

WM Phoenix Open

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Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Jake Knapp

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome PGA TOUR rookie Jake Knapp to the interview room here at the 2024 WM Phoenix Open. Thanks for joining us for a few minutes. I want to jump ahead before I brag about what you've done to get here. Just heard about your new residence. As of November, you said, basically you're living across the street on the Champions Course. How cool is that?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, I've always been looking for somewhere with just kind of better practice facilities, better environment to play in, getting around better players, and I spend a lot of time here with PXG, so kind of looked at some places the end of last season and pretty much looked at one place that had what I needed. I'm a pretty simple guy.

Ended up moving in in November, been here since. Went back for the holidays, but being across the street for this event makes parking and logistics a little bit of a nightmare, but being able to practice here and to play this course a bunch in the last three months has been really nice, and obviously getting in this week makes it much better.

Q. Last year, great year on the Korn Ferry TOUR, 10 top-10 finishes in 22 starts, finished 13 to get out here and you're making your eighth start. Top-5 finish at San Diego, Farmers Insurance Open a few weeks ago, gets you in here. Just a few comments on how comfortable and confident you're feeling as you're making your way through your rookie year on TOUR.

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, I think I got my PGA TOUR card at the right time. I think if you would have put me out here three, four years ago, I don't think I would have been ready to handle it in terms of the preparation, the style of courses, everything else that goes on. I think it just would have been a lot for me to take in. Now I feel super comfortable, kind of feel like where I'm supposed to be.

Last week felt great. Never really got super anxious or excited or really nervous at all, to be honest. Just felt this is what I want to do, just going to work hitting shots, and it

was a lot of fun. It was a great experience, and obviously I'd like to have it over and over again.

Q. You're sitting just outside the top 5 on the AON Swing 5. How much is that on your mind?

JAKE KNAPP: Not much, to be honest. Obviously I'd love to be in that AON Swing 5. But I've just kind of always said, you play well, it takes care of itself. If you start watching for points and things like that, you start kind of get down on yourself and you don't hit those marks.

Obviously I'd love to play my way into the Genesis at Riviera. Being from So Cal and going to UCLA, playing there a decent amount, it would be a pretty awesome event to get into. But just going to go out this week, try to have a solid week, and see where it puts me.

Q. Your swing has gotten some attention on social media. It's kind of throwback a little bit in how long the backswing is. Has anyone ever tried to shorten that up?

JAKE KNAPP: I've had some people try to shorten it up a little bit. Luckily for me, I've had pretty much the same coach for my entire life, John Ortega. He's always said, your swing is going to get naturally shorter as you get older, so he was like, why shorten it now.

Every time I would say I wanted to change something about my swing, he would show me five guys in the Hall of Fame who have done that exact thing and had a lot of success. We've done a good job of just working with what I have and trying to create the best version of it.

Q. We were talking about you want it to get soft. You like long golf courses. Are you excited about the big courses to come on the PGA TOUR?

JAKE KNAPP: For sure. I think the longer, tougher the golf course and the conditions can be, I just enjoy that test a lot more. Weeks like Torrey Pines -- I know some guys have said horses for courses, and I couldn't agree more. That's just a good golf course for me. If I can hit driver a lot, it's going to benefit my game.



I enjoy those weeks. I think it obviously makes it a lot tougher for some guys, but yeah, I just enjoy those kinds of tests for sure.

Q. What are your thoughts on playing No. 16 this weekend for the first time on the PGA TOUR?

JAKE KNAPP: I'm excited. It'll be an atmosphere like I've never seen before, so I'm pumped about that.

I think it's a cool hole. I know that there's some guys that say that this is the absolute best event and they'll never miss it the rest of their careers, so I'm excited to see what it's all about. Hopefully the weather holds up and it doesn't make it too bad on the fans.

I'm excited. Good shot, bad shot, something good happens, whatever, I'm open for it.

Q. Do you have a plan in mind to keep your focus and composure on No. 15 knowing you're heading to the stadium right after?

JAKE KNAPP: Not really a plan, to be honest, but I do a pretty good job of just staying in my lane and keeping my tunnel vision. We have some kind of fun stuff planned on 16 that my caddie and I have talked about throwing some stuff out and whatnot, but we kind of both said, it's like, let's just make sure we don't let one hole affect the other 17. Just going to do our best to go about our business, and then on the walk over, it's okay to get a little bit excited and then take a deep breath and go about your work.

Q. How much have you played the course out here, especially since moving this way?

JAKE KNAPP: I've probably only played like the full 18 like two, three, four times, something like that, but then I've played the front nine a bunch. Usually I'll kind of practice in the morning and afternoon and then go out in the evening and play nine holes, hit a bunch of shots.

I've played it a decent amount now, but you either have to kind of go off that first time or late in the afternoon as one of the pros because this place stays pretty busy.

Q. What in particular about Scottsdale drew you here to get the place, and were there other places you considered?

JAKE KNAPP: I've obviously thought about most of the places guys move to are kind of Vegas, Scottsdale, Dallas, Florida. Florida never really appealed to me. It's just too flat and doesn't really do it for me.

Dallas gets too cold in the winter for the most part.

Vegas, kind of the same way.

I wanted somewhere in my off-season that would be as good a weather and you can find. Similar growing up in California; there's never really a day you can't play golf. I didn't really want to go anywhere I would have to take time off.

Then obviously being with PXG made it easy, as well. Having them here and having the headquarters and being able to get anything and everything I need done is really convenient.

Q. Had you ever been to this tournament as a fan?

JAKE KNAPP: I haven't. I have not.

Q. In terms of the stadium hole, what have your impressions been growing up in golf and thinking about what that is and how it's kind of become what it has?

JAKE KNAPP: It's pretty cool. Obviously on the Korn Ferry there's certain holes, certain places that try to say this is like our mini-16th hole at TPC, and it's like, it's mini, all right, for sure.

I remember coming here when I first moved here to go out to practice and I couldn't believe how early some of the grandstands and everything was up. 16 was already fully encased. It obviously wasn't filled in yet, but you're standing there and you're like, I can't believe this is just going to be layered with people.

It's going to be a pretty cool experience. I'm not really sure how to -- I don't think there's a great way to prepare for it necessarily. Just have to hit a good shot.

Q. What do you think is the biggest crowd, rowdiest vibe you've played in front of in your career?

JAKE KNAPP: Maybe Farmers Insurance or something like that in 2015 or even this last year because I played with Michael Block, so he has a lot of rowdy people following him.

I would say the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers, but that was so much different because there were so many holes where the gallery was so far away from you, so it felt like you were on your own course and people were just walking in a park nearby.

Q. What's the craziest sporting event you've been to outside of golf?

JAKE KNAPP: Probably in college just going to like USC-UCLA games, something like that. That's probably the craziest anything has gotten.

Q. About 10 percent of people worldwide are lefties but only 5 percent of TOUR golfers are lefties. Do you have any insight into why you think that might be the case, why they're underrepresented in golf?

JAKE KNAPP: It's a good question. One reason is probably because a lot of companies don't make all their equipment left-handed, as well. I know when I was a kid, my dad said that I started taking swings lefty, and he just put a right-handed club in my hand and was like, we're not paying for two sets of clubs. You're getting hand-me-downs from your brother.

Yeah, I know it's not obviously super common, but I also know there's a lot of companies who basically go out there and they'll come out with a new club. There will be some lefties who want it and they're like, it's only right-handed right now. I'm not sure why there's a bias, but there definitely is one.

Q. So it was more comfortable for you initially to swing left-handed?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, like I play hockey left-handed, and then I always was a switch-hitter in baseball and all that kind of stuff. Golf was just forced on the right hand.

Q. Can you reveal what you and your caddie have planned for No. 16?

JAKE KNAPP: We have some fun original Penguin gear and then some Anaheim Ducks gear that hopefully we're going to toss around, and then he might put on a little outfit depending on how good of a shot I hit.

Q. What was the timeline realizing you were into this event after Top-10ing from Farmers?

JAKE KNAPP: Finishing top 10 doesn't get you into the event guaranteed because the smaller field gets you into the category. So I moved up to I think it was fourth alternate, and then I worked on a letter to send to the Thunderbirds, to send over to those guys, and see if I could get an exemption. They literally called me back the next day and gave me the exemption, which I was very grateful for.

Then fortunate enough I think I called them on Friday

around noon because I saw that I was in the event and I was worried they were going to give my exemption away and then maybe somebody else would get into the event and I'd fall out and end up as an alternate again.

They gave me the exemption and then I ended getting in off my number. Now I think I'm like four into the actual event. But it was kind of a bummer standing on the green at Torrey realizing, well, if Yeager birdies you're out of the Swing 5, but if he doesn't then you're in, so there was a lot of kind of back and forth. But I'm excited to be here now.

Q. So you were aware of that scenario at the end of Farmers as you were waiting?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, yeah, I was standing there with Jack Ryan I think it was. We were standing on the green and he was going through everything. I got caught up in it in a minute, and I was thinking about everything and like, oh, man, now we might not have a day off and we've got to drive up to AT&T and go up there.

You just take a second and you're just like, all right, it's all out of my control. I played well; it is what it is. No, super fortunate they gave me the exemption as that kind of safety net so I could prep for this week.

Q. You mentioned playing with Michael Block. I'm curious being a So Cal guy, did you have a relationship with him prior to playing with him, and were you following everything that's been happening to him over the last 18 months or so?

JAKE KNAPP: For sure, yeah. I wouldn't say we're super close friends by any means. We've known each other for a really long time. Played a decent amount of golf together. The Southern California golf community is a very small bubble, so we've known each other for a very long time. When I Mondayed into the Farmers in 2015 I was actually playing a practice round, decided to cut across on No. 8 and jumped to 18 and he was on the tee box, so we played 18 together then.

He asked me to be his partner in this event. It was like a pro-am event. We cross paths all the time and see each other all the time in So Cal.

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