

WGC Dell Technologies

Match Play

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Austin Country Club

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference

LAURA VESCOVI: We'd like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview room. Jordan, making your seventh start at the World Golf Championships Dell Technologies Match Play here in Austin. Let's start with some opening comments about being back in your home state and playing in a city you know so well and then we'll open it up for some questions.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, excited to be here. Austin Country Club is such a fun golf course to play. You got a lot of different options on a lot of different holes, which also makes it a pretty fitting golf course for match play. So I love coming down here, feel like I have tremendous support in the state of Texas, so I'm always super pumped, especially with the fans being kind of added in and things starting to feel a little bit closer to normal, I think that just kind of can add to some momentum and some positivity for me as we start out.

LAURA VESCOVI: Perfect. We'll open it up to questions.

Q. My question for you is about the change in mindset when you play match play, and I know there's some obvious ways that you adjust to your opponent; if he hits in the water you might play it more safe. But I'm thinking more of a psychological angle. Do you find yourself becoming more combative and instead of an enemy who is like a 149-person blob more focusing on the one person and treating him like a direct opponent?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I think it's a good question. It's a really tough thing to do because you want to play the golf course and not the opponent. Just if-I-shoot-the-lowest-score-I'm-probably-going-to-win kind of mindset. But you definitely make adjustments to watching what that other guy across from you does. Trying not to kind of -- it's kind of a fine line. Look you don't want to really get too focused on what he's doing, but you do kind of need to be aware so that you limit a mistake that doesn't need to be made. It's a good way of putting it with



the 150-person blob or whatever, but where you're kind of just trying to shoot up a board.

The other thing that's a little bit tricky is you get a lot -- you feel a lot of freedom on shots that you don't in a regular tournament because you're like, hey, if I don't pull this off, whatever, if I lose this hole, it's one hole. I don't lose -- I don't make double or triple, I just lose one hole. But at the same time closing out matches a lot of times can feel like the pressure of closing out a tournament. So it's kind of a little bit like you get freedom on some, but then on others you kind of feel a little tighter and that's kind of the beauty of it. I wish there were more events like this, but it's once a year and got to take advantage.

Q. And a really quick follow-up, you've been doing it a long, long time. Is it easy for you at this point to flip that mental switch, or was it kind of weird coming off a slew of stroke play events to all of a sudden go oh, this is how we do it now?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, I don't think it's difficult. In fact, I get -- I think I could probably speak for a number of guys, but I get pretty excited about it, the idea that you can go out and kind of take on some pins if you want in certain cases and kind of the just kind of the back-and-forth that you can get in a really good match where you can go up there and stuff it close or you can be on the other side and you can each have eight-footers and you've kind of got that mindset like, all right, first one in is going to win here. This putt, if I miss it, his is a lot easier to make if it's either win the hole or tie versus I have to make to tie. So you get those flips and those switches, and I think guys are pretty -- they embrace that and I certainly do.

Q. When you look at it mathematically, most guys advance out of the pool stage either tying a match or even losing a match, at least since they started this, but do you good into with the mentality that if I go undefeated, that's the only option that you'll accept or do you accept and realize that, all right, I've got a little wiggle room here?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, certainly on Monday and Tuesday I'm thinking I got to go win all three matches, and that's the only way I have advanced out of group stage in this tournament is by winning all three.



Two years ago I had a chance at 1-0-1 going into my last match. If I had won that, I could have been in a playoff. I could have won by them tying behind me and I could have won by whoever it was losing behind me. And so if you get to a loss or a tie, I guess it is a nice feeling to know that there is a chance still. But the mindset going in is you got to just keep winning, so I got to -- I got a tough pool. I got a tough pod, you know, with two of the hottest players in the game and another one who is the highest ranked, who isn't afraid to take chances wherever it comes. So it's a tall task for me, so I'm just approaching it as if I'm in the round of 128 and I just got to win each match to keep advancing.

Q. Having played here a little bit, and I know it's probably situation dependent but is there a specific hole on this course that you feel that you can maybe play differently because of the format changes versus if it was stroke play?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think people look to that stretch of 12 and 13 as being a pretty -- you got a lot of different ways to go about it, depending upon where the wind is and such. How do you approach your second shot into 12; do you try and go at the green or just kind of hit it just short right and give yourself a pitch on the par-5, and then you hit anything from 5-iron to driver on 13. That's obviously a hole that you can make a mess with any club in your hand and you can make birdie with any club in your hand. It normally is just those two being at that 12 and 13 stage in the round, too, a lot of times can flip a match or continue to press one forward that allows you to just kind of feel some, hit the middle of the green and make them have to beat me now if you kind of pushed it 2- or 3-up at that scenario.

Q. You've talked in the past about the one thing you could tell yourself would be to play like a kid and kind of have fun with that and Justin just kind of joked with us that you're talking to yourself more on the golf course and he likes to see that. Do you feel like you're getting back to that? Do you feel like you're kind of loosening up a little bit and playing the way you want to play again?

JORDAN SPIETH: Oh, yeah, definitely. Yeah, I kind of -- I'm playing a lot more rounds like that. There's certainly one-offs in there where I'm either contending on a Sunday, and I've never been somebody to laugh much in contention on a Sunday. I'm out there to just be as competitive as possible. And then if you have a bad round here or there.

But yeah, certainly starting out, just kind of getting into that free-flowing mindset is important. I think match play you kind of -- you see guys go into both ends of the spectrum and less in the middle there. You see them either super loose or super tight.

But I think kind of holding a little bit of a neutral kind of mentality and just kind of enough competitiveness but enough kind of lightheartedness too to feel again that kind of freedom to take on whatever shot you need to and close out matches when it feels like you're winning a golf tournament. It's kind of a balance.

Yeah, I've felt a lot more. I mean, obviously when you play well, you're happier. You play poorly you're not as happy. That's just the way it goes. But within both realms you can certainly be less negative, more having a positive outlook, and it's amazing the impact that that has week after week. It may not make a huge difference the next hole. For pros, I mean, I could be really, really mad and have a great bounceback stat that week. But over the course of not burning that energy over a few weeks at a time, it becomes pretty important.

Q. Is there one memory, maybe not even match play related, but one memory from ACC that you take with you that kind of stands out that you could share with us?

JORDAN SPIETH: From what? From ACC?

Q. Yeah, just from playing here so many times throughout your life.

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't remember a lot of the college rounds. Those were qualifying most of the time. We didn't play it a ton. I practiced here a lot of times before we went to the airport. It's closer than UT Golf Club.

For this tournament it's just been really fun as you get down to those lake holes, and I've been out one time on 13, 14, and my buddy had my ski boat out there that we had brought from Dallas with like a bunch of friends out on the water and it was just kind of weird to like look out and be like, whoa, all right, that's mine; what are you guys doing? Thinking that they were in the crowd, but instead they went and got the boat and took it out. So that was probably the weirdest thing.

Q. Wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on the bone chip in your left hand that was suffered in 2017 or 2018 and how it happened. Did you ever get surgery to fix it or did it just kind of go away?

JORDAN SPIETH: I didn't, no, I probably should have. It was nothing -- it was something that was you can clean it out or you can, it's not going to make anything worse, it's just a matter of how bad it's bugging you and it was for awhile there, kind of in the spring of 2018 through that fall, and then it got a little better probably because I started

swinging so poorly.

But, yeah, I mean I don't feel it now, which is nice. Needed to work on some grip strength stuff and stuff like that. I'm not, I mean I could pinpoint a couple different times, I think, but for the most part I just started noticing it when Cameron was trying to get my grip strengthened and I just kept fighting him on it because it would hurt and just didn't -- you know, just didn't really know what to do and ended up just kind of playing through it and trying to figure stuff out in the off-season.

So it feels good now. I'm able to kind of start to get to do things closer to the way I want to in the swing, trying to progress each week and I have no restrictions right now.

Q. Was it a weightlifting thing, and did you not mention it just because you didn't want to make excuses?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I think when it first happened, but I didn't really think it was a problem, I just kind of I was like, oh, you know, sometimes something kind of tweaks, and like if your back or your hip hurts a little after you're doing some kind of lift you're like, okay, I'm going to take it easy the rest of the day, and then it would just kind of come up after second, third, fourth week in a row on the road or something like that.

But again, it wasn't -- I didn't think anything was broken. I didn't think there was a huge deal with it. If I taped it up, it didn't feel so bad, so I just -- you know, I went out each day trying to play the best golf I could play, and whether it -- I mean I wouldn't blame anything on it other than that I probably fought changes that would have helped me turn things in the right direction a little bit sooner, but yeah, so I'll just keep an eye on it.

Q. Little something different; I'm gathering people's memories on the 2008 U.S. Open at Torrey Pines. You were 14, almost 15 at the time. Do you have distinct memories of the Tiger putt and watching the final round and then did you watch Monday and what are your memories of that? Do you have distinct thoughts about it?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, they were redoing the course I grew up at in Dallas, Brookhaven. They were making massive renovations, too. They were redoing the driving range and rerouting some holes to make for a new spot for a range and stuff like that. So I didn't -- I was able to go to this place -- I remember watching it at this place, Prestonwood in Dallas. I went out there with a buddy. We had some access to go play out there a couple times a week or something, and I remember going in and we were

playing and we were like, all right, we got to go in, this is getting interesting at the end on Sunday.

I remember watching him make that putt, which was, you know, it was just another putt that he made that we then tried to go right to the practice green and do just like we had seen so many times, whether it was at Bay Hill or Jack's events. I mean just so many different putts where you -- or Augusta, and you're like, all right, I'm going to go out and pretend it's to win this one. So it's just an inspiring moment, obviously watching him do that on one leg essentially. And then Monday, I don't remember much about Monday. I might have been in school. I don't remember if it was a holiday or not, but might have been in school for most of it.

Q. It's kind of right at the end of the school year.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, but -- yeah, yeah, it would have been June so yeah, it would have been summertime. Monday the courses are close so I was probably home watching it. But I don't remember a ton out of Monday, but I certainly remember Sunday there.

Q. Did you know much about Rocco?

JORDAN SPIETH: Some, yeah. I remember him being kind of the fun-loving guy that I saw on TOUR, just always just kind of smiling and making jokes and kind of had that funky motion, played a lot of draws, and just, yeah, it seemed like he was always having fun on the course. He was a hard guy to root against, but certainly growing up and trying to emulate Tiger and everything he did, I didn't find it that hard that week. Neither did a lot of people. But pretty much every other week he was a guy that seemed easy to root for.

Q. The hand, how long do you think that it affected you, and when did it maybe stop impacting you?

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't know, it was taped up pretty -- Justin had something going on in his right hand. I remember us both playing with each other, playing matches, teammates at the Ryder Cup, and mine was heavily taped on the left hand. We had the same physio, and he was just like doing work on Justin's right hand. I had mine taped up on the left, and then I just, I just continued to kind of fight strengthening my grip, and once that happened, I think it stopped hurting, and I wouldn't bow my wrist like I used to.

I just kind of fought that, too, and just said, you know, I'll just make it work. I'm not sure. And again, I'm not -- this wasn't anything I intended to have come out by any means of any -- it was just something I was kind of reflecting on,

and I certainly could have done anything about it and just kind of -- it was something that was -- I was playing through pain for the first time maybe ever, but then I stopped feeling pain, figured everything was fine, and now I feel good. It shouldn't be anything that causes any issues.

Q. Justin compared his iron play to your putting in that it's the part of the game he has to think the least about because it's a strength. What makes Justin a special iron player and kind of stand out in that facet of the game from people on TOUR?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think his start lines are really solid. He normally starts the ball right where he's lined up, and he kind of like in a way D.J. does, he really commits to playing a very similar ball flight, like a few-yard fade most every time. And then if he needs to work a different flight, he can. But just kind of that consistency in start lines makes iron play that much easier when you can line up kind of left center of the green or center of the green to a right pin and say, yeah, I know this is going to start there and either stay there or it will cut towards the hole. And he's just so good at having that ball start very zeroed, no matter what flight he's playing.

Q. You've always been really good at match play even at a really young age. Do you remember any signature moments or matches growing up that kind of established you bona fide as a great head-to-head player?

JORDAN SPIETH: I remember playing the 2015 U.S. Junior, and I remember my first match I think went to extra holes. Might have been the second match went to extra holes. And I just remember winning that match and thinking, okay, I don't really have to be -- I think I even won the extra hole with a bogey. Because I was like, man, I don't really have to be -- you don't have to do great things in match play. You don't have to shoot 6-under every round. You got to be really kind of consistent and just try and have a putt to win more holes than he has a putt to win.

And I remember playing that final match, 36-hole match and just coming out and just hitting some really good wedges on the back nine to make some birdies, and I just felt -- I started feeling like, I started getting super pumped because every match again, kind of again, closing a match kind of felt almost like winning a golf tournament, and so you just get that extra kind of confidence boost when you do and it just carries you forward.

So the further into the tournament I went, the more confident I was feeling, versus kind of the closer you get to

winning sometimes when you tighten up, for me I just felt actually more loose. I remember it kind of starting back then.

I've had average success at this tournament professionally. Played it really well my first time there when it was in Arizona, and then I've advanced out of this group stage once in maybe four tries, but have won, you know, matches, gone 2-1 a number of times and 1-0-2 or something like that so it's been, I felt like I played it well, but you just got to play it really well just to get to that round of 16 here.

Q. You have plenty of experience at Augusta, obviously. But did you learn anything new about Augusta or how to play it from the November Masters?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure if I'm going to take a whole lot into this year, if the golf course is playing very different. The weather we've had, they get pretty similar weather to what we had at home, just a day later. I would imagine they're going to be pretty firm. A couple of the players have said the fairways are still soft right now but the greens are pretty firm already and fast.

If you're looking at an 10-under-par score winning, I don't think there's a whole lot you can draw on from this last Masters. Balls are going to go way further off the tee but then your shots in have to be so much more precise and you just can't get away with your misses in the wrong spots like you maybe could on a couple holes. So I don't, I think Dustin Johnson wins the Masters regardless of how it was playing, but I think that I'll probably throw that one out if it's going to be a firm Masters, just like -- I mean, in 2016 it was a very different Masters from 2015 when I won. In 2014 it was like 2016, they were just very different. It's not to say that one, because it was in November. It's just if you get a lot of rain you get a lot of rain and the course is going to play very, very different.

So I'll get there -- and you kind of assess it after the first few days and looking at the forecast but they can normally do what they want in April, and I think they're just a little torn in November when you got that overseed trying to come in. Just makes it a little more challenging.

Q. We know it wasn't until a few weeks ago that you were qualified for this tournament based on your World Golf Rankings. Was this tournament on your mind at all as you were making that resurgence going on that run and climbing up the world rankings? Were you at all worried about not being able to play in Austin?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, yeah, first and foremost I was

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looking at the tournament that got moved from Mexico into Tampa and that hit me pretty hard. Missing a World Golf Championship, via not qualifying for it was the first one, and I didn't like that at all, being able to play in an event against the best in the world, not being able to play in it but that being because of World Ranking.

So it was definitely a little bit -- it lit a fire that I hope to progress forward and not miss many more. But this one being in Texas and being home and obviously having actually maybe an easier chance to qualify for this one than that one, I definitely wanted to keep playing well to make sure that was a possibility.

I run into a little bit of an issue right now where the World Ranking system going back two years and three months kind of hurts me a little because the beginning of 2019 if the events from January to March had dropped off, that would really help me right now, but because they still linger on there with that extra three months, that I think starts coming off maybe this week or next, I had to play really well maybe better than I would have in other years to compensate for a higher divisor with tournaments not coming off of -- no tournaments coming off from that kind of November, December time frame from late 2018.

So I knew it was going to be more challenging, and I'm glad to be here with a chance. I almost got -- I think I was one spot away from getting in the third category, which only helps you a little bit more, so I've got a tough first round matchup on Wednesday and that's kind of where my mind's at right now. I've got to go out and play phenomenal golf against somebody who's been playing some of the best in the world.

Q. Going back to referencing what you were talking about earlier in 2018, did you get into any bad habits because of that that might have impacted your play and might one of them have been your, the grip thing you mentioned, resisting changing your grip?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I mean I was like 200th in putting in 2018, so there's not much of an excuse for that. That was just piss-poor putting. So but as the year went on my grip got weaker, the club face got more open and then I needed to flip at impact and so it just required more timing. From somebody who already has kind of a weaker grip to start with, you don't really have much wiggle room on that side of the things. And so it's something that I've got to continue to try and work on and make sure it's not an issue. It was 100 percent responsible for me not being able to strengthen my grip, which in turn then is probably normally the first thing guys go to, if something gets a little bit off is, all right, where in my setup are things different. And if that's one of the things, that's going to impact how

everything feels.

I mean your brain's -- I've swung it enough the right way, when it's not the right way my brain's like, wow, something's out of position, what is it. And I could shoot 5-under, but for four straight rounds to have to time it up a lot more and be consistent, it's that much harder. So it was very much a reason, but I mean, everybody's got some reason for something that they get off. That was mine, and I certainly could have handled it differently and feel good that right now it's not an issue.

Q. You learn a lesson there about dealing with injuries? Perhaps, in other words, not fighting through it or listening to your body more to make sure you get something taken care of? I mean, obviously you have nicks and pains and things every day playing golf, so it's kind of probably a juggling act there.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, hopefully a lesson that I don't have to learn again for a long time, but you know, I mean I weighed -- I was weighing options and chose to say, you know, I mean it's, it bugs me here and there, but it's okay and went ahead and kind of fought some changes that I didn't necessarily think were that important that now that I have a lot more knowledge of what I did well back in the day and why, really it was that much more impactful on inhibiting swinging the club really well and being a more consistent player.

So yeah, I mean, if it comes to it again, but at the time it wasn't something where I thought it was making that big of a difference. It's only kind of when I look back on, wow, I actually am swinging the club closer to how I want to, this is why, I'm like, wow, yeah, I should have done something different back then. So I'm 27, I've got a long road ahead, hopefully it's one that's full of a lot of consistent golf and continued progression like the last month or so and I got a lot of good to draw back on, and I've got a few kind of regrets, and it is what it is. I think that's pretty normal for anyone's career.

LAURA VESCOVI: Thank you, Jordan. Good luck this week.

JORDAN SPIETH: Thanks.

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