

WGC Dell Technologies Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference

MICHAEL BALIKER: We'd like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview room here at the WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play. You advanced past group play here in 2021 to the round of 16. You've been here since 2016 when it first debuted at Austin Country Club. Just thoughts on being back here in Austin this week.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, Austin is a second home to me and I have a lot of great memories in this city. Really fun to play this format on a golf course that we qualified on in college. And certainly have really enjoyed being around Austin Country Club going back to -- we used to come out here to practice the days we'd fly to tournaments. So as a team it was a lot of fun to come out, we'd hit ball here, jump on 360 and go to the airport. Just brings back a lot of good ol' memories.

I've had a decent amount of success at this tournament out of group play. It's obviously difficult just to get to Saturday with all the scenarios that can happen, and you really just -- I've got a pretty good group this week of all major champions in the group and guys who have been playing pretty good golf this year, as well.

Just got to go out and play solid golf. Hopefully the wind blows a little bit. I like when that happens out here, and it certainly makes it a quite a bit tougher test.

Q. If somebody came up to you and said I need one piece of advice or two pieces of advice on match play, whether it's psychological, practical, and what differentiates it, what would you say?

JORDAN SPIETH: I like to play every single hole as if I'm 2-down. I start the match 2-down and when I get to even it resets. I go back to 2-down. Just stays aggressive. When you get up sometimes it almost feels like you're protecting a three-shot lead in a tournament when things can change so quickly, especially with the back nine out here. That hasn't changed back into my junior golf days. I just kind of went in with that approach one time and liked the way it



made me play aggressive golf.

That's really the only piece of advice I have. That's the only way I change any mentality in match play versus stroke play.

Q. That wasn't in response to having lost a big lead or anything like that?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, I've come back on leads, I've lost leads. It's match play, right? It means it's golf. If you -- I'm playing Keegan, I think, tomorrow. If we play together in a random round, how many times are our scores going to change, quite a bit throughout the round.

You almost understand that guys are going to go on three-birdie streaks or guys are going to have a couple shots in a row where they make a couple bogeys. If you can just keep something consistent, which for me is keep your mind on always being 2-down, then I play the way I want to play. If I don't execute the shots, then I don't. But it forces me to continue to make aggressive swings and act like I'm the one behind that needs to make the birdie in order to win the hole.

Q. What do you remember from the U.S. Amateur at Southern Hills when you played up there? Brian Harmon told me he played in that same event. What do you remember about Southern Hills and did you ever play there when you were playing at Texas, as well?

JORDAN SPIETH: I did not when I was at Texas, but I remember it being way too big of a golf course for me at 14 years old. Hopefully I feel a little differently going back. Wasn't it 2008? Is that right? Maybe it was '07, I would have been 14 by the time -- I would have just turned 14. I remember the starting holes and the finishing holes just being a lot.

I was in like a 17-for-4 playoff, and I ended up being -- I kept making pars. Like I'd have to get up-and-down from 50 yards. I kept making pars. There was only one birdie, one birdie, and I was the last or second to last eliminated out of that.



I don't remember the holes specifically, but I actually plan on getting out there at some point between now and the tournament so that when I arrive, I don't have to feel like I have to catch up and learn a lot of the golf course.

Q. With the PGA courses rotating around, do you feel like this is one of your better PGA chances to get a win and kind of complete the Grand Slam?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think on paper, yes, just given grass types, winds are more similar to what I'm used to at home, and it's about as close to home as we get for a PGA, at least until we go to Frisco.

But yeah, it'll be by far the closest PGA I've played to home, and the best chances I've had are when courses are played with wind and firmer conditions at PGA Championships.

It's May versus August; I feel like August has a better chance of being dry and hot. But as long as it doesn't get soaked, I certainly would prefer to see a course firmer and faster and more challenging.

Q. If a player is struggling for form in stroke play, can they recapture it here in match play?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I think you've got a better chance of luck being on your side here where you can kind of gain some confidence, and you may be able to escape without -- where you may have been 25th after three rounds, you may actually get through group play if you caught guys at the wrong day. May have shot 6-under, 1-under, 6-under, but you caught them on the 1-under day, I guess.

But at the same time the times I've made it through, '16, '17, and last year, I was playing a lot better than I was in the other years. For me it's more been if you're on form, you've got a lot better chance of getting through.

With the old format you could probably get by and make it to maybe the round of 16 or even the quarters on a little more -- now with so many scenarios, you've really got to play some nice golf.

Q. Can you work on your game out here for three days?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, definitely. I think so. You get more opportunities to, I think, play shots under pressure, especially as you come down the stretch in each match. And then you get opportunities with a lot of freedom shots where you get to make aggressive swings to the middle of

the greens when other people make mistakes.

Yeah, there's certainly something to that where the abnormality of it maybe helps if you're trying to get stuff back on track.

Q. People talk a lot about kind of mixing up the variety of the TOUR schedule, adding more match play, then you have a team event at Zurich. I'm curious if there's any room for maybe a little bit more unique stuff, maybe like a Skins game. Or a lot of guys play Wolf at home. Do you see any of that working, because a lot of guys do play Wolf when you're back playing --

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I don't think that would follow under the guidelines of we can't gamble while we play in PGA TOUR events, so that would be a tough --

Q. FedExCup points.

JORDAN SPIETH: Gamble with FedExCup points? I think -- I highly doubt that's the case in a PGA TOUR event going forward. I'm not on the PAC or the board anymore, so whatever they're planning, I've got no idea. But I don't foresee that.

We may even be moving out of match play into more Stableford-type stuff where you get bigger advantages for eagles and stuff like that, just to have full fields on the weekend for these sponsors that pay a lot of money and sometimes you end up with four people around on the weekend or on Sundays.

I think, if anything, it might go the other direction before the one you're talking about. Unless you're talking about the fall, bringing in some fun charitable aspect to it. I think going back to the Shell's Wonderful World of Golf type stuff back in the day, I think we might be seeing a lot of that coming in the future, but I don't see it being a part of the January to August FedExCup schedule at all.

Q. What would happen if they had a tournament, 72 holes of stroke play, where you only could have seven clubs in the bag. That wouldn't compromise anything, would it?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, that's certainly interesting, but I don't know what benefit you get to who on that. Like I think there's a lot of times the TOUR is saying, hey, fans like seeing 16-under. They want to see guys make birdie. Sometimes it's nice to mix in the events where you get carnage like at Bay Hill. But if that was every week, it would be like -- well, there would be a lot of players fined a lot more and then you'd have -- probably wouldn't be as exciting.



It's kind of -- I think the mix and match is nice, and when you go to seven clubs, the scores are going to shoot up a lot higher, obviously. It would be a matter of polling, I guess, whoever they need to poll that would benefit all birdies.

Q. Your vote apparently --

JORDAN SPIETH: I would love it, but I don't know who it benefits, to be honest.

Q. My question that I wanted to ask you was the times you make it out of group play, is your optimism level different than stroke play? In other words, if you make the cut on the number, it's still a long shot for you to get in contention usually. Here you get out of group play, you're tied for the lead. Does it always feel that way?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it does. My Saturday morning matches have felt just like my Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday matches, though. I haven't felt -- you're pleased because you're like, well, I guess the worst I can do is ninth, like top 10. But at the same time, it's like, okay, what does that do for me right now versus you've just got to beat this guy and all of a sudden it's a top 5 or you beat this guy and you've got a chance to win. I haven't felt any different. It's just a really good feeling knowing you have a chance with that clean slate on Saturday. And I would say maybe one or two of the years, would I have been in the top 5 in a stroke-play event after the three going to -- and I'm going back to 2014 even the old way it was played. There's been some years I've advanced where I've played worse than other years where I didn't advance. That's just the way this tournament goes.

But yeah, it's the clean slate that makes you feel like you are tied for the lead in a sense, and it is a totally different feeling than making the cut on the number, if that's what you mean.

Q. I asked Scottie and Coach Fields this, but if your 2012 Texas team faced Scottie's 2016 team that had Beau Hossler, Doug Ghim, Gavin Hall, and Taylor Funk and you played in a match play, who would win?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think we would, but we have two guys on the PGA TOUR right now and they've got three, four? Scottie, Beau, Doug. Who rounded it out?

Q. I think it's three.

JORDAN SPIETH: I mean, I don't remember how many times they won. Our team I felt like was ridiculous, and I

think their team was, too, but I'm going to be totally biased to our team.

Q. Is there anyone on that team that you would want to be matched up against?

JORDAN SPIETH: Probably Scottie. I play a lot of golf in town with Scottie, though, so it's always -- it's a good match all the time. Whatever Wolf game we're playing, it's a good match.

Q. Scottie says you talk as much when you all play as you do on the TOUR. Could you confirm that?

JORDAN SPIETH: It really depends on how it's going. I like to get -- well, we play a lot with Tony Romo and a lot of times, it's just a lot of back and forth. I wouldn't say I'm talking a lot at Scottie. I know better. But yeah, within the group, there's just a lot of banter on rules questions, what the hole is worth or whatever.

So yeah, no one knows me to be a quiet person that puts a muzzle on it, but I would say in those games sometimes I get a little excited.

Q. I remember talking to Jack Nicklaus once about Tiger, and he said, well, let's see how he does when he gets married and has kids. You've got a kid now. Change your approach in golf, your mindset? Have you put a club in Sammy's hands yet?

JORDAN SPIETH: The guys at Vokey and my guys at Scotty Cameron have both made him a putter and a wedge that are really special that are in his room at home. So as soon as he's able to, I'm sure he'll be swinging it around.

It's been amazing. It's certainly figuring out time management on the road is something -- trying to be the best I can be here, there. And it's another element of something that you want to be the best that you can be at. And that's really difficult to do when you want to be the best golfer, too. So trying to figure out that balance is something that I feel pretty patient with.

I think last year helped a lot with being able to feel patient with it right now. Like I feel like my game is in a better place than last year with not quite the consistent results to show for it with a couple outlier rounds with crazy conditions here or there.

But I feel really good about my game has actually gotten better, I think, week to week, month to month, since this time last year. So I think I'm doing a good job of it. But it is certainly a balance where your priorities shift a bit, but my drive to try and be the best golfer in the world has never

been higher.

Figuring out time management, it's like you went from grade school, I didn't have much time at the course every day; college you had a little more time. Professional and not married, you have whatever you want to do. Get married it goes just a little bit one way; then a kid, back the other way again.

Yeah, each stage is cool in its own right, but you've got to kind of mix and match how you're going to do things.

Q. Billy was in here a minute ago and said he was still sore on a Wednesday after winning this and playing seven rounds. Does that enter your mind? Is that a worry?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, I mean, I'd love to win this golf tournament, and I'd take two days off and show up just to play whatever 18 holes next Wednesday and go from there. There's no better prep than contending and winning golf tournaments for the next week.

I felt that way last year with San Antonio into Augusta and just didn't putt well. Yes, it can be a long week. It's very different, the fact that you can play seven rounds, but there's enough time there where I can approach it as -- I can get ready for next week while still resting.

Q. You're not an old man yet?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I sometimes feel that way a little bit now.

Q. A weekend player might play a match and get a bunker shot and be freaked out by a bunker shot in a match play situation. For you, for a TOUR player, is there a shot in a match play situation that's terrifying or that really gets you --

JORDAN SPIETH: I wouldn't say terrifying. I would say you feel at a disadvantage on a couple shots where if you're teeing off first versus being able to club or play off of what someone else did, right? Some of the more difficult par-3 shots or if you're trying to drive the green on 13, where if you do hit the right shot, it's a big advantage. But hitting second is nicer on, say, 11. I think tomorrow is into the wind. So you can kind of watch the person in front of you how the ball reacted, and I think that changes some things, especially par-3s.

You know, hey, I can be aggressive with this, or I get the luxury of being able to play it to the fat part of the green and two-putt for par.

Certainly no crazy nervousness, but you feel like you're at a half a stroke disadvantage sometimes if you're going first on the par-3s. But if you're going first, it means you won a hole recently, so there's that, too.

Q. You said this is like a second home; can you quantify the home support or the feeling that that gives you with the crowds here and what it might manifest itself into? Is it a hole? Is it a shot? And just how the people here have treated you.

JORDAN SPIETH: Amazing. Austin has certainly grown as a city massively, but it still feels like it's burnt orange. We support our own, and I feel that out here. A lot of hook 'em horns. You saw it with Scottie last year as he went towards the finals, and I felt that same support. I'll be playing -- it's really when you get down 12, 13, 14 and you've got boats full of people out there all screaming at you, and that's a unique situation for us, which is really cool.

Obviously the fans that are here, but then it's kind of -- really Austin to me is Lake Austin with the bridge down there and you get both sides, you've got the crowds here and you've got the people in the boats there. That's where it gets real fun.

I like the front nine and the hills here, but down there is where all the cool-looking shots are.

Q. I wanted to ask you why this works for you, this schedule leading up to Augusta, and is there anything about this week that can tell you about your game and how?

JORDAN SPIETH: I feel I've been sharpest second, third week in a row of stretches. It's always been my third week in a row. That's not to say it'll always be that way.

I had three out of four and really I wouldn't even call THE PLAYERS the way I played a tournament. So I really had four weeks off, so I've got quite a bit. Like I was playing nine holes today and it's been super windy. My brother got married over the weekend, I haven't played much golf at all, and there was quite a few rusty shots. You're hanging lies with the wind this way or ball above your feet holding it this way. So there's quite a bit I can learn about exactly where I'm at versus just pegging off the same lie on the range.

I think in match play more so than stroke play you've got a chance to learn even more because you get not only those shots where you feel like you can play more aggressively so you're taking stuff on more than maybe you would early on in a tournament, but when you start hitting 13, 14 in a

close match, it starts to feel like you're trying to win a golf tournament against that person next to you, and those feelings you don't normally have until Sundays.

The further you advance, the more you're almost playing Sunday rounds in contention, and those are priceless.

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