

TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview room at the TOUR Championship. You're the 2015 FedExCup champion, a former champion of the TOUR Championship. Just talk about your excitement to be back here this week at a course that you've got some great history at.

JORDAN SPIETH: I think I speak for all the players when you say that when you're at East Lake, it essentially verifies that you either have had a really good season or you've turned it on and played really well in the Playoffs.

Either way, that's really solid. I'm happy to be back here. I wish I was starting a little closer to the lead, but didn't quite have -- I started to play a little better each day as the last couple weeks went on, but the way the format is, go out there and try and get off to a really hot start and then see where things are at, and hopefully you can start to have a chance to make a run at it.

It seems to be set up to where you believe no matter where you sit when you start this event that you can win the FedExCup, and I think that sitting in -- I don't know what I'm at, the 17th or 18th position -- that's obviously great. If I was at No. 1, I'd be like, well, I think it's easier from the old way.

Given my situation this week where I stand currently, I'm excited to go out there on one of my favorite tracks that we play all year and get started.

THE MODERATOR: Just touch on your season a little bit. You've had a great season, a win at the RBC Heritage and six top 10s. How does that play into your mindset and your confidence going into this week?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it was a good season. I struck the ball really well. I made some strides in that department. And I didn't have my best putting year, but I've been stroking it really well as of late without kind of the results coming from it.

That's always a good sign for me. For me it's about getting



better each day, making a bit of progress. I feel really good about the state of my game. It's just is it going to be these four days or am I just going to continue to get better as we head into next year.

I would have liked a little bit more consistency, but that just came down to making putts this year. I've put in a lot of work now over the last couple months on it and starting to see a lot of results on the practice green and quite a bit on the course, and hopefully it can make it rain this week.

I feel like once you start to see a few go in on greens that are this good in a small field where you don't have a lot of traction, I feel that I can possibly go out and get real streaky and pour it in. Hopefully that's the case.

Q. Obviously Jay made a big announcement today. Just interested in your thoughts on the changes he announced and how you see that affecting the TOUR down the line.

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I think it's great. I think that to every single member of the PGA TOUR it's going to be really good as the details start to unfold and everything gets figured out.

Most importantly, I think that players coming together to continue to want to make the PGA TOUR better in the ways that we're trying to figure out how to do so I think is really the silver lining here.

I think that we all wanted to make the product better, so we wanted to get together to do that with Tiger and Rory helping run the show, and I thought it was really great.

I listened to Jay's remarks, and I feel like the PGA TOUR has a lot of momentum right now. I feel like it was very forward-looking, feels like there's a lot of momentum with it.

Q. Do we have today's announcement without LIV Golf?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I think certainly it's impossible to not think that that was a catalyst for continuing to want to make sure that our -- the players that we have on the PGA TOUR now stay on the PGA TOUR.

Would this have gone that direction this soon? Maybe not,



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but to say that it wouldn't have happened in general, I'm not sure. But I think that that certainly has been a catalyst for looking at the product as a whole and figuring out how to make it the best it can possibly be and maximize the strength of fields at the biggest events.

Q. I think I don't have your words specific and several other players like it, about a year ago or so were saying that competition -- at the end of this, it's going to make it better. Is that what's happened?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think that it's going to be -- I think the PGA TOUR, with the remarks Jay made today and the proposed changes and what changes come from that and I think in general, it's just going to be in the best place it's ever been for a long time going forward. I don't even know if that leaves there to be much competition down the road.

Personally competition I guess is always good to help push each other, but I'd rather have the competition just be us against what could possibly be better and better on the PGA TOUR. Your competition is the best version of yourself kind of thing within the organization.

I think that that would be the best case scenario.

Q. With the top players kind of consolidating around 20 events or so, do you worry about the rest of the schedule and how those events might struggle?

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't. I think there's a lot of details to come on how not only every member will benefit from this, but also how the sponsors of these tournaments will continue to actually benefit from this. I think this is the tip of the iceberg in a way where things are getting started in the right direction with a plan going forward, but I'm not -- no, if you're asking about my concern, no, I think overall every single member will benefit from this, and I think the TOUR as a whole will.

I actually believe that the sponsors, and I would imagine pretty much all the tournaments will probably see a better field however many times it's going to happen. I'm not exactly sure how all that is quite going to work.

Q. Now that you're a dad, do you see yourself playing more than 20 events a year?

JORDAN SPIETH: I already have. I mean, this is no different. 20 weeks -- to work 20 weeks -- you work more than 20 weeks, don't you?

Q. Sadly, yes.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah. I think that's the whole point, is

trying to figure out where that number is, how to make sure that it fits everybody's schedules so that we can continue to try and deliver the best product possible with the PGA TOUR running the show to make it possible.

I think that's including the majors, when you say 20 events, so that's less events than I play right now. I would be inclined to still play other events, as well.

Q. Rory has been very outspoken, out in front of all of this. You seem to have taken a slightly lower profile. Are you happy that he's sort of emerged as a spokesperson?

JORDAN SPIETH: Honestly, as long as what we're setting out to get done gets done, it does not matter to me whatsoever. I'll be as useful as I'm wanted and as behind the scenes as I'm wanted. To be honest with you, it's all about what's going to be best.

To be honest, I don't think it hurts for me to be a little bit more vocal going forward. I may be so. But I'm kind of -- I rolled off the PGA TOUR board and Rory took my spot, and therefore he's more in the middle of a lot of it.

And then obviously having Tiger's influence, that doesn't need to be explained. He's stepped into a position where he's more in the know with a lot more knowledge on PGA TOUR matters than even the members have, and his and Tiger's kind of leadership through the whole thing.

But everyone's input has been what's really helped push this agenda forward and quickly.

Q. Following up on that, along those lines, you've typically played some events that aren't in that 20: Will you still play the Valero Texas Open, the Houston -- a lot of Texas events?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I think every player a lot of times has sponsors that take part in, whether they're the title sponsors or at any level of TOUR events, and therefore that's not going to change.

I'm going to have to look at the schedule as a whole and see what's going to be best. My schedule I played this year was different than in '21 which was different than '20 which was different than '19. A lot of times I actually -- the most frustrating part is trying to pick my schedule. I feel it's a luxury to be able to choose your schedule, but sometimes I wish it was chosen for me, and this will choose the majority of it for me because I want to be where the best players in the world are playing. But I will still have other events.

As I mentioned, I'm going to play more than 20 times because I love to play golf. I'm 29 and I'm healthy, so I will be playing other events, as well.

Q. It was riveting listening to you and Michael think about how to play the shot last week on the 5th hole. Hindsight is 20/20, I know it didn't work out well, but what's the aftermath of that? What did you think of what happened and how did you guys...

JORDAN SPIETH: I think if I had punched it out and laid up I would have made a better score than I made. But I mean, the position I was in in the tournament, tied for the lead, I've been tied for the lead plenty of times in my career. I wasn't overreacting. I thought that I was going to explain everything I was thinking, he would explain what he was thinking, and if I -- I'm the one that hits the shot.

So I told him, this one is on me and I didn't pull it off and I walked to the green, and I said, sorry, man, you were right. This one was on me.

But when I tell him that, then he knows he's done everything that I normally want him to do to try and kind of put the yellow light or the red light on some of the crazy stuff I try and do sometimes. That one I felt like I could get six or seven out of ten balls on to the green. I just hit it a little fat.

Q. With everything that you've done for the game of golf, do you find it a little unreasonable that the TOUR does not allow you to have a breakfast ball off the first tee box?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think I could name a dozen or so times where I really could have used it. I think going forward, it could be the difference.

Q. Some players have suggested that the TOUR changes are essentially copying the LIV model, that many people had decried earlier. Do you think that's a fair critique?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think that I still see a lot of differences, don't you? It's 72 holes...

I think that in general in sports it makes sense to try and get -- the more players in any sport that people want to watch, if you can get them playing at the same time in competition, it makes sense.

I think the majors have the highest ratings with THE PLAYERS Championship, and then from there it drops significantly depending on if Tiger is playing or in contention somewhere.

The idea that you can -- that as players we can collaborate and get together to produce a better product while having stiffer and better competition, I think that that would be something that is -- I think that's just something in general that makes a lot of sense.

It'll create a better product for us going forward, and I just don't believe that it's -- there's no teams. This is still PGA TOUR golf. It's just trying to get -- I think it's going to be way better for the fans. I think networks will be happier.

I think in general, we are going to try and get as many of the highest ranked players that you can get all playing as often as they can together, and it just seems like that's the way things should have been all along. But it takes all the players getting together, and when you're able to pick your own schedule outside of the four events everyone plays, everyone plays THE PLAYERS at then the Playoffs, what realistically -- how often can we have this happen?

That's kind of, I think, what we're trying to settle on right now.

Q. You're a decade removed from being this guy, but do you have any issue potentially with like a young hotshot who's coming out of school gaining access to play against these top players in the world in these elevated events?

JORDAN SPIETH: They're going to have any ability that anybody else does once they earn their PGA TOUR status going forward. There's going to be nothing holding them back from being able to do so. That, I assume if has not been made clear, are details that will be made clear to you guys going forward.

Q. You've won a variety of tournaments during your career; looking forward over the next 10 or 12 years, do you have certain tournaments you'd like to win in that time span, other than majors, which we know you want to win?

JORDAN SPIETH: Other than the majors? Riviera is maybe a top-3 course in the world for me. I'd love to win there just because I love that place so much, and it's one of the best tournaments of the year. That's the first one that comes to mind.

I'd love to win THE PLAYERS, but I kind of put that in the major category.

I'd love to win a Ryder Cup over in Europe, but that's 12 guys, not just one.

As I look to next year, those are three events outside the majors that I'll highlight that I'd love to win.

Q. Following up on what Ryan said earlier about having the best players player together at the best tournaments, it's an obvious conclusion to draw; why has it taken so long? Why did it take this kind of existential threat to get to this point?

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't know. I'm not sure. I'm not sure what else could have provoked it or -- it's almost like things have been pretty good. Golf has been good. Right when Tiger's dominance -- he ends up injured, isn't playing for a little while, he comes back and he wins the TOUR Championship and then the Masters.

You have new media rights deals around the same time. COVID hits, not good for anybody; golf numbers go up. It's been in a good place. It's almost like, if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and it wasn't broke, and it's just now there was maybe -- there's been seems like a time to -- a really good time to make some kind of a change.

Also, I think with the reserves, the reserve situation and COVID, having to have those, and then they get re-built up by markets being built back up and PGA TOUR's, a lot of their separate business entities being really successful, they get a situation where they can bump all these and continue to move this direction.

I think the timing just made sense, and it was also provoked a little bit. To be honest, yeah, I don't know.

Q. A little off topic, but when you look at -- and I'm sure the watch the NCAAs or pay attention to college and amateur golf -- can you identify a can't-miss kid coming through, and did you think of yourself as one?

JORDAN SPIETH: I really didn't know on me, the second part of that question. I have confidence in myself, but I just really -- it was so different than the way I look at things now. I was just, yeah, I'll go play there next week; now I'm going to play there next week, because that's what I'd get into. Okay, I'll just go there and play the best I can. I'll just go play.

There's something so great in that you lose a little bit of as you start getting into where you pick schedules, play the same places over and over again, not everything is new anymore.

I think that if I looked back at, say, Patrick Cantlay's class, my class, the class after, so within a year above or below our class, I could have probably predicted five or six guys that are out here that have been out here for five to eight

years.

But I also would have probably said there was five others that I thought would not out here that aren't that were just as talented and you would have thought would make it, too. And I don't know what the difference ends up being there.

But whether it -- a lot of times it's injuries, but sometimes it's not, and I would say if I look right now, that kid that's a freshman from Vanderbilt that won the NCAAs looks like it's going to be something else out here. And then I could look at Pierceson Coody and the way that he's stepped into his -- he won the Web.com event the second or third time out there.

You start to see these easy -- you look for the easy transition when you get exemptions into the big events, and you just step up and you start playing, and that's normally a good telltale. But from college events or amateur events I'd have been wrong just as often as I've been right.

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