think he's probably just talking about just having more the ability to work it both ways. Maybe it kind of goes down into the rest of his game too. I know he said that he chased a little bit of speed training and that he, that it may have worked out to actually hit it further but then got off a little because of it and I know obviously I was super happy for him last week. I know he had kind of, was on kind of the comeback from trying to kind of slow things down, and I don't think that's a very easy process to go through. It was pretty cool to see him just play unbelievable golf on the weekend. I don't -- I mean, if that's what's going to be more comfortable for him, then so be it. I mean, it's, he's an athlete, he's somebody who is surely capable of mixing things up and being just as successful.

Q. And has the technology at all changed your philosophy on how to shape it?

JORDAN SPIETH: No. No. I mean, Lee Trevino says cutters get rich and hookers lose their job. I think that's

kind of, he's always said that to me, and I think, I mean, I think you kind of, having the ability to work it both ways and then having a shot you can go to under pressure that you trust, whatever that is. Rory's a drawer of the golf ball. No one's not going to say he's not rich, so that, it only, it's not, I think if you have the ability to work it both ways comfortably and then under pressure you got to hit a shot and you know what you can go to, that's really what it comes down to at the professional level.

Q. I wanted to go back in time a little bit to your last time competing at Craig Ranch. I seem to recall a story of you maybe missing a couple shorties, like on a par-5, and the word on the street was that you've got a good game, but you'll never make it because you can't putt. Any truth to that? Do you remember anything about that?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I think I thought that when I walked off missing second stage. I think I remember watching that year and into the kind of the next year, I remember kind of watching being like, man, I just was really struggling my last semester in school putting into that summer and into that fall. I just had a bad year putting. When you do that, you just wonder kind of where the solution is. And it's kind of funny because there's been times where the script has flipped totally and it just shows you that people don't necessarily know what they're talking about all the time, do they?

Q. Yeah, they don't --

JORDAN SPIETH: Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't.

HALEY PETERSON: That's all the questions we have. Thank you, Jordan for taking the time this week and best of luck.

JORDAN SPIETH: Thank you.

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