

# The 151st Open

Mixed Zone

Friday, 21 July 2023

**Zach Johnson**



ZACH JOHNSON: Today was quite solid. Figured some things out on the range this morning that just wasn't really doing well yesterday. Honestly, I hit one bad shot yesterday. I made 6 on 17. I own that hole now; made a 4 today. (Laughter.) 10 shots on one hole. I'd like to say something else, but I'm not going to.

Really solid. Tee to green was much better. Gave myself ample opportunity. Missed some putts, made some putts, took advantage of the par-5s, and then maybe butchered a couple par-5s, too.

It was probably about what it should have been. It probably evened out, so it was a solid day.

**Q. What did you think of the bunkers, and were you surprised they changed something after round 1, on the slopes?**

ZACH JOHNSON: I'm not familiar.

**Q. They altered -- made them flatter so the ball could roll down to the centre after the first round.**

ZACH JOHNSON: I only hit it -- they made an announcement?

**Q. They sent a release.**

ZACH JOHNSON: I probably should have read that. (Laughter.)

I only hit it on one, and it was on 17, and I hit a really good bunker shot to 15 feet. I hit a really good tee shot. Just didn't have enough speed on it. Proper club, proper line, just didn't hit it hard enough.

I think I only hit it in one sand trap or bunker, fortunately.

**Q. Have you been having Ryder Cup conversations this week with guys?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I've had a few. I think it kind of comes with the territory, considering we're two plus months removed. Yeah, a handful probably.

**Q. You've been so good playing under pressure in these**

**majors and all the high-profile events.**

ZACH JOHNSON: Thank you.

**Q. Do guys ever come to you and ask you for advice about how they can train to be better under pressure?**

ZACH JOHNSON: As of late, no. But I'm sure some have. Some of the younger guys have probably sought out some of my counsel. I sure did when I was young.

There's certain guys that you watch and obviously admire in certain situations, whether it's the situation you're talking about or something else subtle or with serious substance.

I'd have to really think about that. As of late, I haven't really had conversations with anyone.

**Q. Is that something you consider to be helpful to you or players when they are good at dealing with pressure? What goes into developing that skill of playing well under pressure?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I think the ones that I look at, it's as if they train for it, and not only do they welcome it, relish it, savor it, whatever you want to call it, they're almost more comfortable in it.

The extreme examples are obviously Tiger Woods. But there's even guys out here, shoot, I'd throw guys like -- I don't know how many tournaments Brooks has won, but seems to me when the gravity is at its highest or strongest or whatever, he seems to bring out the best.

DJ seems to do that.

Jordan seems to do that.

There's guys -- Jon Rahm, even Rory, of course. Those kind of guys -- we're talking about the best players in the world. Those kind of guys just seem to almost find freedom and a comfortable zone when there's an immense amount of pressure.

**Q. How much of a concern is Justin Thomas's form at the moment?**



ZACH JOHNSON: Well, as a friend and roommate, I'm concerned just because he's my buddy and I know what he's capable of and that sort of thing.

**Q. With the Ryder Cup coming --**

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, obviously he's a stalwart in that event, right. I don't know his record off the top of my head, but I know it's pretty good.

**Q. It's very good.**

ZACH JOHNSON: It's very good, yeah. Those kind of moments like that, he's one of the best there is.

Bottom line is this game is really hard. There's going to be peaks. There's going to be some valleys. Let's hope whatever sort of non-peak he's in, it's short. I know he's got a great team. I love his coaches. I love how he -- he works. He's a worker.

Guys with talent like that that work and aren't afraid to put their work in the dirt, if you will, not to be cliché, typically find it. It's just a matter of when, not if. He's too darned good.

I might be slightly concerned, like I said, as a friend, but I'm not worried about him because I know what he does and I know what he's capable of.

**Q. A group or two ahead of you today on 17 there was a Just Stop Oil protest. Were you held up at all?**

ZACH JOHNSON: We were not held up. They mentioned it when we were walking to -- that was on 17?

**Q. Yeah, on the 17th green.**

ZACH JOHNSON: I think they mentioned it to us when we were on 15, 16-ish. They said there might be a slight delay. I couldn't quite understand what they were saying, but they just said there might be a delay on 17.

**Q. Do you have any particular opinion on these protestors at sporting events?**

ZACH JOHNSON: I've got to say I'm honestly ignorant when it comes to what their initiative is.

**Q. The R&A was saying earlier this week it took great pains to say the players shouldn't get involved, but this Billy Horschel helping them up in a gentle way. It's difficult not to get involved, isn't it?**

ZACH JOHNSON: I honestly don't understand the situation. I have not witnessed it. For me to make an opinion of something

that I don't understand any of it would be, I think, a little irresponsible.

**Q. You said at the PGA that you hadn't really looked much at LIV Golfers or how they play or what they do. Have you had an opportunity since then now to take a little better look at any of them?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I think we're getting towards that moment, right? I've always got an eye on it, and so does the individuals I surround myself with.

**Q. When Brooks and you guys played in a practice round, he said you guys spent a lot of time talking about different things, things that he kind of learned from. Didn't really elaborate very much. But did you find that time with Brooks beneficial?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I wish he was still on the PGA TOUR just because I enjoy watching him play and admire how he goes about his work.

Yeah, that was completely random. We've had quite a few talks, just he and I, as of late prior to this week. And text exchanges. But that was completely random. I'm glad it worked out because it was good to rub shoulders with him again because it's been quite some time.

**Q. You said you're staying with JT this week?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

**Q. What was the mood last night?**

ZACH JOHNSON: He's like an hour and a half behind me. I fed myself and went up and showered and essentially went to bed. I saw him this morning when I was coming this way. He was going that -- he was coming in, I was going maybe to the range or something like that.

He was walking, had his head high. The kid doesn't quit. I'm hoping he goes out there and throws a nice number up or at least finds something. Sometimes the scorecard can be misleading. I hope he can find some form.

**Q. How do you weigh past performance in the Ryder Cup with current form when you're making --**

ZACH JOHNSON: Experience is an element. I would say individuals that have really played well in that should be or can be a part of the pot, stew, if you will, of creating it.

But I've seen both sides of it. A guy that isn't in great form that's got a lot of experience goes in and plays great. Ian Poulter would be a great example of that, right? Brings out his

best when he's called upon.

I've also seen the inexperience or rookies go out there and it looks like they've been in that position for 25 years. Collin Morikawa would be another good one. He's a rookie with two majors under his belt already. He was a rookie, but -- you've got to take everything with a grain of salt.

There's so many factors when it comes to forming the best 12. Pairing would be a part of that, too, absolutely. The guys that qualify and earned their way on to that team are a part of that. It's their team. I could go down -- there's a lot of elements.

**Q. I know it's still early, but does a guy like Brian Harman playing really well make your job more difficult?**

ZACH JOHNSON: I hope so. I want all these guys to make my job difficult. That's what I signed up for. I want them to want to play. It's that fine line between going out there and playing for something bigger than you, but then it's also -- as I've told these guys, whether it's via text or in person, you've got to stay right where your feet are and play today for today, whether it's the round, the hole, the shot, whatever it may be.

In my experience, I don't want to say I got lucky at my first Ryder Cup. I didn't perform well coming into it. Fortunately I played well enough early on that I got in and the point system was totally different. My point was I started playing for it, and I think that's hard.

I personally can't do that. Maybe other guys can. I cannot.

I think you have to just -- you have to be so grounded exactly where your feet are at that moment.

**Q. J.T. making (indiscernible)?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, there's still some golf left. I know he's got some plans to play some more golf. I don't know what that entails yet. I'm not going to assume.

But I mean, as a stalwart of those teams over the last -- I'd have to go back, probably since 2017, right? 2020 was cancelled, '17 he played the Presidents Cup. He didn't play in '16. So you're talking five Cups. It fuels him. You can tell he wants to be there.

I haven't had direct conversations on what's going on. I'm hoping -- I do know this: Once you feel like you've got this game, man, you've got to, we're going to keep riding it, and that's a fun ride, but the moment you think you've got it, it can chew you up and spit you out, and then the moment you think you're miles and miles away, you're probably technically about that far away.

My hope is that JT and all those guys -- you go down the list. I want all those guys in good form. I want them to make my decision really difficult.

I'm not going to sit there and say I'm looking forward to the calls of guys that aren't on the team because that's a part of it, but I've enjoyed every step of this, and I really welcome anybody talking to me about it, caddies and players.

**Q. Like any player who plays at this level, there's peaks and valleys --**

ZACH JOHNSON: 100 percent, it's a hard time.

**Q. What is that like when you don't have it, you're on the world stage, you're in a major championship, people are looking at you and you just can't perform?**

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I think you've got to put it in perspective. It stinks. It stinks, because you're working and you're not seeing the fruits of your labour, so to speak.

But you've got to keep the perspective. You've got to understand that the work I'm doing, whatever it may be that I'm doing on my off weeks, my preparation going into the weeks, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera at some point is going to pay off. You have to believe that.

Sometimes it's a stretch. It could be a four- or five-hole stretch where you're like, oh, there it is. Sometimes it's 18 to 36 holes and sometimes it's a full week, sometimes it's two weeks. It's almost like you've got to take two or three steps forward, then you might take a couple steps back, and after that it's like you're on an escalator.

It's hard, especially in the grandest of stages. It becomes even -- it's more magnified.

Then the mental side of it kicks in even more so. But every week is important. Every PGA TOUR event is difficult.

Yeah, I think it's a brutal animal, man, and you can't tame it sometimes, and other times it just feels like it's sitting right in your lap.

**Q. A lot of guys talk about the need to have the 12 best players on both sides. Is it more than likely you wouldn't necessarily have the 12 best players but you're going to have the best team?**

ZACH JOHNSON: That is the way I'm looking at it. I think when it comes to the 12 best players, that's extremely subjective. How do you really measure that? Are you going to go off World Ranking, FedEx? What's your measurement? I think that's very difficult.



It's also very difficult to put the 12 best guys together for that week. But I'm leaning more on that. I don't know if it's horses for courses, but that's an element.

But it's also 12 guys in a locker room that want to be around each other. I want five vice captains, counting me, six individuals that would not to be around each other, and I want that synergies within the captaincies to overflow into the players. I think we've done a really good job of that as of late, and I think when it comes down to it the guys play with a little bit more freedom and expectations are laid out and communication is at a high level.

It's all of that. When it comes to the 12 guys, I want 12 guys that would not to be there, be around each other and fight.

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