

U.S. Open Championship 2025

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Oakmont, Pennsylvania, USA

Oakmont Country Club

J.J. Spaun

Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: J.J. Spaun, 4-under 66. Just your second U.S. Open, your first ever bogey-free round in a major and it comes in the U.S. Open at Oakmont. What was able to work well for you today?

J.J. SPAUN: I kind of came out here with no prior history at Oakmont, not really knowing what to expect even U.S. Open-wise. This is only my second one.

I don't know if that freed me up in any aspect, but I just tried to kind of take what the course gave me. I hit a lot of good shots and tried to capitalize on any birdie opportunities, which aren't very many out here. But I scrambled really well, too, which is a huge component to playing well at a U.S. Open, let alone shoot a bogey-free round.

I'm just overly pleased with how I started the tournament.

Q. Speaking of scrambling, you got off to a good start on the first hole with a chip-in. How did that catapult this round?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, definitely. It kind of set the tone for how the day was going to go. You're not really expecting to chip it in. You're just trying to get yourself within making distance for par. It was really nice to predict the lie, hit the shot exactly how you want to, and it kind of comes out, and it's just feeding towards the hole and it goes in.

It was a nice little wake-up call at 7:10 in the morning or whatever it was. It was a nice way to start the day, and I obviously kind of rode that momentum throughout the day.

Q. Obviously you handled it better than anyone else so far, but how would you describe the challenge of this golf course and specifically what makes this different than maybe something you'd play week in, week out?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, it's challenging in every sort of aspect or variable in golf. Off the tee, you've got to get it in the fairway, otherwise you're pretty much chipping out or trying to hack something out, unless you get a lucky lie.

Landing it in specific spots, which you're only able to do that if you're out of the fairway because the greens are so slopey, and they're not really sections so you can't really play to one part of the green and feed it down. Everything kind of goes to one spot. You've got to be able to control your spin, the direction of the spin to hold it up against slopes and stuff.

It's just tough, and then you're obviously going to have to grind when you're out of position, and I did that really well today.

I putted really well. I think today was one of my best maybe putting days I've had maybe all year, especially inside like the makeable range putts, inside 12 feet or so, like converting those putts, because that's huge for momentum and keeping a round going, and that's kind of what happens here at U.S. Opens.

Q. Was there anything over the course of your preparation the last few days that kind of signaled to you that something like today was out there for you?

J.J. SPAUN: No, not really. I'm really picky with how I swing the club. I felt like I was a little off after Memorial. I tried tweaking some things at home, and I kind of went down the rabbit hole a few days at home and just kind of threw it out the window a few days before coming here. I'm like, I don't want to play the U.S. Open thinking about too much in my swing.

I did a lot of productive preparation. I didn't really try to mess with my swing. We just tried to work on getting a good feel for the shot pattern that I'm trying to hit, and then we did a lot of short game. I started working with Josh Gregory this week on short game, and he helped me kind of learn how to read the lies in this kind of rough and change my technique a little bit.

It was funny, my caddie, after I chipped in on the first hole, he goes, nice chip, Josh, just because that's the instructor's name.

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I didn't really know -- I didn't really feel like I'm going to show a bogey-free round 4-under. I didn't really know what to expect especially since I've never played here. But yeah, maybe sometimes not having expectations is the best thing, so I'll take it.

Q. If you don't have a lot of experience here, obviously you come into this week and you hear all the stories about how difficult everything is. Do you feel like you were -- actually did it free you up that you didn't have the psychological thought that of, oh, gosh, this is such a beast, I've played here before and this is such a beast? I wonder the mindset coming into this week given the fact you didn't really have much experience here?

J.J. SPAUN: No, I was definitely, like, kind of nervous because I didn't -- all you've been hearing is how hard this place is, and it's hard to not hear the noise and see what's on social media and Twitter and all this stuff. You're just kind of only hearing about how hard this course is.

I was actually pretty nervous. But I actually tried to harness that, the nerves, the anxiety, because it kind of heightens my focus, makes me swing better, I guess. I don't know, I kind of get more in the zone, whereas if I don't have any worry or if I'm not in it mentally, it's kind of just a lazy round or whatever out there.

I like feeling uncomfortable. I ended up feeling pretty comfortable towards the end of the day, but there's a long way to go still.

Q. Just wondering where you're at with your own self-belief about contending in events like this, PLAYERS, and how that maybe compares to different points of your career?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, totally. I don't know why this is happening already or happening at this point in my career, but I guess being kind of put in that spot at THE PLAYERS, I was leading going into the final round of the Sony Open, I finished second at Cognizant, like I've been consistently right there. And everyone knows that the more you put yourself there, the better you're going to have results and the better you're going to play, eventually turn one of those close calls into a win.

THE PLAYERS was sort of a kind of spring into the self-belief because it wasn't like I faked it. Yeah, you can maybe fake it at the Sony and Cognizant or whatever, but to do that at THE PLAYERS, a course where I'd never done well historically, and to go head-to-head with Rory on Sunday, and then the playoff was great for my confidence.

Unfortunately, I didn't win, but it was great for me to kind of lean back on that experience and know that I can perform on the biggest of stages and handle it with the pressure.

There's going to be a lot of pressure this week, too, and hopefully I can rely on those experiences.

Q. When you saw that your ball on No. 4 had gone into the church pews, what were you thinking you might see with that lie? And when you did get up there, how did you approach that shot?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I didn't know -- I hadn't really been near the church pews all week, so I didn't know if it's really heavy, thick fescue to where it could maybe be lost. I actually said, do I need to hit a provisional in case for like lost ball? Because we were kind of getting behind. My caddie was like, we'll find it, I guess, and then we did, and I don't know if you saw but it was literally on the wall of the church pew, and I had to almost kneel my left leg, foot down in the bunker.

It was a good lie and I knew if I made contact with any club, that it would come out pretty good. I played a little baseball growing up, tee ball, which helps. So yeah, I just kind of put a good swing on it, used my hand-eye coordination, and it ended up being a decent lay-up.

Q. How did saving par there keep your round going?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, totally, it did. That happened a bunch of times today. I did that on 1. I did that on 4, 6, 8. But that's kind of the key to this tournament and this venue is just not losing your steam, not losing your focus, and converting those momentum-saving putts.

Q. Monday at THE PLAYERS, you said afterward that you want to be the guy with the ball in his hand at the end of the game. How do you get to that thought when you previously hadn't been there?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I think having that experience at THE PLAYERS made me come to that point. I used to be kind of scared to want the ball, or I guess you could say have the lead or be the one that everyone is chasing. I always was comfortable kind of being a chaser than the one being chased.

I mean, I had a really rough Sunday at Memphis like three years ago, and that kind of gave me some scar tissue. And then kind of didn't really contend too much like that in between then until this year, leading into Sony, or going into Sony on Sunday, one-shot lead at a course I never really historically played well.

So I was pretty nervous. But I was like, you need to embrace this, stop being scared. You don't want to go back thinking, what if I didn't embrace this, who knows what I would have done, versus yes, I want to be that guy. That's what all the great players want.

So if you want to be a great player, that's the route you've got to go.

Q. Tell me a little bit more about going down the rabbit hole, and what did you do?

J.J. SPAUN: So yeah, I just didn't like where my club position was at the top. It was a little too down the line for me. I kind of get it pointing more a little left of the target. It's slowly gotten more and more down the line the last probably two months I would say.

We were just trying to figure out how I can get it more laid off. Not laid off, but pointing left, then it kicks the club out on the way down and gets the path easier to get left to hit a cut because I play a cut 90 percent of the time. So when it's too down the line, you end up having to come steep, but if you don't, then you get under and it can be like a two-way miss. So I did like two days of trying to manufacture something.

I love doing that, but that's what I do. I've gone down plenty of rabbit holes in my career. I know if it's the right thing or not.

I did it for a couple days, played with it. I was like, I feel uncomfortable playing at home with this; how am I going to do this at the Open? I kind of just forgot about it and tried to just use more of, we call it, through-side feel, meaning through the ball. That can kind of get you where you want to be based off of where you're trying to hit it and stuff like that. We just figured just keep up with the rotation in my upper body to kind of keep the club out in front of me.

Q. These greens are so tough, but at what point today did you feel like you were feeling it on the greens? Was there a moment?

J.J. SPAUN: No. 17 was a nice putt, like a little 12-, 14-footer, I think. I didn't have too many putts to make, within making distance, until that hole. But my speed was really good. Like my lag putt speed, except for No. 1, but that was a really tough putt. You're hitting it back uphill, then it starts cresting downhill from where I was.

I would say that putt on 1, the second putt. It was probably 10 feet, and I kind of curled it in there, and it just went right in, and it felt like one of those days where you couldn't really miss anything that was a reasonable putt to make.

Q. Coming up No. 9, obviously a pretty iconic view in golf. You've got a crowd following you. You're 4-under. Do you look out at the crowd? If so, what are you thinking? What's going through your mind at that point?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, it's such a blur when you're playing. But I hear a lot of like "Go J.J." chants and stuff like that. It's really cool to see the magnitude of this championship and at such a historic venue. Yeah, to see the beautiful clubhouse in the background, it was really cool to see.

But you're just trying to stay in the moment. You want to say, like, thank you to everyone that's telling you, good playing, but you end up saying it 50 times in one hole.

But thanks to everyone that was wishing me well today.

Q. Congrats on a terrific round. I wonder, as of right now you're leading the U.S. Open by two shots -- as you rightly said, there's still a long way to go -- but what does that mean to you personally? And how do you deal with nerves and emotions that go with that?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I mean, it definitely makes me feel good, makes me feel confident that I'm leading the tournament. But yeah, like you said, there's plenty more golf left. This course is only going to get tougher.

I just think I'm trying to feel like I have nothing to lose. That was kind of my mantra at THE PLAYERS when I was playing really well at that tournament and going into Sunday with the lead. It was like, I feel like I have nothing to lose.

So I'm going to roll with that again this week, and hopefully it'll turn out more in my favor.

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