

THE PLAYERS Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Jordan Spieth

Quick Quotes

Q. How would you sum up your day?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think I hit 12 of 14 fairways out here and I pulled driver around the place, so I don't know if I've ever done that here. So from the spots I was playing and the shots I hit into greens mid-air, I would have said I should have shot lower, but at the beginning of the day, I would have certainly signed for 70. So it's kind of -- I feel really good about today overall as far as if I'm continuing down the path of, kind of the way things felt today, I feel like lower scores could come from it, which is really nice around this track.

Q. It's been a lot of trust the last few months, it's been a motto for you. How much is this golf course kind of a litmus test for that to see how much you're feeling it?

JORDAN SPIETH: Between last week and this week, very much so. Riviera, you know, there's very few hazards, so it's a little easier when you're going to miss in a bunker than if you're going to miss in the water. And so last week I think was actually, I think a good building block for me. I felt like on Sunday I played some awesome golf and just kind of ran out of steam and just didn't make a few putts at the end that could have been a difference-maker. But I wouldn't have traded the way I played any of the shots or hit any of the putts either.

So I thought last week was a good test for this week. I'm glad that I played. When I went out today, I was able to trust some shots that I had to build trust on last week, shots like 18 here, where I started down the left side playing a nice little fade that held straight versus trying to just kind of hope that I'm drawing it into the fairway.

So this Florida swing is very, very challenging and you have to trust and play boldly, but you also have to get a few breaks too. So I'm looking forward to getting out tomorrow and a little bit smoother surfaces in the morning and hopefully roll a few more putts in.

Q. This is a place where historically you've struggled over the last few years. Does a round like this speak



to the fact that those incremental gains are really starting to add up in a positive direction for you?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I mean, I've come in here playing poorly, and played poorly, but I've come in here after winning the Masters and missed the cut and in that stretch I was playing great golf wherever I was going. So I've learned a lot. I've thought I learned a lot in the past going out to the course, and just not used that course knowledge to my advantage, which is, essentially, you have to play this course almost like a U.S. Open venue, if you don't get a perfect number with the right wind, you just can't attack, even if it's a wedge, and just wait for your spots and take advantage of the par-5s. That's how I'm supposed to play this place. And I did a great job of that today for the most part and that's going to be the game plan going forward for sure.

Q. I know this isn't the first week back with fans, but what did you miss most about them being gone?

JORDAN SPIETH: Definitely not the drunken yells.

Q. The follow-up was going to be what didn't you miss so --

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, the energy. It's different, right? I mean, I'm sure if you ask anybody that plays a team sport professionally they would say even more so than for us golf, it means quiet when we are hitting versus a crowd's having an impact.

But it's definitely a different energy out here. It's a different -- you know the momentum. You start to really feel like you can get into a round, like the fans are kind of with you, willing putts in, that kind of stuff. Certainly, scientifically, that doesn't make a difference, but it's just kind of how you feel, you just get more excited, you get more into it, and golf needs fans, and I think the fans out here are about as good as anywhere in the world. We normally pack a lot of people in -- today, this afternoon, there were probably more people here today, I think, than there were at any other event so far this year, including the weekend last week and in Phoenix.

So it felt very, very normal. The difference in 10 and 40,000 in your group, you don't really feel that difference



until you get to the last few holes. But, so it felt like to just back to normal inside the ropes for us and I think that players in general really enjoy that.

Q. What was your level of concern after impact on 18? I know you said you were trying to cut it, but it looked a little scary there for a second.

JORDAN SPIETH: I hit one yesterday that was about five yards left of that and it didn't carry, but it was also a little more into the wind. I knew my, I knew, there's a split tree there and if it comes down on the split tree today, it was going to be fine, so I lined up just right of that and tried to actually play a little fade into the breeze and it came out, and it was still hanging on or just right of that tree.

So I really, as much as it kind of looked scary in the air, I would have been surprised if it was in the water. I thought it was just, I thought I got away with almost a perfect drive on accident and that's what ended up happening. I had wedge into 18, which can't ask for better than that.

Q. What's your strategy on 17? Do you look at the pin or try to play for the middle of the green?

JORDAN SPIETH: Today, it really depends on how good your number is. I was just trying to carry it just to where the top, the, that ridge meets the flat on top, which was about 13 paces on, I think. So you're looking at like 135 yards today. And the wind's down off the right, so playing a club that goes there, and then if you're in between, for me, I've always found hitting less club harder is a better strategy on that hole, just given, if it happens to spin down to the front, that's fine, but if you take more club and you hit it easy, that spin rate goes down so significantly that it lands on top and it can just, it can go through.

So to answer your question, I'm normally looking for the middle of the green, one or two paces on either side if the pin's in the front or in the back.

Q. You kind of joked a little bit last week when you were talking about Bryson going over the lake. At this course, it doesn't seem to be many places, even if there is some downwind, where you would really roll the dice and --

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, anybody can win on this golf course. There's no advantage to any player. Now, obviously if someone hits it really far and they hit it straight, then you always have an advantage, no matter where you are. But this course is about hitting it to certain spots and then from there hitting that approach shot into certain spots and having tremendous approach shot distance control. Your distance control has to be pretty spotless in order to

be able to make any birdies or else you're just from one knob to another or up a ridge or down a ridge. So Pete Dye does a great job on all the courses where you have to have -- it's really about more a second shot distance control than it is about length off the tee out here.

Q. As a follow-up, you can't be surprised to know that Bryson took iron off 18 today, then even though a lot of people take bigger clubs than that.

JORDAN SPIETH: I mean, I wouldn't, I mean I could have seen him hit driver, I could have seen him hit iron, it's kind of the -- the fairway's equal width really no matter what club you choose, you just have to pick a club that you're comfortable with. And he hits an iron 275 and then he could hit 8-iron from 200 in with how his lofts are. So it seems like that would be the easiest way to play the hole would be to hit it out in the fairway each day. And for me it would require hitting probably a hybrid and it's just a little more kind of, off a tee with a hybrid's, a little like -- I don't have a driving iron out here because I like the height into the par-5s. So every configuration's different, I bet Dustin probably hit driver and just put, with his flight, he kind of holds the wind if it comes out straight, it's great. So yeah, again you're just playing to spots. You pick the spots you want to play to and you're trying to just get as many greens in regulation as possible, take advantage of the par-5s.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports