

Genesis Scottish Open

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North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

J.J. Spaun

Press Conference



BRIONY CARLYON: We'd like to welcome J.J. Spaun to the Media Centre here at the Genesis Scottish Open.

You were last here in 2022. Give us a sense of what you remember about playing here in Scotland, and you've just come off from the Pro-Am and what the course is like for this week.

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, 2022 was a great first experience playing, ever, in not just Scotland but the U.K. in general. Got a taste of what a different style of golf is here. More links style. More elements involved. So it was a lot of fun and I played okay. Kind of gave it my first run here. So I'm happy to be back.

Q. Obviously looking forward to your Open debut next week, but just apart from The Scottish Open, do you have any links experience at all?

J.J. SPAUN: Not proper links, I would say. I would say the closest I ever got to links was Bandon Dunes over in Oregon. I played the U.S. Amateur Pub Links back in college in 2011, I believe, was when I did that. Definitely links style for what I'm used to, but probably not as proper as it is over here.

Yeah, it was fun. I enjoyed it.

Q. How much of an adjustment is it for you?

J.J. SPAUN: Quite a bit. I think you're just trying to figure out how your numbers carry out here as far as the wind goes. I mean, it's a thicker wind. It might feel 10 to 15 but it plays a lot longer than that if it's into you. As far as that goes and getting your trajectories down, and I think the other thing is getting dialed in with your spin rates because obviously into the wind that plays a huge part and how far that's going to carry into the wind.

So that, along with the travel and acclimating your sleeping and all that stuff, so I think I've been here since Saturday. So I'm kind of -- I'm finally sleeping through the night.

Q. I'm guessing that you as a person hasn't changed since what happened at the U.S. Open but how has your demeanor changed when you come to an event like this? How do you feel within yourself in terms of how you're received by people? Have you found that a lot different as well?

J.J. SPAUN: Totally. It's been a complete 180. I've been out here for eight, nine years now, and you see the same guys but you kind of notice a little bit of change in tone or I guess more of like respect. You.

Know, you kind of earn some respect out here, especially from the top guys. They engage a little bit more with you. Not that they are different with other players but you kind of feel you're at a different level now, winning a major.

It feels good to kind of earn that respect from my peers, and obviously the greatest players that are out here kind of acknowledging me and making me feel like I belong, which is huge for confidence and huge for self-belief. And it's nice to be out here, and that confidence goes a long way, whether it's off the course and on the course. The reception and the fans and spectators, it's been incredible. I still kind of can't fathom every time someone congratulates me for winning the U.S. Open.

It's still a pinch-me moment that it's something that I did do. It's very cool, and I'm completely honoured to kind of, yeah, earn the respect from the other players and the fans and audience, as well.

Q. How difficult is it to get your feet back in the ground, obviously a big week this week, and then going into The Open where expectation levels are going to be higher, probably?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, totally. I've played okay at the Travelers. It took me a couple days to kind of get the rhythm and it was a whirlwind of a weekend and early start to the week in Connecticut.

So I've just got to go back to knowing that my game is in a good spot. It's in good shape. Yeah, it's a different kind of golf, golf that we are not used to or play much in the



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States.

Again, the U.S. Open, that was my second U.S. Open. First time I missed the cut four years ago. So that's been sort of the theme all year where the successful weeks that I've had have been on courses that I've never really done well on, and I think that's just a testament to how well-rounded my game is, where my mental game is at, too.

Yeah, there's some expectations, and I'm going to try to kind of dumb it down and just try to play golf, as simple and cliché as that sounds. But I know there will be some expectation. I'm just going to go out there and stick to my game and try to execute. That's all I can do.

Q. What's been highlight for you so far as a major winner?

J.J. SPAUN: The highlight, I just had a lot of cool people reach out to me, you know, congratulating me, people I don't expect. Like Jack Nicklaus wrote a very nice letter to me. It was funny, I saw him in passing at the Memorial Tournament, the last tournament I played before the U.S. Open, and he just, you know, stopped me. I never really engaged with him before that, and he just said I was playing really well.

I said, "Yeah, it would have been nice to win."

He's like, "You keep knocking on that door, you're going to knock one down," and, literally, the next week that happened. He remembered that and sent me a nice note, which was really cool.

Q. When you are jet-lagged and you can't sleep, did your mind sort of go into reflecting on this extraordinary year, and not just the U.S. Open but THE PLAYERS Championship and all of that? And if so, what kind of reflections did you have?

J.J. SPAUN: I was jet-lagged and I didn't -- I had some restless nights. My two girls, my two daughters and my wife are here, and the last couple nights we've had them in our bed, too, trying to get them to go to sleep. Other than the kicking in the back while they are trying to get back to sleep, I did, yeah, some reflecting.

It's just so cool to think about how far I've come, and how much I've achieved just this season alone. It's just kind of like this ascent to a more elite level that I never really thought I would maybe get there; eventually, hopefully, one of these days I would, but to finally do it, it's pretty crazy.

And also, being over here and just how much of like a

worldwide effect I think it had, my finish at the U.S. Open, children here and fans here, obviously this is golf country, everyone is aware of what happened. But I'm just trying to soak it all in still, and I try not to let it be like a victory lap sort of mentality but it still feels that way.

Q. When is the last time someone congratulated you and when do you think it will stop?

J.J. SPAUN: Two seconds ago before I walked in the tent.

Q. Was it Briony?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah.

Q. That doesn't count.

J.J. SPAUN: Literally in passing. It's crazy. But it doesn't get old, obviously. It's really cool. I think the one thing that I've noticed, not like this is an issue, but it's just like it takes a lot away -- it takes a lot of your time, people wanting to talk to you about it.

Now I have to give myself more time to get stuff done, whether I'm on the range -- everyone wants to come up to you, which is cool, but man, I mean, how does Scottie do it? I guess people just get sick and tired of telling him congrats, they just don't tell him after awhile.

It's awesome. I'll never get sick of it.

Q. If you go back to '13 when you first got a Tour card, what did your progression of goals look like, and where do you go now?

J.J. SPAUN: Honestly, I'm not a huge goal-setter. I think objective one or goal one is to keep your card, especially as a rookie, and that's always, you know, in the back of my mind, every season you peg it up, considering I was kind of a middle tier player fighting for my job every year.

Yeah, exactly, last year, I just -- now that I have five years guaranteed on tour, five years guaranteed into the other three majors, and ten to the U.S. Open, I've got to figure out some new goals and objectives.

But it's kind of how my career has been. I've never been, you know, I need to play the AJGA and win so I can get a scholarship to play in college and win out there so I can gain some sort of traction professionally and get starts there. It's just always like, I just played and progressed, one foot in front of the other. And next thing you know, I am playing Division 1; and next thing you know I am turning pro and getting hope to chase the dream; and next thing you know I'm on Korn Ferry; and next thing you know



I'm on Tour.

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I don't know, I had never really -- yeah, you have the ultimate goal of getting to the Tour, and I think then I had to adjust what I wanted to accomplish. But I never really had a bigger picture goal.

Q. When you left San Diego State and turned pro, did you get any support, any help?

J.J. SPAUN: I did.

Q. What kind?

J.J. SPAUN: Nike Golf. I was a Nike guy throughout college, and they had like a developmental sort of tour support deal where they -- Cricket Musch, the college, sports development, player chairman guy, something like that. Cricket -- Marvin -- don't call him Marvin. I call him Marvin.

Yeah, he saw my potential, obviously being a Nike player was huge to invest in those kind of guys, and yeah, they gave me money to literally not have to have a job, and you know, I was able to afford Q-School and playing Canadian Tour, Monday qualifiers. Like they were investing in me to let golf be my No. 1 priority.

Fortunately, I still see Cricket every year at the Charles Schwab in Fort Worth. We have a fun little story that we like to talk about. I was telling him, you're the guy that invested in me and helped me get to where I am. I definitely give him a lot of credit and to the whole Nike family.

Q. When you said you had been congratulated by a lot of people in golf country, sounds like were you being forgiven for beating Scotland's player. Obviously a lot of people got excited for Bob in the clubhouse. What did you make of all that?

J.J. SPAUN: I actually ran into his manager the morning after the U.S. Open on Monday morning, and he was happy. He was really delighted for me and happy and he said, you know what, that's okay, because what you did to Bob, that's okay because Rory did that to Bob here at the Scotland the year before and then Bob comes back and wins the next year.

So he said, "Now we're winning the following year. It's all good."

BRIONY CARLYON: All the best for this week, and thank you for your time.