

The 149th Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 14 July 2021

Dustin Johnson



OLIVIA McMILLAN: I am delighted to welcome Dustin Johnson to the interview room. Dustin, thank you for joining us and welcome to the 149th Open. You've been out to play Royal St George's. You obviously had a good finish here back in 2011. Have you had some nice memories walking around the course? Is it how you remember?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, the course, obviously it's the same golf course, but it was a little bit firmer in 2011. Obviously they've had a lot of rain, so it's playing a little bit softer. But it's starting to firm up a little bit, and I feel like the course is in really good shape. The rough is definitely a little bit thicker than it was back then.

Yeah, I think it's shaping up to be a great Open Championship.

Q. What lessons do you take from 2011, and how much confidence does it give you playing somewhere where you came so close?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: That was a long time ago, but obviously I have good memories here, and I did play well.

I do like this golf course. I feel like it's a tough golf course. It's going to play difficult, especially with the wind direction that it's supposed to blow for the week.

It's a typical links course; you've got to hit golf shots, and you've got to hit them where you're looking or you're going to have a tough time.

For me, I feel like most of it's going to be driving. If I can drive it well, then I feel like I'm going to have a really good week.

Q. This past year has been all about hitting it harder, hitting it longer, but this is the sort of course where that's maybe not always going to be the right option, isn't it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, for me I'm always trying to hit it in the fairway. As far as hitting it further or harder, that's never really been the case.

Yes, I've always been a long hitter, but I'm not trying to hit it any further, I'm trying to hit it straighter.

Q. After the great run in the fall, the Masters, even at the beginning of this year winning the Saudi event, what do you think has been the difference? Is it a fine line, or was there some aspect of your game that's been missing?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, obviously I played really solid there for -- really well for about six, seven months. I feel like the game is starting to get back to where it was, just seeing a lot more consistency with the shots and the shapes. I think that's probably just a little bit of the difference.

Putting, I felt like I putted consistently well for that time period, so just been working on the putter a lot. I feel like that ultimately can be the difference.

Q. Going back to 2011, what sticks in your memory from the event, the final afternoon, and do you look back on that as a missed opportunity on that occasion?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, obviously I had a good opportunity on the back nine there until, what, 14. Obviously take that shot back, yeah, I've got a really good chance to win.

Sunday played really difficult. I played really well, just kind of hit one bad shot, and it pretty much ultimately cost me having a chance to win.

I mean, it was a long time ago, so I don't remember a whole lot, to be honest.

Q. Do you feel you're a better player now than you were back then?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I do. A different player. Obviously I shape it -- back then I was hitting a draw; now I predominantly fade it, especially off the tee. But still turned my irons over. But yeah, it was a long time ago. Definitely a different player.

Q. The rules and protocols here are very different to what you find back home. How much of an adjustment, if at all, has that been to get in the right mode for this tournament?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I think The R&A have done a great job this week. Obviously we knew what we were coming into. They did a good job of providing us all the rules and regulations prior to coming over.



I've played a couple -- I played a European Tour event where we were in a bubble, so it's not really that much different. Obviously it's different than back home, but rules are rules, and you've just got to go with what you've got.

Q. Have you set a wedding date yet?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's next year.

Q. How much fortune or luck do you need to win a major, and is more required at a British Open than other majors?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, yeah, you definitely need -- you know, a bounce here or there can definitely be the difference between winning a major or not. Definitely around links golf courses or at the Open Championship that can definitely come into play a little bit more, but everybody is playing the same golf course, and it's all the same humps and bumps for everybody.

But yeah, definitely a bounce or two can be the difference, absolutely.

Q. I'm sure you can think of plenty of times when the golfing gods weren't happy with you, but what do you consider the best bounce, the best break you've ever gotten in a major? Think positive here.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, I don't know. The one that sticks out, probably getting a drop on No. 10 at Oakmont. I think that was on Sunday, too. Because of the sign or the TV tower being in my way. Obviously it gave me a chance to hit it on the green, where I probably wouldn't have been able to hit it on the green from where I was.

Q. Obviously you've won a lot of big events in your career. I'm just wondering where would an Open Championship win rank among them?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It would definitely be right up at the top. It's obviously a major. It's a tournament where I've been close quite a few times. I really like coming over here and playing. Yeah, it would be right up at the top with the rest of them.

Q. A slightly less serious question: Are you Team Bryson or Team Brooks?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I'm in the middle. I don't really care. (Smiling).

Q. I know you played with Jon Rahm earlier today; you obviously over took him in the World Rankings again, even though he came seventh -- if he made one more place higher he would have stayed world No. 1. I just wondered how

much does that motivate you? I know you don't make the rules, but did you talk about it with him today?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, we didn't talk about it. I mean, yeah, the rankings, they're tough to figure out, but yeah, obviously if you play well, you get to No. 1. I need to continue to play well if I want to stay there. Obviously Jon has been playing really well lately. I need to step up my game a little bit.

Q. What were the teams if you had any? Was there anything at stake?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, we were just out playing, practising, trying to get a good feel of the golf course.

Q. What do you make of Phil right now? How does he look? Obviously the big win a couple months ago, but he was in contention here last time, too.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah. I mean, obviously Phil has been a really good player for pretty much throughout his whole career. He plays well on links golf. He's done well a lot of times at The Open. Obviously he's playing good golf right now.

Q. I'm just wondering, when we get 32,000 spectators in, they'll create some definition out on the course. If they weren't there and there were no crowds and no grandstands, would it be a completely different test without that element and that definition taken away?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It's hard to say. I don't think I've ever -- never played an Open without a lot of fans. But I've definitely played links courses with no -- but I don't really think it makes a difference because they're so far off the fairway that it really doesn't make a difference.

Q. What did you call this tournament growing up, and what do you call it now?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, it was the British Open growing up for sure, but now I call it The Open Championship.

Q. How come that changed?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Because that's the name of it. (Laughter.)

Q. This was pretty pedantic, too, DJ, but just curious of The Opens that you've played, what's your favourite, and where do you put Royal St. George's?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I really like this golf course. This is definitely up in the top. But for me St. Andrews is my favourite just because -- I just always enjoy playing there.

Q. Can we put this down for No. 2 for you?



DUSTIN JOHNSON: Sure, put it down as No. 2. (Laughter.)

Q. Does it annoy you when you hear a lot of Americans call it the British Open now?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, it doesn't bother me. I know what they're talking about.

Q. We don't call it the U.S. Masters anymore.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: You could if you wanted. (Laughter.)

Q. This is kind of a silly one. Obviously it's tradition for folks to kind of -- folks who won majors to drink something out of the trophy. I'm just wondering if you were to win, what would be the first thing you would drink out of the Claret Jug?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Probably beer, I would say, would be the first thing.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Dustin, thank you very much for your time today. Best of luck this week.

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