

Valspar Championship

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Dustin Johnson

Press Conference



JACK RYAN: Dustin, thank you for joining us. We'd like to welcome world No. 1 and reigning FedExCup champion Dustin Johnson into the interview room here at the Valspar Championship. Dustin is making his fourth start in the event highlighted by a T6 in 2019. The event obviously wasn't able to be held last year. How does it feel to be back at the Valspar Championship?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's good. I think it's a great event. It's a good golf course. It's tough. Yeah, I mean, I like it. I haven't played here a bunch, but the few times I have, I've liked the golf course. Yeah, it should be a good week.

JACK RYAN: Making your first start here on TOUR since the RBC Heritage, finished T13 there. How is the game feeling coming into the week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it feels pretty good. The Heritage I felt like I drove it really well. Irons just were a little off. Obviously the greens there are really small, but I felt like my iron game is one of my strengths, and so just need to clean that up a little bit, but overall I felt pretty good at the Heritage. Just made too many mistakes with the irons.

Q. What do you remember about your last round here?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I didn't play very well. I think I was in the last group with Paul, right? I don't remember. I don't think I played poorly. I just didn't play very good.

Q. You didn't make a birdie.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, obviously didn't putt very well.

Q. When you look at the state of your game, it seems like from I want to say Sunday at Riviera, it's not like you played bad, it's just you've not put pieces together, and I'm wondering if you feel that's the case, is it frustrating, and what's keeping you, do you think, from having everything at least in decent order?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I feel like it's really close. You know, I just haven't put it all together, especially for a week. But I feel like I'm driving it good again. Just the only thing, just a little off with the irons at Hilton Head. Obviously I hit a lot of good shots, but just didn't hit enough and made too many costly mistakes with the irons.

But it feels like it's getting better and it's trending in the right direction.

Q. I was curious what you like about this course or what stands out to you, what makes it challenging, whether that be the snake pit or anything else that you've kind of encountered during your time here?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I just think overall it's just a really good golf course. You've got to drive it well. You've got to hit your irons well. You know, you've really got to kind of think your way around here just because all the holes are -- there's always something about a hole that can -- you can get out of position, and it's tough to make pars.

I like it, too. You don't have to make a lot of birdies. You don't have to shoot way under par. You just shoot a couple under each day, and you're going to have a chance to win come Sunday.

Q. This field is very, very competitive. Is that one of the exciting parts about being here this weekend?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I think they always get a pretty good field here at Tampa. Yeah, it's something that I like the golf course, like I said. That's mostly the reason I play. It's a good challenging golf course, and they get a good field, so that's why I play here.

Q. Butch has talked about how when you got the TrackMan you really upped your practicing. How would you compare early stages of your career how much you were practicing versus how much you practice now?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Don't really probably practice any more or less, but just practice better. The thing is as you



get older and kind of know what works for me and what doesn't, I just practice a lot smarter. Quality versus quantity is how I kind of look at it.

Q. Do you agree, though, that that was kind of a turning point for you in your career when you got the TrackMan?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, well, it really helped with my wedge work. I always practiced wedges, but it just really helped me dial in distance control with the wedges.

Q. How do you describe that trophy next to you?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It's a nice trophy. I'd like to have it. It would look good on the shelf. I don't know what it is, but it looks nice.

Q. Do you have one place where you keep all your trophies?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, they're all in a box in my office. We're kind of in between houses, so I didn't unpack anything, even though I've been there for like three years, but just never unpacked any of them. They're all sitting together in boxes. I've got a few of them out.

Q. U.S. Open?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, that's sitting out -- actually it's not. I keep it in the case because I want it to look nice.

Q. I wonder what you thought about the bonus pool that they've announced last week, the \$40 million bonus pool. Will you guys look at it? Will you try to figure out what is going to go into it? There's a lot of metrics that are going into this. And then also some people are believing that -- they're not doing much for the middle to lower end guys who may need some of this money more than guys who would get it. What are your thoughts on all that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I haven't really thought too much about it. I mean, I know, yeah, there's a lot that goes into it, like you said, but Tiger and Phil would be probably the top two I would imagine. But obviously it's nice. The TOUR is kind of -- the guys who kind of make the TOUR what it is are the top guys on the TOUR who put in a lot of the work each and every week and draw big crowds. I mean, that's kind of -- just kind of giving them kind of a thank you. I like it. I think it's nice of the TOUR to do, and it's deserved.

Q. Brooks said no matter whether Tiger plays or not, he should be No. 1 because he's the guy that kind of --

what he said is you guys are making all this money because of Tiger. Do you agree that even if he doesn't swing a club this calendar year that he'll probably still be No. 1?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, Tiger has made a huge impact on the game of golf, and we're all very thankful for Tiger and what he's done. Yeah, absolutely, he definitely deserves it.

Q. You said you're in between -- are you still living -- are you going to be living in North Palm Beach?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I'm going to live in that area, yes, sir, I'm not moving.

Q. I know you look forward to any major, what's coming next, but does it ratchet it up a notch when it's in your home state? Does Kiawah become a bigger deal because of where it is?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, yes and no. I mean, Augusta is closer to where I live than Kiawah.

But yeah, I mean, it obviously is great to play a major in my home state, and depending on how many fans are there, I'll have a lot of support. Definitely looking forward to it. Obviously I played there -- when was it there last?

Q. '12.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Somewhere back there. Obviously a really good golf course, very difficult, and looking forward to going back.

Q. Have you been vaccinated, and do you have any interest or what's your position on that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I have not been vaccinated yet. I plan on getting it. I'm going to speak to my doctor again, though, about it. But yeah, I mean, the plan is to get it here shortly.

Q. You didn't win Q-school, did you?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I did not win, no, I finished like 13th. I had a bit of a meltdown on the last nine holes. Not meltdown, but I was losing it a little bit. I was playing really well, but I missed like three putts that were like this long coming down the stretch.

Q. I'd call that a meltdown --

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Hey, I made it.



Q. That's all that matters. The money question, though, is do you remember the first kind of significant paycheck you got?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah. It was 25 grand for making the TOUR.

Q. What was your first big check you got on TOUR?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, maybe not -- I got that -- I think right when I signed I got -- I don't know if it was maybe like 150 or something. I don't know. It wasn't very big, but it was huge to me because I had zero dollars in my bank account when I got that check.

Q. What was that like and what did you do with it? Was there any temptation to --

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It was a good Christmas. Yeah, I think I went straight and bought a car.

Q. What type of car did you buy?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It was a Yukon Denali. My family, they had -- like my dad's mom and her brother, so my grandma, they had a GMC dealership, so I bought one from them.

Q. This is I think your fourth time playing this event but only your second time in the last 10 years. What did you initially think of this golf course, and can you describe the closing stretch of holes?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's a good golf course. I always liked it. It just never really fit in the schedule that well. Yeah, so it does fit now for me, so I'm going to play it.

I like the course. Yeah, the closing stretch of holes are difficult. 16 -- really 15, 16, 17, 18 are all really good holes.

JACK RYAN: Dustin, thanks for your time, and best of luck this week.

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