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King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia
Royal Greens Golf and Country Club

Dustin Johnson

Press Conference

STEVE TODD: Pleased to be joined by Dustin Johnson. Dustin, one, welcome back to Saudi. I know you've just been out. It's a place that's treated you well in your two visits so far, first year and then second last year. And just give us your thoughts on being back here this week.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it was the first time I came here. It's a golf course that I thought set up well for me. I like the golf course. It's a fun course to play. Yeah, obviously I've had success here the last two years and yeah, I enjoy it. It's been a great week. I think they do a great job hosting this event, and yeah, obviously this year, we've got a great field.

Yeah, I was excited to come back.

STEVE TODD: You're 29-under par for the eight rounds you've played here, which is pretty impressive and course record holder, as well, with a 61. It's a course that you can make a score out there.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yes, it's a golf course where you have to drive it well. I mean, have got a lot of slope in them so you need to be able to control your ball coming into it. But if you drive it well, you can definitely make a lot of birdies just because you can get some short clubs in your hand.

But yeah, I think it's very important to drive it well here, especially with the rough. Got quite a bit of rough. But yeah, I mean, there's only two par 5s, but you can -- if you drive it in the fairway, you can reach them, and quite a few short holes.

Like I said, you've got to drive it well, and felt like I've drove it well here the last couple years and that's why I've had success.

Q. I don't know if you had a chance to see the news where the USGA and the R&A have put out a proposal



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in regards to distance. They are still working through all the increments, but since you haven't been able to see it, maybe more of a general question. Do you think that golf needs to have something in place to control distance?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't think so. I mean, I don't think -- if you look at the scores over the last 15 years, scores aren't -- really aren't any different, and I don't feel like the game is too easy by any means.

You know, I think conditions are a big factor in scores. I mean, if you're playing a golf course that's soft and really good greens, I mean, we're going to shoot low.

But you take that same golf course and make it firm and fast with a little bit of rough, and the scores are going to change dramatically. It's all conditions I think, like I said. But I don't think that we're hitting it too far or our scores are too good. So if they want to do something, that's fine, but obviously we'll all adjust to it and go from there.

But as of right now, I don't think there's anything they need to do.

Q. Do you see yourself as an entertainer versus an athlete?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No. I would say I'm more of an athlete than an entertainer. I know they are both kind of the same because I am playing on TV, so -- but yeah, I mean, myself, I see as an athlete.

Q. You were obviously in the West Coast in the States last weekend, Saudi this weekend, and West Coast next weekend. How do you manage that from a condition point of view?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I think it's very important the first day, obviously after your flight, whether you land in the -- so while you're flying, managing when you sleep or don't or when you get somewhere. You know, usually the first day is the toughest but making sure you get back on that time schedule as quickly as possible. For me, that's what I try and do. Obviously staying hydrated and stuff like that



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really helps. Maybe getting a workout that first day you arrive somewhere to get the body feeling good.

It's difficult but you just try and do the best you can.

Q. Have you got almost a routine on the plane, almost a 16-hour flight, something you go through,

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, if I'm landing somewhere in the morning, obviously I'll sleep on the later part of the flight. If we are landing at night, I'll try to stay awake, just so I can go to bed when I get there. But yeah, it just all depends on where I'm going, what time I'm going to land.

Q. We all know golf is a frustrating game but it seems like it doesn't bother you or frustrate you. Is that the case or not?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: For the most part it doesn't but there are days where I'm definitely frustrated with myself or the game. It's a game -- obviously I love the game but it is very frustrating at times but that's part of it. I think that's one of the reasons I love it. You're never going to perfect the game but there's always -- no matter how good you are, there's always an area after the game where you could be better.

Q. How would you explain that to a person who barely knows golf or is a beginner?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I mean, obviously right now I'm the best player in the world, I hit some of the worst shots you've ever seen. But I go find it and hit it again. Obviously not all of them are bad but I do hit bad shots.

But it's managing those shots and not letting it bother you and going and hitting the next one good.

Q. In the last couple of weeks, we've been speaking to some of the players in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and both Rory and Paul Casey were talking about how towards the end of the year or after the resumption of the Tour, they felt that there was something lacking in their energy that they could get from the crowds. In your case, it really didn't seem so. You were just on a roll. You played so well towards the end of the year. So can you just tell us what's the kind of mindset that you go to a golf course that doesn't have any spectators or it doesn't bother you at all if there are fans or not?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I try not to -- obviously it's different. Obviously my whole career I've played in front of a ton of people every week. It was something you have to get used to. The energy is not there for sure, especially on Sunday coming down the stretch.

But for me, whether the fans are there or not, I still -- because I didn't know until the first time it happened with no fans, but I still felt the same coming down the stretch just because the cameras are there. You know, it means something to you, and whether they are there or not -- and you know people are watching. It still had the same feelings coming down the stretch on Sunday.

But definitely sometimes those morning rounds or Thursday, Friday, it's definitely a lot different because you don't have the energy that you normally have.

Q. I know you've got the defense of your Masters title in April which you're really looking forward to, but what's the main goals this year? I know you probably got asked this question this time last year but then we had the pandemic. Looking now to 2021, what's the sort of high points of the season you're looking forward to?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I'm looking forward to the whole season, obviously the majors, but every event I play. I don't really set goals of I want to win a certain amount of tournaments or win this tournament. I don't like to do that. For me, every week, every tournament I go to, I want to compete and I want to put myself in a position to have a chance to win come Sunday.

So that's kind of my goal going into every week, so I don't really look past the tournament that I'm playing that week. So that's just how I prepare and that's how I approach every event.

Q. Can I just ask you, in the short time since you've had the green jacket, what's the reaction been like from those rounds when you sort of walk into a room or you've got it on, and can you share any of those memories or moments with us?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, obviously it's been great. It's obviously got a lot of respect and praise from friends and fellow competitors, but yeah, obviously it's definitely a nice jacket to have in the closet.

Q. Is Augusta going to let you wear it past April given that you've only had it past four months, or from April can you only wear it on the property?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Hopefully I'll just get another one in April.

Q. Being the world No. 1, does that put any additional mental pressure on you? How does it feel or is it something you tend to not think about on a day-to-day

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I don't -- obviously I've been kind of No. 1 on and off for a while. I'm kind of used to it, or I guess if you can say that.

Yeah, I don't really think about it, especially not while I'm playing golf, or I try not to. I think to -- it kind of drives me to want to get better and stay there. I use it as a tool to drive me to stay in this position and drive me to get better.

Q. I just want to ask you, we saw your tearful interview after the 2020 Masters Tournament, what was going through your head at that moment after the big win?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I mean, it just meant so much to me. Obviously I was so happy and excited, and having the family there, it was incredible. I'm not really sure what I was thinking, but yeah, I did get a little emotional. It was obviously tears of joy. But that was one time where I had no control of my emotions and could not gather myself.

Q. So a lot of tough competitors on the start line this week. Can you talk about Viktor Hovland and what he's been in the recent couple of months and weeks?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, obviously he's a really good, young player. Haven't played much golf with him but he's got a very solid game I think throughout bag.

Yeah, there's quite a few good young players: Collin, Matt, Viktor. But it's great to see. I like to see the young guys having success and playing well.

Q. I'm not saying you're an old guy, but these young guys coming up now, there's a lot of interesting players. What do you think about the young core can that's coming in? Collin is in the top 5, sick. Viktor is No. 12 I think. There's a lot of good young players right now.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I think it's good for the game of golf. No, I'm not young but I still feel like I'm one of the younger players. I guess I'm kind of middle of the pack now. I've been on Tour for a while so kind of a veteran.

I don't feel that way yet. Hopefully it stays that way for a little bit longer. But yeah, I think it's great for the game and like I said, there's some really good young players. We are always going to have some good young talent coming out I think and it's good for the game of golf.

STEVE TODD: Dustin, thank you for joining us. We wish you well this week.