

# The 153rd Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 16 July 2025

J.J. Spaun



ED HODGE: Good morning, everybody. Delighted to see you this morning. We're joined by J.J. Spaun, the U.S. Open champion.

J.J., welcome to Portrush. I assume you're looking forward to a great debut in the Open.

J.J. SPAUN: Totally. This is my first Open, so get a proper links test. Just excited to make my debut here at such a beautiful venue.

**Q. What's the key, do you think, taking your game from America and coming to links golf?**

J.J. SPAUN: I think initially it will just be learning to play different shots. You kind of want to play everything airborne in America, pick your number, try to fly it there, and hopefully it spins and stops near the hole.

But links golf requires a lot more creativity, imagination, so learning to flight shots better and trying to guess bounces correctly is going to be sort of the challenge this week. Also, the elements. I don't think the forecast is looking very great, obviously not perfect like today, but that will be probably the other battle this week.

**Q. It's been a month, obviously, since the United States Open win there at Oakmont. Behind the scenes, I talked to both your coaches, and there were some pep talks that both of them gave you there in the rain delay. I'm just curious, what do you take away from that now, just looking back on those conversations with both your coaches?**

J.J. SPAUN: I took away a lot of sort of confidence. I felt like they were instilling a lot of confidence, and self-belief is a huge key to pulling off a big event like a major, let alone a U.S. Open.

I think it's very reassuring and calming to have a group of guys in your corner that are just instilling the confidence in you to pull this off. I hadn't been in that territory really very often, just once earlier this year at THE PLAYERS. Nothing like learning experiences that have helped me come through on the other side at the U.S. Open.

It was great to have my team by me and helping me stay in the

moment, stay in the present, and not give up because before the rain delay, it was not looking great for me at the U.S. Open.

**Q. A quick follow-up, your team you mentioned there, overall team, your caddie, how cool has it been the last month just seeing the adulation, the congratulations he's gotten along the journey?**

J.J. SPAUN: Totally. There's been so many people reaching out. Mark's been out here 30 years. He's had some big wins. He won THE PLAYERS with Si Woo Kim about nine years ago, so he's been in the moment. He was a really good attribute to have coming down the stretch, kept me calm, gave me really great words of encouragement. There's no one I would rather have on the bag coming down the stretch at the U.S. Open.

**Q. Scottie made some very interesting comments yesterday talking about winning and it feeling unfulfilling and the joy of it being quite fleeting. I'm just interested to know your experience because obviously grinding away for a long time and then getting such a big win, has it felt as good as you thought it would? How have you wrestled with the experience? Has there been a comedown in the time after? Was that reality sinking in again after such a high?**

J.J. SPAUN: I believe there's some truth behind Scottie's words for sure. Yeah, you do have these high aspirations, these dreams to accomplish things in golf at the highest level, and then you do and it happens so quick. Then you're so elated, and then all of a sudden it's like, now what?

I tried to sink it in as much as possible, and it did, but it's a weird feeling. I never thought I would win a major, let alone a few years ago I was just trying to get in them. So I think, yeah, there's some testament to that. You've got to really -- I think it goes back to your priorities, what you really want to accomplish not only in this game, but in your life.

I think that's true to what Scottie said, like he's more focused on being a better person off the course than achieving historic monuments, monumental things on the course.

I would say, yeah, it was really surreal when I won, but I still wake up every morning trying to pinch myself, looking at the trophy and just think it's actually mine. So it is weird. It kind of comes and goes very fast.



**Q. How much has life changed? Obviously new demands placed on you. You've gone from trying to get into majors and this week you're a headline press conference at one of them. That's one of things is that you're more in demand, but how has life changed for you over the past month?**

J.J. SPAUN: I'm getting more recognition, whether I'm just walking down the street, getting put in marquee groups. There's definitely expectation, but at the end of the day, golf is just golf, and I'm trying to just play my game. That's the attitude I've had all season long. Whether I'm the reigning U.S. Open champion, yeah, there's going to be some expectations, but I feel like this whole season I've been doing a good job of just trying not to let the moment feel bigger than itself, just trying to play my game and go out there and do what I do.

If the cards fall in the right place, then I'll be having more opportunities.

**Q. Congrats on that last putt. How do you think the LAB putter helps you? What have you felt with it, and how did you get used to trying that?**

J.J. SPAUN: I got the LAB putter, the DF3, last November of 2024. I had been looking for a little bit more forgiveness off the face as far as contact goes, and I've been using a traditional blade style putter pretty much my entire career. Mallets were kind of a phase the last year or so, and I just had difficulty getting comfortable with a traditional mallet with traditional hosel, where the shaft goes into the putter.

I just picked up one of the LABs on a Tuesday in Dallas at the Charles Schwab back in May. I kind of liked it. I had one at home and finally gave it time in the off-season and learned to like it and understand my tendencies with it. The biggest thing I noticed with that putter is no matter where you hit it on the face, it carries the speed that you're intending to have, and I think that's behind the whole technology of the putter where you can misstrike it, but because of the forgiveness and the way it's balanced, it still creates the roll that you're wanting to have on that line of putt that you're hitting.

I think it's been really good for me all season long because of just that. Speed is king when it comes to putting. If you don't hit your speed on the line, you're narrowing your chances of making the putt. To kind of forget about one variable as far as hitting good contact and the speed, it's been nice having that putter do it for me.

**Q. Three players from San Diego State here this week, two of them major winners. I wonder if you have a good explanation for this. Also, how much do you talk with Justin and with Xander?**

J.J. SPAUN: I've known Xander for a very long time. I haven't gotten to know Justin yet as much as I'd like to, just because he's not out here very much. He's been out here at the Masters. Obviously we had a podium sweep at the U.S. Open. He had the low amateur and I won the tournament, so that was really cool.

I just think San Diego State, it's a testament to how good the program is. I think they're really good at developing sort of -- I wouldn't say underlooked players, but just guys that don't be given chances. Like I didn't really have a chance; they gave me a chance. Xander was a great player coming out, but he wanted to stay locally, stay comfortable, and it turned him into one of the greatest players of all time.

I'm sure Donovan, my coach at San Diego State, kind of has that in his back pocket and understands that, as long as he keeps doing what he's doing, giving guys chances, opportunities, and the resources, they're going to turn out to be great players, and we're seeing that with Justin.

**Q. I wonder what you say, I kind of see the three of you kind of embracing being under the radar, if that comes from that, and how much does it help you in a way?**

J.J. SPAUN: Kind of flying under the radar, I feel like that's kind of what I've done my whole career. Yeah, it's a big difference kind of having the spotlight on me now and expectations, but all I can do is just rely on the experiences that I've had, coming down the stretch at the U.S. Open, getting myself in the playoff at THE PLAYERS.

I've had way bigger challenges, whether it's life or golf or losing my card. I've had other issues to go through than just being more in the spotlight. So I'm learning to embrace it, and I'm excited for the challenge it brings.

**Q. It was very impressive in Oakmont on the 2nd hole of the last day when your ball hit the flag, rolled all the way back. What was really impressive about it was how impassive you remained at that, as if you were in complete control of the situation. If I said you were impassive generally, would you accept that? And would you please give those of us over here who don't know as well some adjectives to describe yourself.**

J.J. SPAUN: I wouldn't say I'm entirely impassive. Kind of grading that week as far as performance goes, the golf swing was really good, probably B-plus, A-minus. Short game and putting was B-ish. It wasn't like I was striking on all cylinders. I had some bad swings here and there. But my team and I, we kind of looked back, and we kind of graded my attitude with an A. I think that's kind of what helped me win that tournament.

For instance, hitting the exact shot that I imagined on No. 2 and having it to get an unlucky bounce like that, it was pretty



much a two-shot swing. So I felt like, if I just got down on myself or upset, that I was just going to amplify the struggle that I was already going through on that round.

My caddie's done a great job of telling me everyone's going to get bad breaks. Sometimes you want to make it feel like you're the only one getting the bad breaks, and it definitely felt like that on the front nine, but I just try to keep a positive attitude. I think I was able to equalize that by getting to the ball after it hit the stick and it ended up in that collection area 50 yards from the hole, and I told myself, well, at least it's not in a divot, like an old divot, which would have made that third shot even harder.

I think that kind of brought me back to level-headedness and just do the best I can to get it up-and-down.

**Q. What about the second part of my question? Describe yourself, for those of us over here who don't know you as well as people in America. How would you describe your character? Give me some adjectives that describe J.J. Spaun.**

J.J. SPAUN: Humble. I think humble is probably the only one I can think of now. I try to -- I don't like to self-glorify myself or pursue -- or exude like an aura. I just try to treat people how I'd want to be treated and let the golf talk for itself.

I think there's a lot of guys that are out here that think of themselves that way, but that's pretty much how I feel.

**Q. Not only did you win the U.S. Open, but you did it in really tough conditions at Oakmont. What does that do for your confidence levels in your game, especially coming into a week like this?**

J.J. SPAUN: I think I just have to be able to tap back into that memory bank and just remember, okay, it was tough conditions, it was raining, and I won the U.S. Open coming down the stretch hitting all those really good shots. We don't really play in a ton of tough conditions in America. It's always pretty mild, moderate weather.

I think that all I can do is kind of fall back on that experience and know that I've got it done at a really pivotal moment, probably in the worst weather of the week, and that I can pull it off kind of anywhere.

**Q. You said earlier you didn't think of yourself winning majors. Why did you have that mentality?**

J.J. SPAUN: I don't know. I feel like I've had to prove to myself that I'm worthy of just playing on the PGA TOUR and winning on the PGA TOUR, and just trying to get into these events alone was sort of what kind of helped me -- what sort of maybe lack that self-confidence. It's hard enough to win in general on

the PGA TOUR, and you kind of get in your head thinking, well, if I can't win a normal event on the PGA TOUR, what makes you think you can win a major. Let alone I was struggling just to get in them.

That's kind of how my career has developed. I never really knew how far I could go, and whether it was playing Division I golf, getting to the PGA TOUR, then winning on the PGA TOUR, I don't really know what's in store for myself. Who knows? I don't know what I'm capable of now. I know what I can do, and that's all I can really rely on.

**Q. Could you imagine yourself being a Ryder Cup player, and where did the motivation to make the team this year come from?**

J.J. SPAUN: I don't think I've ever thought of being on the Ryder Cup or imagining myself on the Ryder Cup, but I've been hearing that a lot throughout the last few years, from my caddie and my coach, like they've been kind of putting that out there and almost in a way manifesting it, which is kind of weird.

My caddie's always believed in me, even when I was ranked outside the top 100. He's like, I think you're a top 10 player in the world. He thinks I could be No. 1, but honestly, let's be real. He's like, well, I at least think you're top 10, and I was like, okay, sure.

Here we are top 10 in the world. He always believed I could be on the Ryder Cup, and here we are looking pretty good for the Ryder Cup. It's just weird how you kind of hear -- you soak in those things that people tell you, and then it just sort of ends up happening. I think that has to do a lot with developing and believing it yourself.

It was funny, like the week before the U.S. Open, I was sending my coach swings, and I was like what do you think? He's like, I think that's the U.S. Open champ. I'm like, no, technically, what do you see, not just in the video? So it was pretty ironic, but I think there's truth to be told about manifesting and telling yourself positive reinforcement for future success.

**Q. Are you making any changes in your bag to play links for this week? And do you have any personal favourite links courses?**

J.J. SPAUN: I haven't made any tweaks or changes. I'm probably going to add a 3-iron that I always keep in my bag, like a driving iron. That's more of an option that I use week in and week out. Obviously more for windy conditions. It replaces my 7-wood, which goes pretty much the same number, but this one's got more of a flatter flight. I can flight it better. That's about it equipment-wise.

Sorry, what was the other part?



**Q. Do you have any links courses that you like the most, any favourite courses? Not necessarily on the rota, but links that you like to play.**

J.J. SPAUN: The only other links course I ever played was in Oregon at Bandon Dunes. That's not true links, but it's links for America, and then obviously the Scottish Open. So I don't have a ton of experience on links. But it's really fun, and it's definitely a different game. That's why we're here early and trying to get acclimated to it.

**Q. Can I just get your thoughts on the 16th here and where it sort of ranks in the par-3s you've played? It's a signature hole there, and some people say it's fair with that drop on the right. I just wanted to get your thoughts on it.**

J.J. SPAUN: I played it Monday and just hit only the tee shot and missed it down on the right. It's pretty intimidating, like, visually. I didn't know it was 240-plus yards. Wind dependent can really make it a tough hole. I think just making four pars on that hole, you're going to be gaining strokes on the field.

That's why they call it, what, Calamity Corner? There's going to be some calamity there.

**Q. You do anything fun with the U.S. Open trophy? Any good stories?**

J.J. SPAUN: No. We all shared some drinks out of it on Sunday night after the U.S. Open in Oakmont. Fun stories, no. We did the media tour in New York City, so it was kind of cool showing it off and beating everyone at the Today Show and all that fun stuff.

I think Xander, I saw something today, he doesn't even know where his trophies are. It is kind of a weird thing. You get the trophy, and you admire it for a day or two, and it just sits there or maybe it goes into a bank vault like he said. I'm going to have mine on display.

**Q. Where are you going to put it?**

J.J. SPAUN: I have like a little trophy case like in our main living room. It's got a Korn Ferry one, a Canadian Tour one, my Valero Texas Open one, and the U.S. Open one now, right in the middle.

**Q. Behind the curtain for a second, you talk about your trophies, but I think about your workout routines. What do those look like for you during tournament weeks?**

J.J. SPAUN: I always do a workout, like an activation workout before I play, whether it's practice rounds or practice or tournament days. It's been really important getting my body

activated and moving and warm before you go play. It's a routine I started about five, six years ago. It's helped me develop physically more strength. I'm hitting the ball a lot further than I ever have in my career.

I'm not getting younger, so I think longevity, you want to do what's right for your body. Most importantly, my trainer does a good job of creating workouts to prevent me from getting injured. I think that's objective one for all trainers out here. You're trying to create strength in certain parts of your body to take the payload of swinging a golf club thousands and thousands of times.

I think that's very important. Especially the older you get, it becomes really important.

**Q. Quick follow-up on the trophies. Xander was saying yesterday, no trophy room and no pictures of himself. I don't know if you have any pictures of yourself there.**

J.J. SPAUN: No. The only picture I have of myself, it's not just myself, but it's my family at the Par 3 Contest at Augusta. That's the only picture. It's weird seeing yourself. I don't know if it goes back to me feeling uncomfortable. I try to stay humble. I don't want to look at a shrine of myself every day at home. Yeah, no pictures.

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