

John Deere Classic

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TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

Zach Johnson

Press Conference



JOHN DEERE
CLASSIC



THE MODERATOR: All right, we'd like to welcome the 2012 champion of the John Deere Classic, Jack Johnson, to the interview room. Making your 23rd start here; five more than any player on TOUR since 2002. What does that mean to you and what's it like being back here?

ZACH JOHNSON: Wow, that's hard to summarize. Just to come back it means -- it's like going home in a lot of respects. Obviously I travel for my living. Maybe not as much I once did, but I'm still pursuing this at a pretty high rate.

It's always nice to go home. When I can come back to the Quad Cities, come back to this event, an event that is all the cliches, near and dear to my heart, I love it, love everything about it.

It starts with just kind of getting in the area then getting situated at the hotel and coming to these grounds. So did a thing with John Deere last night at headquarters. Just felt like I was rubbing shoulders, shaking hands with friends I've known forever and in a lot of respects that's true.

Yeah, it's pretty awesome. 22nd, did you say?

Q. 23rd.

ZACH JOHNSON: 23rd start. Yeah, that's -- if you asked me that 25 years ago I would've been speechless.

So I don't take that for granted. It's amazing. I love every aspect of this. Starting with the people and ending with the golf.

Q. You played 23 straight now but made 16 straight cuts here. What is it about this golf course that you feel like fits your game?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I would say No. 1, it's just the turf. You know, like my feet just feel -- it's going to sound strange, but my feet feel comfortable here. I grew up on bent grass fairways, bentgrass greens. I had a lengthy

putting session yesterday and kind of just -- I'm not suggesting I'm going to putt great this week, but felt like, man, here we go. It's hard to summarize that.

I'm experienced. I know the golf course. I know where not to go given the conditions. I feel like I've had every wind. Feel like I've had every element thrown at me here. You know, I've had everything Mother Nature has thrown. Wet, dry, windy, whatever, I've had it.

So I feel like I can navigate it, you know, in a pretty opportune manner. That doesn't mean it's going to happen. I still have to execute. I think my game is at a point where execution is really the only -- is really the main thing I got to focus on, and I love that.

Every aspect of my game has been pretty solid. Everybody that knows me and knows me well, it's boring, but I love boring. I'm really good at being boring. So I love boring golf.

But, yeah, it's everything here. It's the hills, the bumps, it's the rolls, it's the speed, it's just I'm comfortable. Doesn't mean it's going to happen. I think that answers why I've had a pretty consistent amount of arguably success.

Q. Talked about that execution. You were top 20 to the Texas Open; top 10 at the Masters the next week. What did you feel like was working at that point in the season and how do you channel that?

ZACH JOHNSON: Kind of just what I just said earlier. Every part of my game was pretty solid. There is nothing in my game that's like flashy, never has been, right? When my putter is manageable or working pretty well then it can show. I tend to hit a ton of fairways, a lot of greens, and so comes down to putting.

Those two instances, two courses I'm extremely familiar with, again. Actually, that was -- yes, Augusta was the fourth week I played in a row. I haven't played four weeks in a row in a long time.

Considering my status this year on the PGA TOUR and the family schedule and everything before and after it, it was the appropriate plan.

So my coaches have kind of said, maybe we should start



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playing three or four weeks in a row more often. There could be some truth in that. I don't know.

I don't do great in heat. Like excessive heat. A lot of the guys love that. I don't do well in it, and those weeks were like perfect weather.

Augusta, man, we haven't had a week of whatever it was, 72 to 77 degrees every day in a long time, so my body was comfortable.

Yeah, I mean, I think it's all that. Hopefully some of those good vibes can come out this week.

Q. Zach, you got a big birthday coming up in February as you well know.

ZACH JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

Q. Are you going to continue favoring us coming to...

ZACH JOHNSON: I'm sorry, I heard the first part about my age. Didn't hear the second part.

Q. Are you going to continue to play here as long as you can, or do you roll off to the Senior?

ZACH JOHNSON: I'll say this: I hope I have the option of coming back here for the foreseeable future. I don't know what the future will hold. Honestly, going back to the beginning of that, a lot of what is going to transpire next year is going to be determined by the next so many odd weeks out here.

And physically, too. I mean, my body is -- I pay attention probably now more so to the physical side of me more so than the technical side of me. And I don't mind that. It's just the evolution of the game and the evolution of where I'm at as a pro. I've got a great team, great plan, great plot as to how to navigate that.

Let's just say if I can keep coming back here and playing, I'm not going to come back here necessarily just to play, I want to come back here to compete. That's what I am first and foremost. You know, to whatever capacity I do come back I hope it's in competition.

But I can't hide the fact that I'm -- I have a high affinity for John Deere and the people, so that goes without saying.

Q. I think closing in on 50. When you were 25 we were talking about the young kids coming up behind you. You marveled at the way the game was changing. I told you Jackson Koivun was in here, and he said, I can't believe the juniors coming up behind me.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, that doesn't make any sense.

Q. Is there a level -- they just can't keep getting better, can they?

ZACH JOHNSON: I don't know. I mean, I guess they can. You know, records are meant to be broken. The trajectory of the youth in this game is not like it's going on that incline, but it's a steady incline. Maybe with a little bit of this in there.

It's impressive. I mean, I think you got to pay tribute to a lot of the guys. We're entertainers obviously, and having the relationships we do with our media partners. I mean, golf is an attractive sport for youth. It's all of that. It's a Tiger Woods effect, too. Not going to hide that fact.

It's all of that. We got athletes playing this game at a young age that could probably go a different direction in sports, but this sport grabbed them, for good measure because it is awesome. It's daunting, it's scary, but it's fantastic, if that makes sense.

As a competitor, as an athlete out here, the youth of this game is impressive. I mean, just like one of my son's best friends, arguably his best friend, both going to Clemson, is a freak in this game. He's a freak. He's been doing things at 15 years old that I've never been able to do. He's a 18 now.

So, yeah, watch out. There is a lot of them.

Q. Good news is next year, you'll be 50 and Ernie Els will be talking about these 50 year olds going out here.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, well, that's an option. Yeah, yeah. You know, sarcasm aside, it is nice. It's nice knowing that there will be an outlet for me if I want to go that direction and still compete.

Those guys are really good, too. Again, really, really, really good. Some of those guys have played out here as you know, somewhat recent and had some successes.

Yeah, it's crazy. I know I'm the oldest guy -- I think I been the oldest guy in every field in year. I think Padraig played one week I played. Outside of Augusta obviously.

When I get to the first tee, fortunately it doesn't really matter. Still feel like I can do it. I just tend to hit my second shots first, so...

Q. You talked a little bit about your commitments this week. You had your event up in Cedar Rapids on



Monday. How did that go, by the way? Then come back here, glad hand last night at Deere. Does that make it tougher for you to prepare for this tournament

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ZACH JOHNSON: Sure.

Q. -- as you get older when you have those commitments that you have to meet?

ZACH JOHNSON: Tougher? No, I don't think so. I just think it comes down to relying on what I've learned in the past. I'm really pretty darn good at compartmentalizing things. I think you have to be in this role, especially once you start garnering success and obligations or opportunity. Opportunities surface more. You have to know how to filter and navigate that.

So I've been pretty good at that. Not just this week, but in general. So I rely on that experience and ability.

I mean, yes there is a lot this week. Specifically talking about Sunday night and Monday. That's a lot. But I wouldn't change a second of it. Not a millisecond of it. It's all worthy and fantastic.

Even though it's John Deere Classic week here, they have a presence in my event in Cedar Rapids as well. It's like a steppingstone to come to Silvis.

The success of what we have there is also energizing and motivational. Yeah, like yesterday -- excuse me, Monday night, Monday afternoon, Monday night, I was pretty tired for obvious reasons. I just competed in Detroit, and couple that with our event, which was outrageously awesome, and I had to decompress a little bit.

I had my whole family there, kids, siblings and their kids, et cetera. So that was awesome. Just grilled, chilled out. Got here yesterday, putted for two hours, and that was about it, right? Did some physio work. Nothing of any substance.

I don't play until 3:00 today and now I'm going to get to work. Slept awesome finally last night and my coach is here, so we're going to get to work. At this point, it's business as usual.

Andrew, Miss Mara and their team, we obviously communicate periodically or consistently. I'm grateful. I have some obligations that I completely welcome and actually really enjoy.

For the most part they want me to go compete. I'm grateful for that. I'll be wearing my green essentially every day.

Friday I'll be red, white, and blue. Going to representing John Deere the best of my ability, and all the 49-plus year olds.

Q. After 23 years, is there anything about this place, tournament that still catches you by surprise when you come here?

ZACH JOHNSON: That's really, really good question. I don't know if anything catches me by surprise. I'm not overly shocked by it. I'll say this: I know I'm an ambassador more or less for this event. I love that. That means I get on a phone call periodically and talk to a lot of good friends that really do all the work.

It's really twofold. No. 1, the people here consistently are just amazing. You know, they love what this tournament is about. I can really get specific on that, but I'll just highlight it once, right?

Over \$200 million to charity that's coming up. That's why we do what we do. Today is the biggest day of the week. As a player, we go to all these communities and obviously all these tournaments that Wednesday and the shelling out of those monies to the organizations that need that opportunity is really what it's all about. We don't see it on the -- like the tangible aspect, but I get videos from Andrew, Clair prior as to why we do what we do here.

I don't know if that's surprising. I'm just saying we don't see that directly. That's what this is about.

No. 2, fortunately, you know, this tournament has always had, if you call it that, a date that can be kind of difficult, right, as far as my peers go. It's going to be the best field statistically if you look from a World Golf Rankings standpoint. I don't really love that measure, but it's legitimate.

So the buzz is out as to how good this golf course is and this tournament is, et cetera. Again, that's not surprising, but to some people that might be a shock.

I understand it because I know what it's about. I know who is here and I know what they try to do. I try to do my part to get guys here as best I can. I bribe. I beg. No, not true.

But it's amazing. It's an amazing week. Last year I think was kind of an anomaly. We had really good weather, like 78 to 82; this year it's back to normal, that 85 to 92 or whatever. It's an awesome week. Trying week because of the walk, but I like that, too.

So, yeah, there is nothing overly surprising. This week is growing on TOUR as to how good it is.

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Q. You talked about the youth. You're playing with a kid today in Carter Henning; are you aware of his story at all?

ZACH JOHNSON: I've been briefed on it a little bit. I don't want to guess on it, but I know he had a tragic accident. I don't know at what age. But he's a pretty accomplished player and continues to be given the circumstances.

So I've got two teenage boys and I'm not so sure either one of my boys are as courageous or strong as this kid. And my big man, my oldest man is a big man. He's strong.

But mentally as strong. I'm excited to witness and then obviously have a chat with him here and there.

My dad somehow was -- we have a connection with the family or maybe his business. I forget. His aunt. Doesn't matter.

But he sent me a video of him hitting a golf shot. Didn't have a prosthetic at that time. He does now maybe. I don't know if that's accurate. You're nodding your heads.

Q. Supposed to be.

ZACH JOHNSON: That's almost irrelevant. The kid can go out and hit a golf ball without his left leg. That's impressive. He still pursues the game at a high rate. That's awesome. It's inspiring.

Yeah, the youth, crazy. Love it. Just don't beat me.

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