

Sony Open in Hawaii

Friday, January 13, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

JJ Spaun

Quick Quotes

Q. JJ, I know that's not the way you wanted to finish, but otherwise how would you characterize the round?

JJ SPAUN: I mean, I played great. You know, you kind of are supposed to give some back at some point, right? So, no, just one bad swing.

I'm in a good spot going into tomorrow and the weekend. I would love to keep things going the way they are.

Q. Other than that one swing, what did you do so well today?

JJ SPAUN: I think I scrambled pretty nicely and I putted really good I think. (Laughter.)

I don't know. Felt like I putted good. A lot of the putts that you should make I made them, and then I sprinkled in a couple 15- to 20-footers. Those are the putts you need to make in order to have pretty low rounds.

Q. When people scramble though it's because they're making the putts though, right?

JJ SPAUN: Exactly. Yeah, so maybe I didn't scramble well. Maybe I just putted well.

Q. Let's go with that.

JJ SPAUN: Yeah.

Q. Coming off last week, was that a good feeling to have played nicely to start the year and keep right on going?

JJ SPAUN: Yeah, especially a place I've never seen before, Kapalua, and that was fun. To play pretty solid all week and being second to the last group, last group playing with guys that are the best in the world, you know, kind of gave me a little bit of confidence that I should be able to compete with those guys a little bit.

So, yeah, it's nice to knock of the rust there and obviously



build some confidence coming into a tournament that I normally don't play well at. You know, I'm trying not to look at the glass half empty these days. Trying to look half full.

Q. You've been at this for a while. Are you feeling more -- are you maybe a little bit more feeling like you belong a little bit more out here?

JJ SPAUN: Why is interrupting your question, by the way? Go ahead.

Q. Do you feel like you belong a little bit more out here even though you've been at this for a while? With the win last year you feel more confident?

JJ SPAUN: Yeah, the win is definitely a breakthrough. You know, climbing the world rankings, seeing my name getting higher and higher and just being comfortable in my own skin and being comfortable in those positions and learning a lot of things like in Memphis and stuff like that and being put in those positions more frequently have been good lessons for me.

You know, it's now like a bit of an expectation to contend for tournaments every week instead of showing up and, like, okay, let's have a nice week. Instead of thinking that it's now like, okay -- I mean, yeah, everyone is thinking of winning every week, but after the first round you're like, maybe I can turn this into making the cut or making a nice weekend turn into a top 10.

Now I'm always thinking kind of like being in contention. So far been working out okay since the win.

Q. I feel like there is some truth to what the young man said, even though most players wouldn't be necessarily willing to speak to that. First time in a major. First time at Kapalua. First time in this group of players. Is that a hard adjustment?

JJ SPAUN: Yeah, I think anything new is always uncomfortable, even though it's still golf. But, yeah, playing the Masters was like such a time warp because I won the week before and getting there.



But they were all great experiences for me to be able to lean on, because not only just getting there, but just also doing well granted the circumstance. Billy Horschel was like, just to make the cut at Augusta as a first timer is like a pretty statistically hard achievement.

Q. In your Southern Cal junior days was there anyone that you used to beat regularly that got to where you wanted to be faster than you that pissed you off -- excuse me, that drove you crazy?

JJ SPAUN: You know, like I -- not -- there is like high school kids that I would play against. I didn't play AJGA, just like SCPGA stuff. I can't really remember. I played with Rickie Fowler. I was a sophomore in high school and we had these 18-hole tournaments.

Q. How old was he?

JJ SPAUN: I think was a senior and I was a sophomore. My principal is here from high school. I was like, hey. You know, it's random. She's on vacation. Since we're on the high school theme here. I played with him and everyone was like -- there is kids on my team playing AJGA and they were like, dude, you're playing with Rickie Fowler. I was like, oh, nice. Who is that? Like, dude, he's like sick.

And then I played with him and we played like Eagle Glen, this course in Corona, California. He shot like 65 or something and I was like, whoa, this is pretty nuts.

That is the first time I ever seen like really good golf like up close as a kid at like our age. Because I was always pretty good beating up on the guys like around my neighborhood.

National level stuff was...

Q. Was what the biggest tournament you played in before you got to college?

JJ SPAUN: I played the U.S. -- I qualified for the U.S. Junior Amateur twice, my junior year of high school, and I played Patrick Rogers who was like 14. He was like so good. I don't even think he was 14; maybe 13.

We were in match play and I was like -- I barely beat him in like 22 holes.

Q. Beat him in the first round?

JJ SPAUN: I think it was maybe the second round, round of 16 or 32.

Q. How far did you get?

JJ SPAUN: I got to -- what year was that? The round of 16, yeah. I lost to -- who did I lose to? I think it was like Cameron Beck. Do you remember that guy? Not Cameron Peck, but it was Cameron Peck versus Beck at the Shoal Creek one in Alabama. But that was my second one.

My first one I played in Boone Valley. I did make it to match play, but I think I lost my first match. But I think a lot of coaches like noticed me and they were like, this guy is pretty good. Who's that? That's just because I didn't play national level stuff. Just playing high school matches and junior, local junior golf stuff.

I did Drive, Chip, and Putt. Maybe the Golf Channel can look up old footage. It was sweet. I chipped in. I was 11.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

JJ SPAUN: No, it was.

Q. It was?

JJ SPAUN: I think I still have the trophy. It was down at Colina Park in San Diego, the regional where they televised it. I chipped in wearing a bucket hat. You guys got to look it up. You you have to find it. Like Tom Needles, do you remember him?

Q. Yeah, he was big then.

JJ SPAUN: Yeah, he was the host. So, yeah, that was like our big thing.

Q. How much extra pride do you take not having the advantages not only of playing on tour at age 14 like the AJGA is now, but also having to work harder to get seen?

JJ SPAUN: 100%, and I think that's kind of been like my mantra like my whole golfing career. I walked on to San Diego State. I barely had -- I didn't even earn a full ride as a two time all-American. I won five times there and still didn't get a full ride.

But that's little things that put a chip on my shoulder. Luckily I signed a deal with Nike out of college and they paid me to go play. I don't know if like I didn't have that seed money they were calling it to be able to chase it, like I don't know if I would be here.

It let's you focus 100% on playing and you have the money to do it and stuff like that, so...

Q. Does San Diego State still have the audacity to ask



you to contribute to the alumni fund?

JJ SPAUN: Yeah. It's kind of funny. And I do a little bit. A little bit. But I'm like, I just paid off my student loans like two years ago, jeez. Cut me some slack here. (Laughter.) You're asking me to sponsor a hole for ten grand. I'm still paying off student debt.

No, it was invaluable stuff even though I had to pay for the majority of school.

Q. Did you at least go to school?

JJ SPAUN: No. Maybe a little bit. (Smiling.) Enough to get by.

Q. What's the deal with the principal? Where do they live? Yellow tank top?

JJ SPAUN: Yeah. They're in California, San Dimas. I went to like grade school all the way pretty much college where we settled down, so...

Q. They're here on vacation or they're here...

JJ SPAUN: Yeah, no, they're here on vacation and then she's -- I just happened to be playing this week. I saw her on the first tee and I was like, oh, my God, is that Mrs. Keir (phonetic.) Sure enough was. Small world.

Q. Did you ever have to sit in her office?

JJ SPAUN: Yeah. I think Cathy Crowther, she got an earful of how I was in high school. I was like kind of a bad kid but I was a good kid at the same time.

I don't know. Her perspective might be different.

Q. Probably.

JJ SPAUN: Probably way different. I think she probably thinks I was a bad kid. (Laughter.)

Q. Play well tomorrow and thanks for making our day.

JJ SPAUN: Thanks, Doug, no problem.

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