

BMW Championship

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Castle Rock, Colorado, USA

Castle Pines Golf Club

Zach Johnson

Jack Nicklaus

Media Day Press Conference

STEVE SANDS: Zach, it's a pleasure to have you on. Congratulations by the way on recently being named the United States Ryder Cup captain. What are your memories of Castle Pines Golf Club?

ZACH JOHNSON: Wow, very fond. I guess kind of mixed in some regard. I remember I think you guys documented it, I think I played it twice, '04 and '06. I'm not sure why I didn't play in 2005, but I remember in 2006 I was really trying to earn and get a spot on the 2006 Ryder Cup team. It just so happened that I did, but the International week was obviously -- all PGA TOUR tournaments are a part of qualifying, and the only way to get points, Ryder Cup points, was to have top-10 finishes back then.

I needed a couple good finishes in the latter part of the summer leading up to the PGA Championship, which is where the top 10 berths are given.

I was in there, but I was kind of reeling back. Lo and behold, I'm playing the International, and I have the lead going into the last round, and I'm stoked. I'm like, all right, I'm playing good. I don't know what I had, maybe a one- to three-point lead, which is really nothing going into the final round of a tournament, especially a Stableford system. It's really nothing.

But I loved the golf course and I was in control of my golf ball, et cetera, et cetera, and I remember getting off to a start that you really just have nightmares about.

I think I finished outside the top 10. I'm pretty certain I did. Maybe 11th to 15th. I got no Ryder Cup points, and I remember my captain, Tom Lehman, that year in the Ryder Cup beat me. I had to fly with him somewhere that next day.

It was really disturbing. I made an X on the first hole. I remember -- I think if you make a double bogey or more it's minus 3 points, and I was hitting my seventh shot from like 200 yards out.



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So I picked up my ball on the first hole, the par-5, and didn't even have to play it and went straight to the second tee. All that aside, that's my last recollection of playing the International.

All that aside, you're talking to a guy that adores the state of Colorado. It's probably my happy place. I love the mountains. I go there to ski. I would argue that it's better there in the summer, and then when you throw that and golf in, a golf-rich community, a golf-thirsty community, this International golf club, Castle Pines, will showcase a great BMW Championship.

I happen to be an ambassador of BMW. Have for years. I love the people associated, and I certainly adore with the WGA, their Evans Scholarship and everything that they try to do for golf and their communities that they're in is special.

That's a long-winded answer to your question, but I've got a lot of passion and a lot of love for this announcement.

STEVE SANDS: The BMW Championship, Zach, sits in a sweet spot in the FedExCup Playoffs. It's right in the middle. 70 guys make it here, the top 70 guys in the FedExCup points standings after that first event in the Playoffs. What is it like playing at a BMW Championship when you know you have all four days, that golf fans will not be cut short. You have all four days to hone your game, get ready and have that playoff pressure.

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I mean, that's the beauty of the FedExCup Playoffs. You certainly get rewarded for quality play from the beginning of the year up to the Playoffs, as far as your seeding and ranking goes. But then if you have an average or not-so-great start, you still qualify, you've got a chance.

That's the playoff mentality. You still have an opportunity. Doesn't matter what sport you're in; if you seize that moment, if you take advantage of that opportunity, much like the BMW Championship, you can work your way up and have a chance going into the TOUR Championship and to the finals.

That's what it's all about. It's a year-long culmination, and when you have these three awesome, magnificent,



high-magnitude tournaments at the end of the year, it's special. It just adds a lot to our product, adds a lot to why we work, and certainly what the PGA TOUR is all about.

You know, the BMW Championship is just that. The beauty, like you said, there's no cut. It's 70 guys. 70 best players that year. That's awesome. In this day and age, it's harder to make cuts on the PGA TOUR than I've ever remembered. I mean, we've had cuts where you can miss the cut and you might be only seven shots off the lead.

In two days you can make up seven shots. We all know that. My point is drama can happen. There's no cut. You can be five, six, seven shots back going into the weekend and still have a chance.

STEVE SANDS: One of the things that makes the WGA an amazing organization and the BMW Championship such a great event on the PGA TOUR, the Evans Scholars Foundation, what the WGA does for the game. You're a champion of this event. You're also a champion of the sport. What does the BMW Championship mean to PGA TOUR players?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I wouldn't even know where to start and end on that. It's a longtime constituent partner of the PGA TOUR. They have fully embraced what our product is all about, what the PGA TOUR is all about. Yes, we showcase phenomenal tournaments on phenomenal properties in front of great fans. That's the entertainment value.

Behind the scenes, I would say the middle of this and face of this, the foundation of these tournaments, and you've mentioned it, certainly the foundation of the BMW Championship with the WGA is giving and serving and the communities that they reside in. The Evans Scholarship, I've seen it firsthand. It incorporates their giving into their tournament directly with us players.

What a great way to utilize the game of golf and the ideals of the game when it comes to caddying and what that entails, and then obviously if you pursue that route, you can earn a scholarship to an institution and get a degree. I mean, you're combining a sport with the life lessons of golf and education. I'm not so sure it gets better than that.

STEVE SANDS: You're one of the great players of your generation, also one of the great guys in the history of the sport. Thank you very much for joining us this morning. We know your time is short. We appreciate Zach Johnson joining us this morning, the 2013 champion of the BMW Championship, which will be staged in Colorado in 2024 here at Castle Pines.

With that, we're going to switch gears and bring in Jack Nicklaus. Jack, I don't know if you need to know his resume, 73 career wins, 18 career major championships, the single greatest player in the history of the sport. His record is unmatched. Jack is joining us from his home in south Florida. Jack has an incredible love for the property, an amazing amount of time he has spent here at Castle Pines.

Jack, how are you? It's good to see you. We know you have come here to Castle Pines about 10 times in the last five years as you've modified it or maybe brought Castle Pines into 2022, and now it's getting ready for the 2024 BMW Championship. Jack, what does this property mean to you?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, the property is a beautiful piece of property. I remember walking in there I guess in 1980, whenever it was, with Jack Vickers, and we looked at the golf course, I said, well, you've got a beautiful piece of property. It's a rugged piece of property. I did a routing and then Jack changed the routing. He wanted the clubhouse up where he could see Pike's Peak.

So we did that, we changed that. So we had to figure out how to finish up with 9 and 18 which were both a little bit uphill, but we modified them such that it didn't play so much that way.

Anyway, over the last, I suppose, five years or so, George has been working out there and wanting to make some adjustments in the hopes of getting the BMW Championship there, and we've done something a little bit to every hole.

I don't think you want me to take you through 1 through 18. But we've modified 1 a little bit; No. 2 we put a lake in, and No. 3 we put a new lake in, and then one fairway rather than two fairways and expanded the green. 5 is a new hole; 6 has been modified and changed; 8 is a whole new green and a whole new par-5 where it is; 9 has been totally changed; 10 was modified a little bit; 11 a little bit, 12 considerably. I am taking you through it, I guess. (Laughter.) We lengthened some holes. 13, 14, we've changed the creek bed so it plays more -- it's more user friendly. 15 we didn't do a lot to, but 16 we totally remodified it, and 17 we changed it totally, and 18 we rebunkered it.

The golf course is -- I always thought it was a really good golf course. I'll be very anxious to see how it plays with medal play. The golf course will be probably about 8,000 yards long, and I think the golf course, as long as we played Stableford, which is the event we had -- that was never my favorite but that's okay. That's what Jack Vickers



wanted. I'm kind of anxious to see how the golf course is going to play in medal play because I hear we've got some places out there that you can get lost and can't get back. That's not quite right, but it's a little bit that way.

But I think it's a really good golf course. I think the adjustments we've made to the golf course have benefitted the golf course greatly. I think it's a fun golf course to play, and it certainly doesn't lack for beauty, that's for sure.

STEVE SANDS: Jack, you're not only the greatest player in the history of the sport, but you're also one of the great architects the sport has ever seen, and you've told me countless times over the years, one of the things that's most difficult for that job is to make the golf course 51 weeks a year playable for the members and people who play there regularly, and then one time a year the greatest players on the planet come. How do you balance those two to make it enjoyable for the membership here at Castle Pines but also make it a stern test for guys like Zach Johnson and everybody else who will play in two years here?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, you know, little things that we've done. The golf course, the members obviously play from the members' tees. We've got to make sure that they can play the golf course and enjoy the golf course, have fun. We've lowered the back tee and expanded the driving range now so that they fit nice with the putting green, so we've done a lot of things around the clubhouse.

But each hole, you've got to make sure that the average golfer can play it. Like No. 2, for instance, No. 2 had a little ditch along the left side, which wasn't really attractive. That's been removed. There was another sort of barranca that crossed in front of the green. We've removed that barranca, put in a new lake. Where part of the barranca was, we've made a place that's all fairway, so now you can play the ball down the left side, bring it in from the left side, and if you want a challenge to the hole, you've got the lake in front of the green, things like that.

I could go way through the golf course. No. 4 had a big beautiful tree with a barranca down the center of it. Fairway is left, fairway right. You didn't know which way to go sometimes, so we basically put water in the barranca, and now it's got a beautiful stream that runs down through, the lake goes down in front of the green. We've expanded the green so it sets up a little bit more of a shot. But all those you can bounce it in from the right side.

The average golfer can play Castle Pines. Most every hole you can bounce it in. 4 you can bounce it in; 5 you can bounce it in; 6 you can bounce it in. 7 is a par-3, so it's only a short iron. 8 you'll have an avenue to get into the

green; 9 is uphill so you'll have to carry it up there. 10 you can run it in. 11 is a par-3. 12 you can run it in; 13 you can run it in; 14 you can run it in; 15 you can run it in; 16 you can bounce it in. 17 is uphill so you have to carry it in, and 18 you can run it in.

Most every hole on the golf course the average golfer -- you've got to figure out a way for the average golfer to play it, enjoy it, have fun with it, and want to come back. That's the whole key is that they want to come back.

STEVE SANDS: It's nice to know your memory is intact. What type of PGA TOUR player do you think will succeed on this golf course?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, Castle Pines has always been a relatively big hitter's golf course, but as far as the golf ball goes today and with the altitude that you're playing out there, you're playing -- I suppose it's averaging about 6,500 feet, so the golf ball is going to go 10 to 12 percent further. If you make it an 8,000-yard golf course and take 10 percent off of that, you're down to a 7,200-yard golf course. It's not particularly a long golf course. But still, keeping the ball in the air at altitude is tough, so you've got to hit the ball pretty -- you've got to be a fairly strong hitter.

The golf course we hope they will keep it so it's firm. Everybody wants to have a firm golf course. You don't want to be shooting darts at a golf course when you're out there. We're playing in August, so you have thunderstorms in the afternoon, but still, it's a golf course that a lot of run-ins are very -- you can do that. That makes it very, very accessible for all golfers.

STEVE SANDS: You were always someone who was so amazingly prepared whenever you went into any tournament, let alone a big one like a FedExCup Playoff event, like the BMW Championship. When the guys come here in 2024 for the most part, other than maybe Zach Johnson, guys have never really seen this golf course. They're going to be playing at altitude, so it's going to be a different kind of week. How will players use those couple of practice days to get ready for tournament play come Thursday morning?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, if I were them I'd get there as fast as I could from the previous tournament. Altitude is something that doesn't just happen overnight. It takes two or three days to get used to it, and also get used to how far your golf ball flies and how much it'll stay in the air. In other words, the golf balls today are designed with less spin. Well, less spin is one of the reasons why the ball goes so far in high altitude.

So if you've got a less spinning golf ball with a high-altitude

golf course, it's hard to put something on it. You've got to -- I think you've got to figure that out. It's a little different game for them. Putting won't be a problem, but the golf course -- I think the greens read pretty truly. They go down in the valley. That's what all golf courses, you go down where the drainage goes.

The golf course will be in magnificent condition. They do a great job out there. It'll be fun for them to play.

STEVE SANDS: Between George and the board and Keith and his staff and you and your design team, how much of a validation is it that all the hard work you've put in is going to come to fruition in 2024 by having a big-time event being played here at Castle Pines?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, you always want to have big-time events played on your golf course. Castle Pines has always been right at the top of my list of golf courses that I'm very proud of. To see that happen, to see a significant tournament like the BMW come there and to see the players come there and only 70 of them which will sort of reduce the field, no cut, it'll be a really, really good, interesting week, and I think the people in the Denver area are going to really enjoy it.

But the players will, too, and I think to me is what it's all about. When you're playing tournament golf, you need to enjoy it. You need to be competitive but you need to enjoy your competition.

STEVE SANDS: Congratulations, Jack. Castle Pines looks fabulous. Look forward to seeing you in a couple weeks at your hometown course in Muirfield Village.

JACK NICKLAUS: Talk to you and I wish George and the staff out there and Keith and the whole gang -- they're going to have a great event, and I'm looking forward to hopefully being around to watch it. Thank you.

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