

# THE PLAYERS Championship

Saturday, March 15, 2025

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

## J.J. Spaun

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome J.J. Spaun to the interview room at THE PLAYERS Championship. J.J., if you don't mind opening us up with some thoughts on being the 54-hole leader going into the final round of THE PLAYERS Championship.

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, it's great. I've been playing really well this year, so I can't say I'm particularly too surprised, but I'm definitely glad to be in a position to have a chance to win the golf tournament tomorrow. All I can do is keep pushing forward and see where we all add up tomorrow.

**Q. Your last putt, what was going through your mind when it looked like it was going in? And at any point when it circled the hole or after, did you think about Wyndham Clark last year?**

J.J. SPAUN: Actually, I didn't think about Lare. Sorry, Wyndham. I call him Lare because it's just like an inside joke. I didn't think about it, but now that you remind me, yeah, hopefully -- I'm glad mine went in, though, for sure. It was a great putt. It was a great way to end the day. Just kind of how the day was going, everything was going really well for me.

**Q. Last night you had mentioned kind of a change in mindset is what spurred your performance as of late. Essentially realizing golf is just golf and there are more important things. Do you remember when you came to that catharsis, and how has that opened you up to play as well as you've been playing?**

J.J. SPAUN: I think it was kind of in the middle of the season last year when I played really terrible to start the year. I had some health stuff, like, fighting off viruses and flus that put me physically unwell. But I didn't want to blame that on my poor play.

But halfway through the season it was looking like I was going to be done, like not going to finish 125, and I kind of was thinking about, Hey, I played eight years out here, I've got a great family, I've accomplished, I've won. So it's not the end of the world if this is how it ends for me.



With that, that's kind of when my attitude changed. Not that I had a poor attitude, but my perspective, I guess.

Then I went on this tear kind of the last half of the year last year to finish inside the Top 125 and keep my status, and I've kind of been using the same outlook to start the year this year. It's been working out pretty well.

**Q. Anyone here with you this week?**

J.J. SPAUN: No, I'm alone.

**Q. Do they ever travel?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, they were going to come --

**Q. West Coast mostly?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, mostly the West Coast. They were at Pebble and Genesis and obviously Phoenix Open I played. I live there. But yeah, my wife is upset that I've only been home for one week this year. I'm itching to get back, and she wants me to get back to help her out a little bit.

**Q. Would she mind if you brought back a trophy?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, she would not mind at all. The sacrifice would pay off at that point, for sure.

**Q. When you saw the wind when you teed off, what would you have taken?**

J.J. SPAUN: Anything around even. I was thinking even par would be a good round, given all the circumstances.

**Q. There was a little bit of an hour there where it felt like everybody on the leaderboard was struggling with the conditions. Is there anything you can pinpoint that maybe you did to kind of be the one that held it off?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I was hitting really good quality golf shots from tee to green and just giving myself looks and not really being in stressful situations. Keeping the ball in front of me, keeping it in the short grass for the most part. I drove it well. I was just trying to hit it close to pins but only when we knew we had the right club and the right wind to



do so, and if not, then we were just going to hit it to 30 feet and try to make one.

I did that a couple times, and I think that's the key to playing in really tough conditions, especially around a course like this.

**Q. How aware were you of -- I guess you were with Rory when you had a tough hole or two. How aware were you of the chaos out there?**

J.J. SPAUN: Totally. I was looking at the leaderboard just to see. No one was doing anything crazy and I was just kind of like riding the storm out and just trying to limit mistakes and keep hitting fairways and greens. I saw Bud shot a really good round, and I knew he was clubhouse leader, so I knew if I was anywhere around 11 to 12, that would be a good spot to go into tomorrow.

**Q. You said it's not the end of the world if this is how it ends. Just curious, have you accomplished all of your career goals, and if you haven't, has the hot start to this year changed anything for you?**

J.J. SPAUN: I mean, I didn't have, like, the pedigree of a junior golfer growing up. I wasn't raised or groomed to be a professional golfer. I walked on to a California state school. I didn't really -- I guess I kind of blossomed as I took on this journey, whether it was like junior golf, then high school golf, then college. I didn't know what my ceiling was, I guess you could say. I still guess I don't know what it is.

But if you were to say before I turned pro, Hey, you're going to win a PGA TOUR event and you're going to play nine, ten years out there, you're going to make some good money and you're going to have fun doing it, that would be a great accomplishment in my terms.

But yeah, who knows. The sky's the limit.

**Q. What do you think your ceiling is?**

J.J. SPAUN: (Laughing) I don't know. I really don't know. I slowly have to prove myself, and people tell me that I'm better than I am or I'm better than I think I am. It's just about believing in it. That's kind of always been the barrier is believing that I can do it and not being discouraged by poor weeks or poor rounds or poor finishes.

I think if I can just dig deep and have that self-belief, then yeah, we'll see where things end up.

**Q. Is that a Dodgers --**

J.J. SPAUN: It is, yardage book cover. What are you a Giants fan?

**Q. God no.**

J.J. SPAUN: Padres?

**Q. Chicago Cubs.**

J.J. SPAUN: Well, aren't we playing in Tokyo tomorrow or something --

**Q. Yeah. So if you win maybe we'll bet on that. Second thing, can you talk about the second shot into 18? It seemed like you had a good lie and I think you were about 241 in, why you decided to lay up.**

J.J. SPAUN: On 16?

**Q. Yeah.**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, so we took out my 7-wood to use a 3-iron, which is more of a driving iron for windy conditions, I can flight it better. It was just kind of a tweener.

The shot asked for a cut, to fade it into the pin, but I was on a pretty severe, like, draw lie. So I just knew I was probably going to pull it into the gallery, and what are the odds of getting that up-and-down, even if that's where I end up.

I just wasn't comfortable with the shot, and that's what we did all day. If I wasn't comfortable with something, we didn't try to force it because it's not like it was a perfect day where everything is going to go right condition-wise and people were attacking pins. We were just trying to stay patient, and we did. I didn't hit a great wedge shot, but I rolled in the putt from off the green, which worked.

**Q. What's the inside joke on the Lare thing with Wyndham Clark?**

J.J. SPAUN: Oh. We call him Larry. Well, him and like another -- we're all members at Whisper Rock in Scottsdale, and we just call him.

Lare. We call everyone Lare. It's like "dude" but like in our own little internal way. (Laughing). Larry.

**Q. Today you bogeyed 17 today, you birdied it yesterday. There was a 48-foot difference where yesterday it was close to the front, today it was close to the back, and you're battling those winds. Just talk about 17 today and that challenge of that big difference there.**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, totally. You have the backstop on yesterday's pin, so you don't have to be precise with your carry. You just kind of fly it into the bank and feed it down, and fortunately I hit it kind of on the right line for it to feed really close.

Then today, it's just blowing 30 miles an hour straight down, and you don't really know what kind of bounce you're going to get. We watched Collin hit in front of us, and he probably landed it 15 feet short of the hole, and it barely skipped and stayed on the rough, like the rough cut.

It also is not very fun going first on that hole, too. I had to go first, and I knew gap wedge was kind of the club where if I hit it really good and the wind does what it should, it should be like 15, 20 feet short, and if not, then we just take it at the front of the green and try to two-putt.

That was a hard two-putt, too. Rory left his short, and then when I started putting, this big gust, like downwind, and I just completely deuced because I didn't want to blast it off the green. Unfortunate there, three-putt, but it's a tough hole.

**Q. The casual fan will see your name and say, Oh, that guy has no chance tomorrow. I'm curious if you're interested in sticking it to people like that, or is that not something you're concerned with?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I mean, I'm sure people have their opinions or doubts. But I'm playing good, and as long as I believe that I can win this thing, that's all I really care about. I don't really care what other people are thinking or predicting how the outcome will be tomorrow.

**Q. Your track record at this place is not very good, so what --**

J.J. SPAUN: I don't know. I don't know. I think just playing it so many times and not playing great, like knowing what to not do, I guess, kind of is paying off. But my game is in really good shape. I've played really well this year, so I have a lot of belief that I can play well around this track. That's kind of what I've been doing.

**Q. What was the reason you withdrew the one year you withdrew here?**

J.J. SPAUN: Oh, I had some weird meniscus pain in my knee. That was, what, 2018, 2019? Here, right, at THE PLAYERS? Yeah, I don't know what it was. I ended up going to the hospital here to get an MRI to see what was wrong because I couldn't post up through the ball and I was just like, why keep playing if I'm going to be in pain.

Then I was trying to play Tampa, I withdrew at Tampa, too. I went and got some more stuff looked at in that area, and it was just some sort of inflammation from, I don't know, over-repetitive use, but it wasn't anything I needed surgery for.

**Q. Do you like your game in the rain? Does that bother you? There's supposed to be some rain tomorrow.**

J.J. SPAUN: No, rain is fine. Rain is fine.

**Q. I take it you've played with Rory before?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I played with him maybe once. Maybe twice. I played with him at the PGA on Saturday, Bellerive. I know that part. I know that memory.

**Q. Just wonder if it gives you a little bit of a boost or extra motivation knowing you're playing with him or if it's at all daunting. Obviously he has a lot of attention. There's a lot of people out there no matter what. Or you just don't even think about it?**

J.J. SPAUN: No, I think more of the attention's on him when I'm paired with him. It's easy to get intimidated and know he's a really good player, but everyone is putting their money on him, not me. Like, I'm out there just free-wheeling it, and that kind of made me feel comfortable today. But he's a great guy. He's cool to play with. He's a great player, and it's always fun to watch one of the best in the game's history to play.

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