

BMW Championship

Monday, June 28, 2021

Owings Mills, Maryland, USA

Caves Valley Golf Club

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference

CAL RIPKEN JR.: Hello, everyone. This is kind of a strange role to me to act as a host of sorts or master of ceremonies. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be doing or not. I guess I'm not here as the old baseball player. Maybe I am here as the old baseball player (laughter), but I'm here as a member and an advocate for Caves Valley, what a wonderful place, what a wonderful golf course.

I remember the history, when I first was looking for property out here. I kept looking up to this piece of property and said, why can't a piece of property like that come on the market? It was just the start of the golf course. It's been a wonderful place for golf, but just a wonderful place in general.

I'm excited for the event, bringing 70 of the greatest golfers in. I know I'm a novice golfer at best. I have some potential, but I need to apply myself a little bit more, but it's going to be cool to see how the holes are played. I've had a chance to play the course and some of the improvements that are made, and watching the best players navigate the course will be really interesting for me personally.

So I couldn't be more excited for Baltimore. I couldn't be more excited for the region. It's a wonderful thing, and especially coming out of COVID. We all want to get out and we all want to be together again. This is going to be a wonderful event for that purpose.

I just wanted to be able to express my gratitude on the event being here in Caves Valley and in Baltimore. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Cal, and thanks to everyone for coming out to Media Day for the 2021 BMW Championship. It's great to be here in Maryland for the first time in the history of our championship and to bring the PGA TOUR back to Maryland for the first time in 60 years. We appreciate all the support we've received from the media in Baltimore and in Washington, D.C. area.



BMW
CHAMPIONSHIP

We have a number of announcements to cover before we kick off lunch and golf, but for right now, we're excited to welcome one of the brightest stars on the PGA TOUR, Jordan Spieth, for an interview via Zoom. I'm going to bring up Jordan here.

Jordan is a three-time winner with 12 PGA TOUR victories and 15 professional wins. One of those victories came earlier this year at the Valero Texas Open. He's currently in the top five of the FedExCup standings and is certain to be among the favorites at the BMW Championship here at Caves Valley.

We've gathered some questions for Jordan prior to Media Day, and we're fortunate to have him here joining us. He's taking the call from Trinity Forest, where he trains and plays from. Welcome, Jordan. Great to see you.

JORDAN SPIETH: Hey, guys. How are you all? Thank you.

Q. We're doing well. First off, there's been some just exciting golf on the PGA TOUR as of late, including last night, where it went to eight different playoff holes. I don't know if you got a chance to watch that, but PGA TOUR golf has not been disappointing this year, especially in the past several weeks. What did you think of yesterday's action?

JORDAN SPIETH: I was on pins and needles there. My college roommate, and actually we lived together until a couple years ago, Kramer Hickok, was in that playoff. He was going for his first PGA TOUR win, and I've known Harris English for a long time. A lot of vested interest, clearly, rooting for my guy Kramer there and pretty unbelievable par saves, a couple of lip-outs for birdie. They both were just stoic, and obviously the birdies they made on the 72nd holes to get into the playoff were pretty electric as well.

That tournament has never been short of pretty awesome finishes over the years. I was glued to the TV. Every single shot, I was living and dying with Kramer and his family just having known them since we were 12, 13 years old playing junior events here.

Q. You were part of one of those exciting moments back in '17, and it's great to have you. It's been a great

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year for you thus far with your win at Valero Texas Open in April and then eight top ten finishes. You're back near the top of the FedExCup standings. How would you describe your year thus far?

JORDAN SPIETH: It's been a good year. I've put a lot of work into kind of trying to get back towards the top of the FedExCup standings, get back in the winners circle, and really most importantly be a very consistent player week in and week out. I feel like this year results are finally lending themselves to kind of that work that's been put in.

I've had shares of the lead after three rounds, I think four or five times, and only one win, so I still have room to kind of tighten things up and get a little bit more consistent. I've got a really fun stretch coming up with the Open Championship along with a couple more PGA TOUR events and the FedExCup Playoffs, where we're going to roll through Caves Valley.

Q. Speaking of Caves Valley, that's where we're gathered here today. I understand you've played several times out here. What kind of challenge do the best players on the PGA TOUR expect when they come here in August?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think it's unique. First off, starting out, you're going to have an opportunity to get off to a really hot start on the first few holes, and then it's going to kind of -- it's going to take some -- it's a significant test after that, especially as you finish on each nine.

I've played a lot of fun rounds there and not played any real competitive rounds there, just when I've come up to visit Under Armour, we typically try and make at least a trip to play one or two rounds out of Caves, so I'd say I played it close to ten times now, but I just love going out there for the entire experience, but as far as the test for guys in the BMW, it looks like it's going to be just a really fun challenge, where you get some shots, some opportunities that you don't get on kind of traditional golf courses.

You've got really short par-4s mixed with some beasts, and then you've got that stretch of 8, 9 is just a really cool stretch on the end of the front nine, where you just kind of try to hold, par is a good score. I expect scoring to be pretty average, relatively good, but in a really exciting way where you have to pull off a lot of good shots. You've got to take risks. When you take risks, you're rewarded when you pull it off, and when you're not, there could be a separation and scoring gap.

Q. It's a fun and challenging golf course. The media gets to play it today. Any advice for them besides maybe play the appropriate tees?

JORDAN SPIETH: Trees are pretty thick out there. I'd probably stay out of the trees. Such cool par-3s, really fun undulation change. One of those unique courses that's tucked in a beautiful place in the country where you get out there and you just feel like you're away from everything. It's really enjoyable. It's just peaceful golf.

Certainly, that may not be the case when we've got a lot of fans and the pressure of a FedExCup playoff event for us, but at least today, I imagine you guys are going to just have a blast.

Q. They're going to have a great time. When the players show up, the one thing that's unique about the BMW Championship is that it rotates to different venues each and every year. How do players approach an event when it's held at a course where they haven't had a chance to play previously? Is there an advantage potentially of having a little bit of that local knowledge?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I understand there's been some changes made since the last time I played there, but I think the majority of it will be very similar. Again, these have mainly been just fun rounds, so I'm not sure how much of an advantage I'd have.

Going to a new golf course, I actually find it really exciting nowadays. This is my eighth or ninth year now out on TOUR, and it's pretty cool when we get to go experience new golf courses and get to learn them. It makes your practice rounds, you've got to pay more attention at times. We get kind of relaxed in practice rounds, I know the pin is over there, there, and there, and you hit the same putts you've hit year after year. Instead, you're going out and maybe trying to put in a little bit of extra work.

Not only that, but it's a FedExCup playoff event where the points are quadrupled and you've got an opportunity to set yourself up to be in an awesome position at East Lake.

BMW has always been an exciting event. We've played Conway a few times, splitting years up, but I've gone everywhere from Philadelphia to Denver to now to Baltimore and pretty excited about going and kind of learning Caves in a way that I hadn't before and certainly spending time in that area.

Q. You obviously have strong ties to this area, having signed with Baltimore-based Under Armour shortly after you turned professional. What has it been like to be the face of Under Armour's golf brand for the past decade?



JORDAN SPIETH: They've been a lot of fun to work with. I mean, they're just -- Kevin Plank's history and start of the company, how he played football at Maryland and just wanted a better T-shirt under his football pads and kind of the way, the American dream of how Under Armour started.

When I visited them first, it was kind of a match made in heaven. I kind of looked at myself as kind of humble, hungry, trying to come up quietly and actions speak louder than words, go and get it done on the golf course. That's how they were disrupting the market as well. I thought the brands kind of aligned. I've really enjoyed everyone I've worked with there.

It's a bunch of sports guys and girls that just love trying to make the best, most innovative products, and it's just been -- honestly, it's just been fun for me kind of watching on the sideline how that company operates.

Q. We have one more Baltimore question. It's probably the toughest one you'll get today. It's a big question from social media. Steamed crabs or crab cakes?

(Laughter.)

I don't know if you should be careful on the answer. I'm not sure.

JORDAN SPIETH: Maybe the local answer is steamed crabs. I love crab cakes. I'm sure I'll probably dive into both when I'm there. I'm just excited to be coming there -- some great hotels, some really cool areas. I think the players are going to really love it. Baltimore is a place that I don't think the PGA TOUR has been in quite a long time. I think the guys are going to be pretty excited to try to go out and experience some of the food, kind of see what the city's about.

Q. You mentioned earlier the Open Championship coming up and the FedExCup starting in August. How does your preparation change when you enter a stretch run like this? It's obviously an important few weeks and month or so on TOUR.

JORDAN SPIETH: I think the number one thing I've learned over the last few years has been how important your rest and recovery days are. Guys are looking for competitive advantages and recovery methods, whether it be masseuse, compression pants, finding where to do ice bath or cold plunges, stuff like this where you can reset the system.

If I've got, say, six events to end the PGA TOUR season

through the TOUR Championship at this point, they're all big events. They're either playoff events or majors or World Golf Championships or big PGA TOUR events. It's more about kind of looking in those days off that you get on a few week stretch and even those weeks off that you get in the middle of it.

I've kind of developed a little bit of a system, I think, to feel like you get legs under you by the time Thursday starts each week, but sometimes you just run on adrenaline too.

Q. You've performed quite well in the playoffs over the years, obviously in 2015 as well. So on the first day of the 2015 BMW Championship at Conway Farms in Illinois, you recorded a hole-in-one. I'm not sure you knew at the time, but it resulted in a creation of a full college scholarship for a youth caddie through BMW's support. How does it feel to be part of an event that makes such a difference in the Evans Scholarship for so many deserving young men and women?

JORDAN SPIETH: I wasn't aware until after the round because there was one of those cool BMWs on one of the other par-3s, so selfishly I was asking if I was getting a car, and they said you actually -- it's a scholarship for an Evans scholar. I was like, okay, that's actually a lot cooler. It makes sense. I don't need to be selfish with this.

I was introduced to the Evans Scholarship program actually back playing in the Western Amateur back in the Chicago area. I played the Western Am a couple times, and it's been an incredible program. I've met a number of different people in the business world now that were Evans scholars and benefited from that support. I think it's incredible, and BMW's support with some of those, with hole-in-ones or whatever it may be through the tournament, it seems like a no brainer. It's amazing how it's changed so many lives over so many years.

These are people now that were caddieing when they were my age at the Western Am, and you see them kind of talk with somebody normally at the BMW Championship, a lot of those -- I say kids, but they end up staying in that Midwest area, so you run into them and say, hey, I was an Evans scholar. I remember meeting you here or there, and you hear their story, and they wouldn't have been able to do that without that support.

So very philanthropic, the Western Golf Association and BMW, through this tournament have always been standing behind making those possibilities a reality.

Q. We appreciate that. The Evans Scholarship is so integral to this championship, but so are caddies and integral to your game. We're going to hear a little bit

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from one of our Evans scholars a little bit later on, but she wanted us to ask you how important are caddies to the game of golf? You obviously have a good relationship with your caddie as well.

JORDAN SPIETH: I think, when you step inside the ropes on the 1st tee, it's you and your caddie, and that's the team. You're going out there. You're hitting the shots, but you're relying on information that you both have done prior and then relying on each other to kind of know how to communicate under pressure.

Really it's a fun -- it's a really fun experience when you get to Saturday and Sunday in contention. Other than that, you're kind of just walking, joking around, and saying -- just going about your days. But once you work your way into contention, you start to really, that trust factor comes in, and you've got to be able to -- I trust Michael. If he needs to back me off when I get over a shot, there's a reason for it, and he's watched so many different holes, so many shots under pressure in the last eight years, that he's got that.

At the same time, I can say, hey, I know what you're thinking here, but this one's on me. So just that communication is so key in our team, especially as we're getting into the thick of things on the weekend.

Q. So it's pretty difficult, obviously, to win on the PGA TOUR. There are so many great players. We actually have one question from the media that do you get frustrated by how easy the media and the fans make winning seem? It's so difficult out there that week in and week out, that it's tough. It's tough to win, isn't it?

JORDAN SPIETH: It is, and the depth of the PGA TOUR has probably never been stronger than it is the last couple of years and most likely going forward. Any media member sees a winner every single week, so there's 45 winners in their book, so it's pretty common to see a winner at the end of the week.

Yeah, it is, and you've got to have the bounces go your way. The guys who win most often are the ones who put themselves in position the most, and they probably have the most seconds, thirds, and fourths too. You saw it yesterday in that playoff. Kramer had two pretty slow lip-outs on the high side that one breath of wind, one spike mark or whatever, could have had that putt go in.

That's what I texted him last night, man, you're in that position again. That putt goes in, any of those putts go in just as easily. I've seen it go both ways, and it's just about getting yourself there, being as consistent as possible.

Then you'd be surprised, as some of them are so difficult to come by, and then some of them, you catch a break. That's the way it is. The guys who are having the most are the ones who are always up there in the top ten when the weekend starts.

Q. You've had a great year thus far. Everybody's looking forward -- I'm sure you're going to have a pretty big cheering section here at Caves Valley when you come to Baltimore in late August. We appreciate your time today and look forward to seeing you and the best 70 players in the world compete here at Caves Valley come August. So, Jordan, thanks so much for your time. Best of luck in the upcoming weeks.

JORDAN SPIETH: Thanks. You all have fun today. Appreciate it. Thank you.

(Applause.)

THE MODERATOR: We're thrilled to have Jordan competing in the FedExCup on August 24th through the 30th is the BMW Championship dates as we compete for the J.K. Wadley Trophy and a purse of \$9.5 million. If you get a chance afterwards, please come up and check out the trophy. We've been hosting the championship since 1899. It's an incredible history. It's a who's who of professional golf of those who have won the championship.

The top 30 FedExCup points leaders after the BMW Championship will also advance to the TOUR Championship where the FedExCup champion will be determined. After holding the BMW Championship without spectators last year, we're really looking forward to having our fans welcomed back safely in August. You can see on the PGA TOUR the fan support is continuing to grow each and every week, so we're excited about that.

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