

The 150th Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 12 July 2022

Jordan Spieth



OLIVIA MCMILLAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be joined by 2017 Champion Golfer of the Year Jordan Spieth.

Jordan, thank you so much for joining us. Welcome back to St Andrews. How nice is it to be here again?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, this is unlike any other tournament really, The Open at St Andrews. It certainly hasn't disappointed being on the grounds this week. The course is incredibly firm. The greens are flawless, and the setting as you come in these closing holes is even more grand than it was seven years ago.

So very exciting. I think, if you're not getting amped up to play in this Open, I'm not sure this is the right sport for you. It's extremely, extremely exciting. I'm looking forward to getting out there. I guess I'm off at 3:00-ish on the first round. So get to see a bit of how the course is going to be playing to start, which might be a good thing, and then go out and brave the wind.

OLIVIA MCMILLAN: It was a nice way to start the week with the Celebration of Champions yesterday. What was that experience like?

JORDAN SPIETH: I remember playing a practise round when it was going on seven years ago and thinking, man, that would be really cool to be in the next one, and it was.

We got carried by Juan. He has one leg and shot 1-under on the four holes. Just absolutely striped it around them, which is incredible. And we had a good time.

I'm looking forward to tonight too. This is, I think only at St Andrews does the Champions' Dinner happen, so I'm very much looking forward to tonight and catching up with and sharing stories with a lot of past Open champions.

Q. I don't know if you ever rewatch highlights, but how much do you remember about your run in 2015 here? And how do you see the course playing this week compared to that week?

JORDAN SPIETH: I really don't remember but a few shots here or there. Obviously the closing stretch Sunday I remember.

But I remember starting out I birdied No. 1, I remember on Sunday. And I remember 16 in, but I didn't even remember 13, 14, 15. I didn't even remember the holes until I got back on property, which is a bit odd.

I think it's going to play significantly different this year because I think we only had one day where it was maybe calm in this wind direction. The other three were blowing hard the other way. So it's a totally different golf course.

We hit driver the entire back nine, you're hitting mid-irons into greens. Now I hit a hold 4-iron on 16 that almost reached the bunker at 3, whatever, holding the wind. So it's playing totally different as far as each hole specifically.

But I think, score-wise, if they get any kind of wind similar to this, I can't imagine it will get to 14-, 15-under. A lot of these holes, it's going to be really hard to hold fairways. From there, if you're not playing out of the short stuff where they put the pins, the best you can do is 30, 40 feet.

I think speed control in the wind becomes more important this week than any tournament I can remember preparing for and thinking that.

Q. Jordan, anything at the dinner tonight? Any particular champions you have a question for about this place or anything in general?

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't think so. I think any time you can corner Jack Nicklaus, he normally has a pretty good idea, whether it's Augusta or here or Opens in general or really any tournament. So he would be somebody that I might -- who's seen probably every single condition, as well as a lot of the guys.

He won how many -- did he only win one Open here? Two here. So clearly, I don't know if it would have mattered where it was, but there's certainly probably some secrets in there.

Q. And just anything you've picked up in the practise rounds this time around that you learned about the course?

JORDAN SPIETH: Like I mentioned, quite a bit because I don't -- you're not able to use the greens books from back then, so you're not even allowed to copy notes unless they're your own



notes that you've gotten this time around.

If you've gotten them not from the greens book, but instead of don't miss here to this pin, then you can obviously use that information.

We have the yardage books from back then, but not the greens books, Michael does. So I went out with Cameron and Michael yesterday evening late and tried to get out and scout a lot because last week at the Scottish was the most unprepared I've ever been for a tournament, coming from Tuesday night for the JP McManus Pro-Am playing nine holes Wednesday and seeing the back nine for the first time on a Thursday morning on a links course is about as unprepared as I can get.

I felt like I missed a few shots out there, just missing in the wrong spots, just not totally recognizing where to go, and I didn't want it to happen this week. I didn't remember a ton of the subtleties. The shapes of the hole, sure, but when they put the pin on 5, 85 yards from the previous day's pin, you've got to get some information on where those misses are and how different that is.

Q. The 150th Open, there's a huge celebration around here. A lot of it is off the golf course here in the town and whatnot. Do you get a chance at all to go out and do anything in town this week?

JORDAN SPIETH: I would not advise that to myself, no.

(Laughter).

The little time I've spent walking down the street, when you're around any golf tournament or an Open, it's not exactly -- you can't exactly go incognito and partake in anything.

It's very exciting. If it were the 100 and -- what was it last time -- 143rd, maybe? I know the years got mixed up with COVID -- versus this Open, it doesn't change anything for me on the golf course.

Off the course, I'm trying to rest the best I can. This is eight out of 10 weeks for me, so I'm trying to keep my legs under me and work my way into contention if I can.

Q. When you're putting on these greens with the wind and trying to adjust, is there anything specific you do to try to be better as a putter in the wind?

JORDAN SPIETH: You just have to have grace. You have to give yourself grace because you can hit a putt with the exact same ball speed two different putts, and depending on which wind hit it, they can be 10 to 15 feet away from each other. You can have one 10 short that would have been perfect, you could have five short and five long. And the more you become

frustrated by it the next one becomes exponentially harder.

I noticed that I did that last week a couple times, and the ones where I gave myself grace, I knocked the next one in. The ones where I didn't, I missed it. I think it's more so than the technical aspect of it. You just have to be mentally be prepared for -- you'll have some where you thought hit a bad putt and it's going to go closer too.

You're just not used to having to putt from 30-plus yards from week to week, and you might have five of them in a round out here.

Q. Jordan, you've talked a lot about just enjoying the creativity that comes with links golf, with The Old Course. Do you feel more freed up mentally or physically when you're playing links golf?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think physically I feel more freed up. I feel that -- I think they kind of go hand in hand as far as, like, picking out the shot, enjoying the creativity of the shot or putt. And then obviously physically, sometimes it's a little more freeing where you just don't have to line it up dead straight and be perfect.

But instead you're like, okay, I have the wind here, the hill here. I'm going to hit a -- it kind of frees you up to be a little more feel oriented, and I really enjoy that aspect of it.

Q. What would you say the difference is between the speed of the fairways compared with the greens right now?

JORDAN SPIETH: There are some spots in collection areas where it's still pretty green and slower, where the balls will be collecting, but then if you're talking about the brown areas to the green, I would say very similar in speed.

The greens, I think, are just a smidge softer if you land it on the putting surface versus landing on -- short of it. But I hit a lot of putts from where I had half of the putt was off the green, half the putt was on the green, and I may have hit it incrementally harder than if it was all green. So I'd say somewhat similar.

Q. Secondly, some of these dinners tonight -- and you had one at Pebble in '19, you have one at Augusta every year -- at your age how much do you find yourself talking and how much do you find yourself listening?

JORDAN SPIETH: Very much listening. Very little talking other than the -- like if I'm at Augusta and it's not everybody listening to one story and sometimes you have your group of four or five people around you, then you're in a normal conversation.

But for the most part, you're listening. And that's what's great

about it is you get some -- whether it's Mr. Crenshaw asks Jack to give a couple stories about this or that, or it's an anniversary of somebody's win that may not be there, and then someone will have a story about that. Or Gary Player speaking Japanese to Hideki. There's just some incredible things that happen that, yeah, if you're not one of the guys who has all those stories, like Jack or Gary, you normally want to just listen.

Q. How old do you have to be to talk in there?

JORDAN SPIETH: Maybe -- I would imagine 60-plus. I don't think Tiger even wants to talk, and sometimes he gets poked to have to talk. So older than him.

Q. Jordan, you've been around over here quite a lot now, and I'm quite looking forward to these answers. What are three things that you like about coming over here? Probably to do with golf but not necessarily. And what are three things that you are less keen on about over here?

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't know if I have all day, but -- to give you six things -- but I would say it's a very nice break from the 115-degree heat index that Dallas has had for 30-something days straight. I actually enjoy coming over here for the weather. It's a nice break from summertime and you get these conditions.

And the style of golf. I love links golf. We don't get true links in the States, regardless of where you are. And you get true links over here, and I really enjoy playing that way.

Then I really enjoy the crowds over here. They're the most educated fans in all of golf. They understand when sometimes you have a pitching wedge in your hand and 30 feet's a really good shot. And they also understand when you're trying to get something closer when it wasn't so difficult. They just seem to be very educated, and it's always a fantastic -- this is a harder venue for fans, right, because for the most part, they're pushed on the outsides of the holes and even out of bounds for a lot of the back nine.

But still with these grandstands, you still get the roars and kind of the appropriate.

I don't know if it's in my best interests to speak to what I don't look forward to.

Q. But go on.

JORDAN SPIETH: (Laughter). What would be something?

Q. Well, something other than warm beer, for example.

JORDAN SPIETH: When I'm in these weeks, I'm not really out looking to partake in going to any pubs or anything like that,

especially, like I mentioned, it's eight out of 10 weeks. So it's more, I guess, time change. That's a lame answer, right? But at this point, I'm pretty adapted to it from being over here for ten-plus days.

I could also say the weather. I can use that for the good or the bad, can't I? That would probably be one of those where sometimes you can be a little bit unsure on how exactly you're playing because you might be hitting the right shots and getting the wrong gusts and bounces and sometimes it's the other way around.

So over the course of 72 holes, you keep your head on straight, and it continues to work itself out.

Q. What about world news, for example? Do you feel a lack of it, or do you find an interesting slant on it over here? Indeed how much attention do you pay to it while you're here?

JORDAN SPIETH: To world news? Not much. For the most part, at night I'm logging in to see who's playing baseball at home. I'm not -- I think that I try to keep things as stress-free for myself off the golf course as I can, and I don't believe diving into world news in a major week is in my best interests of staying stress-free. So for the most part, I try and almost shut off of it when it comes to these weeks.

Q. Jordan, what is your best Tiger Woods story from this championship through the years? Anything funny in a practise round?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure I've ever even played a practise round with him in this event. I remember the first time I was ever paired with Tiger in a major was Saturday of the 2014 Open -- was that Liverpool, Royal Liverpool?

And we teed off on the back nine, I remember. That's not like a great story. That's really the extent of it. But you never forget the first time you play with him in a major championship if you're able to do so.

I remember playing that Saturday round. I think we both had it going for a little while. I think we both shot maybe 1- or 2-under and moved up the board quite a bit. I could be wrong on that. First hole was the par-5 on No. 10 out there. You don't really get split tees very often out here in the Open. That was the first time I'd heard of it.

Other than that, I don't have great stories of being involved -- obviously at Carnoustie, that was the only time I've ever been in a major where I looked at the first page of the leaderboard and saw his name and my name next to each other, which was a dream come true, and I just didn't -- well, I guess neither one of us ended up holding the Claret Jug at the end of the day, but

that was pretty neat.

Q. Did you learn anything in that round when you played together with him?

JORDAN SPIETH: On that Liverpool day?

Q. Yeah.

JORDAN SPIETH: Man, that's eight years ago now, which is a majority of my life. So I don't -- no, not particularly. No, I don't remember much specifically other than being -- feeling like I was teeing off in the last group on a Saturday even though we were in the middle of the pack going off the back nine. Just the setting.

But I'd played with him earlier that season a number of times, so at least that helped.

Q. While it wasn't the result you wanted on Sunday and maybe not the preparation you wanted prior to the tournament, what did you take away from the Genesis Scottish Open last week?

JORDAN SPIETH: I thought it was -- I thought that the course played the way that it hadn't played in years past, from what I had heard. And in that sense, I think it played the way they wanted it to play. It was challenging, but you could also make birdies.

It was a good, fair test. Funky holes or shots here or there, but that's how we're all going to feel about links golf when it gets windy, right, because sometimes the ball never stops rolling.

I certainly learned a lot. It was nice to get on the turf. I thought it was hugely beneficial for this week. I feel a little bit more ahead of where I maybe felt coming into the last number of times when I hadn't played over here the week before, and as far as how far the ball goes into the wind, downwind, getting on fescue turf, judging lies out of the rough, certain pitch shots, how they bounce.

So I think for the most part it was massively beneficial for this week. I thought it was a good tournament in itself, but I thought, man, I thought I certainly could have shot 3- or 4-under on Sunday without a doubt, and I hit a couple of poor iron shots. So I look to improve upon those this week.

Q. You've touched on some technical things, but I'd be interested to hear about your own psychological approach to this week, playing this golf course and this tournament with the field, including so many potential winners?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think it's about patience. I think it's about letting the course come to you. I think recognising that

towards the finish of this round you have probably the highest score to par and then the lowest score to par is back-to-back holes. I imagine 17 will play the hardest this week and 18 will play the easiest.

It's always a bit interesting because you're always kind of waiting for the end of the round for that kind of drama, I guess. So I think it's a tournament also where you don't have to be out in front to win. It's one where, if you can post a score -- sometimes it's really difficult if you're not freely hitting shots at your targets and trying to play a little protective. Links golf can eat you up if that's the case.

I've seen both sides of that. So I think patience is the number one word for me psychologically coming in. It's let it all come to me. Don't go and try to force birdies. Wait for the downwind holes where you get some wedges or the par-5s, and then try to be under-par when you reach the 18th tee box each day.

Q. There's a lot of golfers here. How many do you think have a real chance of winning, like a genuine chance?

JORDAN SPIETH: I imagine that number is the exact same as it is every Open that I've played. I'm not sure how that would have changed, to be honest with you. What's your take on that? I don't know what would cause that question to be something that I maybe would answer differently than other years.

Q. No, it's about whether you think there needs to be huge course knowledge to winning. Or you look at last time Paul Dunne goes out in the final group (indiscernible) --

JORDAN SPIETH: That's to my point. It could be anybody. It could be Paul Dunne or could be Zach Johnson, who played however many Opens. I didn't have any course experience last year and, I make the putt on 17, I think 18 becomes a little easier to birdie.

I would say Augusta, you'd say typically you want to have a bit of course knowledge. Historically it shows that. The Open, I think it could be anybody.

Q. Jordan, there's been a lot of talk in the sport about guys wanting to play less, and you're, as you mentioned, playing eight of 10 now. Just curious where you are physically and whether that's a concern at all, knowing how patient you have to be and how mentally sharp you have to be by Sunday.

JORDAN SPIETH: At this point in my life, I love playing golf. I love playing professionally. I don't want to not play to go do something else. That's where I'm at. This is what I do.

So I feel really good. I'll do my ice baths. I'll do my NormaTec

boots. I'll do what I do on the back end of long stretches to feel like I have fresh legs, but as far as mentally, I don't get burned out from this right now, especially a week like this.

So I have no -- I wouldn't say I've ever played 30-plus events in a year, but I've never played less than 22 or whatever. I don't see that changing any time soon. I really, really enjoy it week to week.

Did I miss the back end of that question? Was there something I didn't answer?

Q. Jordan, why do you think this course has stood the test of time?

JORDAN SPIETH: Because of the weather. I don't think it stands the test of time if it's benign. When Louis won, what did he win at, 22 or something under or more? Am I wrong in that? I thought he was over 20-under. I figured somebody in here would have that answer for me.

(Laughter).

Was it 16? Was that it? If the conditions are calm for four days, which I don't think happens over here, I think that with today's technology it becomes a shootout. But I think we didn't finish until Monday in 2015 because of wind delays and such. And I think the conditions make it to where you still have to play from the certain spots. Holes narrow up at some point.

As you play this back nine, you can't hit driver on 13. You can't hit driver on 15. You can't hit driver on 16. There's just nowhere to hit it, I mean unless you're going to play it to the fescue.

So you're still playing into the greens from the spots that it's designed to play from when it's downwind. And into the wind, you've got to try to bust driver just to get to those spots.

So I think regardless it forces you to play from certain locations no matter what it makes you have to hit off the tee. And from there, it's certainly a challenge.

You can get to those spots easier without wind, and then those next shots are exponentially easier. The approach shots get exponentially easier when the wind's down, and that's where the scores start getting lower. I think it's conditions.

I can imagine at most links golf courses that's the case, right? So that's not to this specifically.

Q. Do you think of yourself as a better golfer now or when you were here in 2015?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think of myself as having a bit more

momentum in 2015. I don't know how you can have more. But I think there's certain parts of my game that I feel are stronger and there's certain parts of my game where I'm just trying to get right back to where they were at that point in time.

So I would say if I played against myself then, if I beat myself then this week, then I would be holding a trophy. So it would be obviously, certainly a big challenge, but I don't necessarily know that I could answer that because I feel I hit it further, I feel that my knowledge, round to round, of seeing a lot more majors and a lot more tournaments can mentally make me just a little bit -- maybe I have some advantage on a shot that I wouldn't have thought about then. But I was also canning everything that I looked at then, and I can't say that's going to happen every week forever, but it certainly can happen in four days.

Q. Without trying to make you feel old, you've played in a number of Opens now. So I'm curious, St Andrews compared to the other venues, what do you need to do well here especially versus some of the other ones you've played?

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't think there's anything different here versus other venues I've played. I think there's a big premium on putting the ball in the fairway and keeping it out of bunkers. That's really the number one key. If I can put the ball in the fairway, keep it out of fairway bunkers off the tee, then I believe that I'll have a good chance.

I think that's most important here. You get enough short clubs in your hands, and I feel that's a nice advantage to me. I feel confident in my ability to get it in quickly when I'm playing from the fairway with short irons.

OLIVIA MCMILLAN: Jordan, thank you for your time. We really appreciate it. Best of luck this week.

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