

PGA Championship

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Rochester, New York, USA

Oak Hill Country Club

Jason Day

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. 2015 PGA champion Jason Day is joining us now at the 105th PGA Championship. Jason, welcome to what is your 14th PGA Championship, following an impressive win last week at the Byron Nelson. You've got to be feeling pretty good about your game coming into tomorrow.

JASON DAY: Yeah, it feels -- it's funny to say that my game feels nice now compared to two weeks prior when I missed the cut at Charlotte. It's amazing how quickly confidence in this game can change.

I feel like overall this year I've been building towards maybe getting that win and working towards it at least, and then I feel pretty good about my game overall now coming into this week.

Obviously a little bit tired. So I don't know if that's going to affect me preparation-wise. Well, I know that it will affect me preparation-wise, I just probably won't be able to prepare as well as I need to. I know that I have to focus on making sure that I get enough rest today and get into it tomorrow.

Q. How has this week been here in Rochester for you so far, and what have you maybe noticed about the East Course?

JASON DAY: I haven't played the course. Unfortunately, I haven't seen the course. I most likely probably won't see the course today. I'm just not fighting anything, I just want to make sure that I'm mentally prepared and mentally ready for tomorrow. No matter how well I prepare, even if I go out and play a practice round, if I come in tomorrow tired and exhausted, it won't do me any favors, so I'm just going to try and take it easy.

It's not the first time I've come into the major championship not playing a practice round.

Q. You mentioned the plus of resting up and all that, but what's the biggest challenge of not seeing the place before you tee it up tomorrow?

JASON DAY: Well, the difference in course from last week to this week is dramatically different. The grass is different. The sand is different. The playing surfaces are totally different.

I won't be able to see how the greens are bouncing coming in to approach play, and I won't really see how the greens are rolling typically out there. I know we have practice facilities here, but it won't give you the best preparation going forward unless you've seen the golf course.

That's probably the most challenges when you're preparing to try and get a grip on. But, like I said, I think if I come in a little bit mentally tired and I start making mental errors, it's one of those golf courses from what I know and what I've played in the past, that if I start making mental errors, then it's going to go downhill pretty quick from there.

I've just got to be cautious, understand that I've come off a good week from last week, and with a win comes some expectations. But, also, I've got to not get too far ahead of myself and make sure that I listen to myself and listen to my body.

Q. What does that mean for your caddie in terms of prep? How much scouting is he doing on the golf course?

JASON DAY: I hope he's very good. No, I'm joking.

He's a good caddie. To be honest, the yardage books that we get these days, the difference between back in the day when you had to make your own yardage book, you had to really focus on having a really good caddie that would go out and get the correct numbers.

These days the yardage books are so good that if you aren't playing a practice round or preparing for a tournament and getting out on the golf course, the yardage books definitely help a long way just because it gives you sight lines in the books with the pictures and then tells you pretty much every yardage to every bunker, fairway bunker, going to the greens. Gives you all the yardages that you need there, as well.



From what I understand and listening to the comments from the guys that have been talking about the golf course and everyone saying how difficult it is, that this style of golf course is going to be a lot more difficult than previous PGA Championships. It's most likely going to be more of a kind of be more to the center of the green, putt to the pin locations, grab your birdies when you can, and then just kind of survive.

That's why I'm like -- it sucks to not be able to prepare the way I want to, but having mental tiredness out there won't do me any good. That's why it's obviously nice to have a good caddie, as well.

Q. With a couple of days now to reflect, Nelson was kind of a long time coming for you. What sort of emotions have you experienced over the past couple days?

JASON DAY: I think it's funny. After I won the tournament, it didn't feel like much at all. I say that in the most respectful way. I think it's more about the actual journey and working towards and all the hours that you get into practicing behind the scenes and working on your body and all that stuff. They're the moments that I live for the most, and then the wins kind of get in the way.

Even though wins are tremendous and they're fantastic to have, and I wouldn't expect that my last win was five years ago prior to last week. If someone would have said that, I would have been -- I might soak it in a little bit more even than what I had.

Yeah, I feel very grateful that I can play this game, and I even feel more grateful of my peers, as well; the amount of guys that have come up to me and congratulated me on the win have understood how much work it takes to get yourself back to a point where you can physically win again.

Q. Just to follow up on that, what has that journey been like, and what do you attribute just the surge in your game recently as opposed to the falterings or some of the ups and downs that you experienced?

JASON DAY: Injuries in competitive sports are no joke. It's very difficult to be competitive in any sport. To fight through something, especially in golf where the mental game is such a huge part of the game, it almost feels like you're handcuffed when you do have an injury, and you're playing against the best players in the world trying to compete and win. That can be frustrating, disappointing, and it can almost be a feeling of depression sometimes just because of the amount of work that you're putting in. It

feels like you're going and working 150 percent just to get 10 percent out of it.

But it's like anything; once the momentum train starts, it takes a while to get things going. But once it starts, it starts to go pretty fast; and if you can stay on that train for a little bit, that momentum can take you on to better things.

For me last week was a win, which was nice. I'm hoping that I can not get too far ahead of myself and expect too much.

It's in my nature to expect bigger and better things, so I'm just trying to cool the jets on that and understand that, hey, I'm here at a major week this week, don't expect too much.

Obviously you're playing some good golf; don't get too far ahead of yourself. But understand that you've got to manage the small things that I've done so well over the last two years. It's about the bigger picture, and more of a marathon, not a sprint.

Q. In that sense, is there -- validation becomes an overused word in sports, but do you have a sense of validation at this point coming off that win?

JASON DAY: I would say, yeah, I do. But once again, it would be nice to get another major. It would be nice to get back to No. 1. So there's things that are beyond that that it's a good step in the right direction I would just say.

I'm really trying to not get too far ahead of myself. Sometimes I get to a point where I let myself go too far, and then that creates a lot of high expectations of myself. Then when I don't meet them, I get disappointed and I get into a pretty bad mood.

Overall I'm very pleased with how the game is played this year. It all started from last fall, and it just kept on -- just ticking the boxes along the way, and the good play just started happening, and then all of a sudden it just felt so -- the previous two or three years before were just an absolute struggle. That was probably the hardest couple years that I've had in my life in regards to my competitive life. Just to go through that was very difficult.

But to come out on the other side knowing that I was working on the right things and the correct things, finding that consistency and confidence in myself was good.

Q. To listen to some of your descriptions of the depths of the struggle, it's easy to feel amazed that you won again. Is there amazement for you among the feelings somewhere?

JASON DAY: Well, at one point, and I touched lightly on it last week, but at one point I was sitting there going, okay, well, I didn't know if this was kind of the end for me just because of where my body was and how I was feeling.

Just my whole thought process to take myself through a week where I was just going to go, don't really practice Monday, Tuesday, play the pro-am, get through Thursday, Friday. If you make the cut, great; if not, then -- that's not really a winning formula, unfortunately. But that's kind of where I was mentally.

I was not only struggling mentally but I was also struggling physically, and there was a lot of doubt in my mind to think that I would ever come back and be able to win again.

We all look at like Tiger's 2019 win at Augusta, but that's Tiger, and he's a bit of a freak. For me personally, I thought it was going to be one of those things where I just had a great career, just injuries got in the way and took him out of the game.

But for me to kind of reflect back on these last few years, knowing that it is about the journey and trying to get myself better, it's quite pleasing to know that I can still compete and play and win out here on the Tour.

Q. When you won this event in 2015, it was a truly great run that extended beyond the PGA. What are you better at now than then?

JASON DAY: I would say it's more about being aware of where I am in my body. Back then, I would just push through everything. I was in pain, and I would just push through it, and that was just my mentality because it was like, hey, I'm this big, strong kind of athlete, and I'm going to push through.

Yeah, that gave me success, and it earned me my first major win and got me to No. 1 in the world. But it was only sustainable for a very short period of time.

I think this time around I'm trying to do it in a different way. I'm trying to be a lot more grateful for the opportunity that I have just because of what I've gone through injury-wise.

But understand that there's not just one way of doing it, of getting in there and being tough and -- because you watch sports in general; everyone talks about how tough this person was or that. There's different ways of competing and playing and winning out here.

For me, I've been a lot more body-aware and mentally-aware of where I'm at, and trying to hold off expectations is very difficult, but I've learned a lot about

myself.

If I can step back to No. 1 in the world one day, I'll be able to hopefully do it in a way that's different that will hopefully keep me there a lot longer than one year.

Q. You mentioned that there was a time a couple years ago where you thought maybe this was over. But you were a world class athlete then; you're a world class athlete now. I would think you would have access to things you have now that have keyed your turnaround. What's happened in the past couple years that's allowed you to get control of the back and the vertigo?

JASON DAY: It's just more of a consistent output from my work ethic in regards to -- I've got two trainers. I catch up with -- one of my trainers, Kevin Duffy, he comes on the road with me, and my second trainer I work with every single week, four times a week for 30-minute sessions. So essentially what he does is he keeps my body neutral, and then what Kevin does is gets my body prepared to play tournaments and adds slow, steady strength.

Now, I haven't been in the gym-gym working out and pushing weights around for over three years now. At some point that's going to happen, and I'm going to get back in the gym because you need general strength just in any sport in general.

But I've realized that you need patience when it comes back to trying to get back to things. It took me a year and a half to two years to just work solely on body work with Chris before we could start working on shallowing and doing some right arm stuff, working on release pattern stuff. It's been a very patient few years before it could really -- I could find my footing and balance and move forward.

But I would say consistent, hard work over a long period of time has pushed me forward to a lot better play this past year.

Q. Evin Priest wrote a story about a meeting that you had with Tiger where he wanted to look at your chipping.

JASON DAY: Yes.

Q. Can you tell us about that?

JASON DAY: So I think I touched a little bit on it in the presser last week, but it was essentially Tiger was going through the chipping yips, and there's so many different ways of chipping, and there's so many different ways of guys chipping. At that moment I was one of the better

players in the world, and my short game was kind of at its height.

He just wanted to kind of pick my brain. We were going back and forth. I actually probably learned more coming out of that little meeting with Tiger than he learned off me because back then I didn't really understand how he could feel every joint, every piece of his body move the way that he wanted it to. Like, he could literally feel everything turning and moving and bending. I'm like, man, I just have straight arms, and I just rock it through; you know what I mean?

But I guess Chris would look at all the 3D biotesting on my chipping and stuff, and they wanted to kind of pick my brain about it, and that's when I met Chris Como for the first time. Coming out of that meeting I'm going, there's something different about that guy. He was very quiet, listened very intently about what I had to give, but then had, like, deeper questions about it.

When you get to talk to him about the golf swing and you start to kind of break it down with him, then you understand his, like, deeper level of understanding of the golf swing. Coming out of that, that's when I knew, I'm like, hey, at the time I think I was still working with Colin. I'm just like, hey, man, this guy is pretty smart. Then fast forward a few years later. I gave him a call. He was the only guy I wanted to call to see if he could coach me.

Q. Speaking of Tiger, did he congratulate you, reach out to you in any way?

JASON DAY: He did, but I can't say what he said because a lot of it was like F-words in it (laughter).

Q. How much did he help you with the idea of trying to get over injuries and come back?

JASON DAY: Yeah, it's just a matter of things because we would text each other constantly about just trying to push each other. I would say that I wasn't relying heavily on Tiger, but it was just more of a -- kind of we're pushing each other to try and get back to where we need to be kind of thing.

Q. You mentioned in your winner's presser on Sunday, visualizing holding a trophy. Can you share a little more color on what exactly you did, and how different was it to then actually have the trophy again?

JASON DAY: Yeah, so I was -- so when my mom was going through the stuff and when she passed away, I was talking to a therapist about it. I would just -- like the way things were progressing, I could see my game improving.

Even though maybe my team wouldn't see my game improving as I was internally, I could just sense that I'm like, okay, the only way that I can change things mentally for myself is trying to visualize myself.

Now, granted, if I visualize myself holding a trophy, I can't do it. I can't see myself holding a trophy, so I have to actually close my eyes and feel the whole environment. It has to be, like, a personal experience for me, actually holding it and feeling, like, how I would feel in that position.

It's amazing how as golfers, and we understand and everyone here understands, that it's a very tough mental game and that you have to have a mental game in this, but not a lot of guys work on it. That's one way of working on it and trying to get yourself out of a little bit of a funk is that type of mental preparation going into.

Even though it may be 1 percent of the whole picture, it's still 1 percent that's moving in the right direction.

Q. When it's this cold out, how much more difficult is it to get work done, especially when the conditions you're going to play in most of the rest of the weekend aren't going to be this?

JASON DAY: Yes. Well, it is difficult, but it is going to change. For us tomorrow, it's probably going to be very similar to what I'm going to have tomorrow morning, which is good to even just get out and swing a little bit.

But everyone has done this for so long that a cold day here or there -- I still can't believe it's nearly middle of May and that we're still going through 40-, 50-degree weather, but that's this part of the country at this time of the year.

This is just one little blip on the whole week. I think it's going to be a little bit cooler tomorrow, but then it's going to start to warm up.

Yeah, the preparation won't be as clean or you won't be able to swing it as hard as you can tomorrow, or you won't be able to do as much, but that's okay. Hopefully you've utilized the first two days, because we had great weather yesterday and the day before to get yourself ready for the tournament.

Q. On the mental aspect, I thought it was really interesting that you know that being grateful and having gratitude is a positive thing to do; and yet, warring against that is the side of you that expects things. You win a tournament. Then you're like, okay, great, now we're going to No. 1, now we're doing to win a major. How do you win that fight?

JASON DAY: Well, getting to No. 1 is a goal. There's a difference between having goals and then walking into a golf course and expecting it. Knowing that it's more about the journey and kind what if I've done -- we were talking about consistent, hard work before. Like, winning last week was a good step in the right direction in regards to knowing that the work and the consistent work that I put in was yielding good play. All it had to do was just kind of show itself.

Now, I've got to recognize and understand that the little things that I did to get here at this point were the stepping stones for that win, and I can't not do that in the future. I have to keep kind of doing that along the way, but also doing it in a mindset that is actually healthy in regards to trying to have success, as well.

Yeah, it's good to have goals, but when you have expectations and you get too far ahead of yourself, that brings on anxiety, and I don't like anxiety. So I try and not think about it. I try and stay as present as possible.

Q. I know in 2007 you finished third at Irondequoit right across the street. Nick Flanagan won. It was a nice run on the Korn Ferry Tour. I wonder what your memories are from that week.

JASON DAY: I've got the worst memory in the world, mate. What was the golf course called again?

Q. Irondequoit. Hole 15 is right there.

JASON DAY: Yeah, so I was wondering that I've been here before because of Irondequoit. So, no, I unfortunately don't remember much of it.

Obviously I like this part of the country. I've played great up here. I remember playing I think we had an amateur event over in Buffalo, the Porter Cup, and I played well there. I definitely like this style of golf, the golf courses up here and the surfaces.

Yeah, it's good to be back here. Looking forward to a good week. I appreciate you guys stopping by. I'm looking for a good week, but take it a step at a time.

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