

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Joel Dahmen

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Joel Dahmen to the interview room here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Joel, this is your fifth start in this event where you have a top 5 I believe in 2020. I guess just open it up, what you are you looking forward to this week and the challenge that Bay Hill represents.

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, I'm just looking forward to being back and seeing some of my old friends I haven't seen in a few years. It's nice to hang out with the big kids this week. Incredible event. Really hard golf course. Played 12 or 13 holes yesterday. So, yeah, it's definitely elevated, Signature Event, you can feel it, and I'm just super excited to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Couple top 10s this season, including one last week to help you get into this field. Talk a little bit about the game, how it's feeling, you feel like you're in a good spot entering this week?

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, I thought the game, my first start was Palm Springs and was almost surprised how well I played there. Historically I have not played well there. But hit the ball really well. Kind of been carrying that over. I've been, there's been some extra work at home. Some extra motivation of not having full status for the first time in nine years or whatever it's been. So, yeah, the game feels good, the mind is cooperating as well, which is a huge part of it. I think you have to drive the ball straight here, that's what I've been doing. And the irons have been, you know, solid as well. If the putter cooperates, the game feels pretty good.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll open it up to questions.

**Q. When you left Sea Island, how far did this tournament look for someone who was outside the top 100, and what kind of schedule were you expecting and could you have seen yourself here?**

JOEL DAHMEN: No, I could not see myself here. I thought it was the first time in a long time that there was a lot of unknowns in my career. I didn't know any, didn't

know what starts I was going to play, didn't know if I would play some Korn Ferry Tour this year. I hoped for some sponsor invites as well and those things. But it was just so up in the air. I think most players didn't really know the schedule outside of that, you know, we didn't know what we were going to get into. So I think for me the biggest thing was, instead of knowing I was going to play 25-plus events, is that every single start is a big start, and I have to treat those, you know, they're all really big. And I feel like when you start playing 25-plus events and you play six or seven in a row at times you can kind of just become Groundhog Day a little bit. So just trying to be a little more disciplined in my process, in my practice, and make sure I'm ready to tee it up when I do. When I left Sea Island it wasn't great, but I was going home to an eight-day-old kid as well, and that helped a lot kind of bridged the gap of realizing -- you know, I knew it wasn't the end of my career. I knew that I had a lot of good golf left in me. It was just taking advantage of the opportunities, and so far I've done that.

**Q. How would you measure your level of, I wouldn't say depression, but melancholy compared with motivation?**

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, so that was, got home the week of Thanksgiving I guess or the week before. We host Thanksgiving, we host Christmas, and my dad winters in Arizona, so it was great to spend a lot of time with him. I didn't touch a club for three, four weeks. Caddie situation's kind of up in the air as well. My wife kind of was, I think it was December 27th, and she's like, So, have you thought about like anything next year? I'm like, No, I really haven't. I should probably get on that. So kind of in that moment I picked up the golf clubs again and got out there and practiced, and kind of started putting the pieces together a little bit. But for sure three weeks and probably all of four there was no -- there wasn't even a thought of golf, honestly. I was just enjoying -- well I don't know how much you enjoy a one month old, those first few weeks, those are hard. But just being around and enjoying it and not sure what the future holds. But I wasn't worried about it. I knew, I mean, everything turns out pretty good for me. So I wasn't completely concerned about my future, but at the same time there wasn't a whole lot I could do in that



moment either. So I was just kind of waiting for the numbers to come out and make sure that when I was practicing I was doing the right things.

**Q. Is there any, from your own perspective, is it too still too narrow a path to get to these places, or should you be seen as any type of a, dare I say, inspiration?**

JOEL DAHMEN: You know, that's a good question. Yeah, the path to the TOUR is tougher. The path to stay on TOUR is tougher than it's ever been. There's a lot of talk about being more of a closed shop, and the game's not expanding, per se. The opportunities are getting tougher.

But on the other side I'm proof that, in four events, you can play well enough and earn your way into these events. And if you play well in one of these next two and you kind of keep going on the upward trend. And that's the great thing about golf is no one can play defense on me. No one -- Scottie can't block my shot. Rory can't go out there and kick my ball. And so in that sense no one's stopping you from playing great golf, and no one's stopping you from winning and doing all the things that you want to. But I think, yeah, I think more so of that I've just been going week-to-week and happy the weeks I'm in. I wasn't in Torrey Pines until Monday morning. I was potentially as much as four out the week prior to PGA National last week to Cognizant, and then found my way in that as well. So it's just kind of up in the air. And I'm not in the field at Valspar at this moment in time either. And there's no way I can play my way into Valspar. I can win, obviously. But I can go second, second these next weeks and not be in Valspar. And then you have Houston and San Antonio, and you're not sure how those are going are going to shake out either. So I could be looking at three weeks off, and four with the Masters, and then five with RBC technically. So it's kind of interesting how you could play unbelievably well and not shuffle your way into some events earlier in the year.

**Q. Are you in PLAYERS?**

JOEL DAHMEN: I'm in PLAYERS, yes. So I have this week and next, but, you know, if everyone wants to play golf, like with where my number is, I wouldn't play for five straight weeks. Which is kind of interesting, maybe, but that's just how it is. And the answer is always just play better, right. So I could have played better last year, and I could have won already this year I suppose, and that would take care of a lot too.

**Q. How close is this year to the feeling of maybe having no status and playing Mondays and not really -- being in limbo kind of every week?**

JOEL DAHMEN: I would say it's a lot, that's a long ways down the list. I knew I would, I knew I would get minimum probably 15. Because the summer months gets pretty -- I think starting in -- I guess even after June, because you have the Canadian Open in June. And then once July hits I'll probably get in almost every event through the fall, regardless of if you're playing well or not, just because of how the numbers shake out. In that sense I didn't think I was going to play as much as I have this early, and this week and next week are huge bonus events obviously. But we had a few extra trip plans. We were going to go to the mountains, see some snow, and we were going to do some extra things as a family. And now, fortunately, I get to play some more golf and family can join me.

**Q. How closely do you follow professional tennis?**

JOEL DAHMEN: Not as much as when Federer and Nadal were going at it. For sure the last few years have been a little more bleak -- I watch the majors, I guess.

**Q. Do you understand how the points and the rankings work or anything?**

JOEL DAHMEN: No.

**Q. Okay. Well just kind of brings me to the next question. A lot of talk is, instead of maybe getting rid of an event like the Cognizant or the 3M or whatever, pick one of those open events, it would just be a tiered, it would be kind of like the B Tour. Would you be in favor of that rather than those going away?**

JOEL DAHMEN: Absolutely. Any opportunity to play, I think you're looking -- when you look at the Korn Ferry Tour, you look at the DP World Tour, if you could -- those are great tournaments, they're great golf courses. The town comes out and supports them. It's a big thing for those areas. They have been going on for a long time. I think even if I have, you know, I've jokingly called it PGA TOUR and a PGB Tour for a few years. But I think the purses should be raised on the Korn Ferry as is, and if you want to make 8, 10, 12 of those events where you have the top guys from the Korn Ferry Tour come up and play. I'm not smart enough to figure how the points work on both, but if you graduate from the Korn Ferry Tour and you get to play in these, you call them elevated events for the Korn Ferry Tour, their points could still count towards the Korn Ferry Tour, that type thing. And then you still have the opportunity for guys who finish outside the top 125 in the prior year, and you add 50 to 75 guys from there, and you're going to have an unbelievable field still. You're going to have a bunch of great young talent that they can showcase. And if you want to bring in some guys from the DP World Tour as well I think it makes sense. You could

fill in a field of 125 guys that would be pretty darn good. So I just hope -- you hear rumors of some tournaments going away and sponsorships, and I am not smart enough, I know nothing of that side of things. But playing opportunities is the number one thing, and if there's always a way to, if you play well you keep climbing the ladder, I think that's great. But it's just getting harder and harder to do.

**Q. Season obviously going really well so far. But if you were to fall back, next year or something, lose your status, do you feel like you have the fight in you to go back down and work your way back up, past champions status not what it used to be, you know.**

JOEL DAHMEN: I asked myself that question kind of in December a little bit, even when I was going back and, you know, should I go play some events on the Korn Ferry Tour or whatever it is. To be honest, I don't know if I do. The road is so hard. You see some guys go down and come back. I know like Jonathan Byrd is still out there grinding and doing things. And it's hard. We're really spoiled up here on TOUR. We get to play the best events. We get courtesy cars. The money when you play well is incredible. To go back down and, you know, swallow your pride a little bit and your ego and to go to these smaller cities and smaller purses would be difficult. The family wouldn't be able to travel as much either, and I'm thankful that my family travels quite a bit with me. So I don't know if I would. That's a great question. I hope I don't have to find out.

**Q. Did you have a chance to sit down with Brian Rolapp, and if so what was the couple things that you brought up as important to you?**

JOEL DAHMEN: I think he's probably pretty open to conversation. I have not sat down and talked with him. I haven't participated in any of that. I was on the PAC, geez, four, five years ago now. There's certain voices in the game of golf, and I'm not one of them, no matter what I'm going to say or feel. So the only thing I can do is play good golf when I get the opportunity and everything else will kind of take care of itself on that front.

**Q. Two really off beat questions. Did you at least find a place to stay the next two weeks?**

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, it's amazing, social media can be maybe not the greatest place, but I try to use it for good when I'm on there. Yeah, I reached out, just said kind of a Hail Mary, and the golf world's really small, and luckily had a lot of leads on places this week. So ended up finding one that was actually great. Then Aron Price, who used to play Korn Ferry Tour, maybe even had TOUR status once,

but he's in the real estate world out there now, connected through Colt Knost actually, got my number, and we've been texting back and forth on a lot of houses there, and ended up finding a great place there through him. So, yeah, there's, there was -- everyone is, why do you need so many bedrooms and such a big place. Well, I got my family coming, and we got, you know, caddie's going to stay with me, and in-laws are coming too. It's a really cool thing that I get to share this journey with my people at two of the best weeks on TOUR and so we're going to try to enjoy it.

**Q. Secondly, when you finished last week, did you see the end of the tournament? Did you see what Shane did towards the end?**

JOEL DAHMEN: Yes.

**Q. I would be curious how you looked at that as someone who plays golf for a living and has been through that very recently, how do you think that compares with how an average fan would view what they saw?**

JOEL DAHMEN: You just feel for him. You're like -- your heart sinks in a way. Nico played awesome down the stretch, obviously, to get it done. But yeah, it's amazing, because Shane's won majors, he's won multiple times, he's a Ryder Cup legend, right. I didn't realize that he didn't close one out in Europe already this earlier this year. On the DP World Tour I think he struggled coming down the stretch in one of those as well, so I didn't realize that. So yeah, I still think about my close last spring. I mean, we're coming up on a year and there's a lot of times that will pop up in my head as well. Not necessarily when you're playing golf. But certainly when you lose status in the fall real quick you're like, Wow, that would have been a lot easier if I would have closed that one out. So you just feel terrible for the guy. And you, he's going to have more opportunities, he's obviously an unbelievable player, but scar tissue does build up. No matter what narrative you want to tell yourself, that you're a closer and you can do all the right things, but it builds up and it just gets harder. I think we could -- Rory did that for 10 years in a major, I guess, that type thing. And it doesn't mean you can't overcome it, but he'll be thinking about it for a while, for sure.

**Q. Do you have any first memories of this tournament, and the closing holes so iconic here, do you have any first memories of watching Tiger sink any crazy putts, or what are your thoughts when you step on 18 and take part in that history this week, and what are your first memories?**

JOEL DAHMEN: A lot of Tiger, obviously. I mean, he made so many putts there on that 18th hole. The back right pin, they're breaking three feet. And, yeah, when you're a kid and it's Tiger Woods hitting those shots, you're like, Oh, that's what he does. But then you play the hole, and you have to hit it in the fairway, number one. And two, you still have a very intimidating golf shot over this. So it's just more impressive to me that he did it over and over again. But someone made a shot in like '92 from the fairway as well to win, I think, or get in the playoff here, which is -- but you see highlights every year of some awesome stuff and awesome finishes around here. And I know they have the red cardigan now that they have been handing out, and just being on property -- and I never got to meet Arnie -- but at the locker room, and just the feel and the vibe of this place is really special.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Joel, thanks for the time.

JOEL DAHMEN: Thank you.

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