

Cognizant Classic

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Jake Knapp

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, we'd like to welcome Jake Knapp to the interview room at the Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches.

Thanks for joining us. You're coming off your maiden win on the PGA TOUR at the Mexican Open at Vidanta. Can you share some thoughts from last week?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah. I mean, I don't think it's fully sunk in yet. Obviously getting a lot of emails and texts and calls and everything, so doing my best to focus on this week.

Yeah, last week was pretty amazing to say the least. Played really solid the first three days and the last day obviously wasn't pretty, but was happy I was able to get it done.

Q. That win earned you spots into the remaining five Signature Events. Can you touch on which events over the next couple months you're looking forward to?

JAKE KNAPP: All I can think about is the Masters. Yeah, in between that place and Pebble Beach, I've always said I have no interest in playing the golf course or going there unless I'm playing. That one is just kind of the forefront of my mind.

At the same time, I'm super excited about the Arnold Palmer next week and The players after that. Trying to stay in the present right now.

Q. Turning the focus to this week here at the Cognizant Classic, have you had a chance to play the course? Thoughts on competing this week?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, I played the back nine yesterday. Trying to walk the front nine a little bit today. The course is great. I like it a lot, to be honest. It's windy and there are some challenging shots. I think it will be a good test.

Obviously the guys I'm playing with hopefully I can feed off them, and I'm sure they'll play well.

Q. What did you learn about yourself on Sunday?

JAKE KNAPP: I think -- I mean, basically just I don't need to have my A+ game to win. I mean, obviously having a four-shot lead definitely helps, but I've always told myself ever since college -- my assistant coach told me make the putts on Thursday, Friday, Saturday so you don't have to make them on Sunday.

No lead is safe on this TOUR, especially with how good these guys are. Saturday I did my best to try and build on that lead and not get too comfortable. Then Sunday, yeah, just -- I mean, learned a lot of little things about my game.

But just for the most part, that I can grind it out and rely on different parts of my game if a few things aren't working.

Q. We know last week was an emotional win. The story came out that you and your grandfather shared a lot of memories where you guys would share a cigar and he would have a box for you after your win. Was there a specific cigar that you enjoyed after the Mexican Open?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, it was a Macanudo. Came in those little white tubes. When I was a kid he would fill them up with dimes and give them to me. That was kind of my bonus.

Q. Your grandfather would've been the right age to appreciate Arnold and Jack. Did he talk about those guys? Was he more of a Jack or Arnold guy?

JAKE KNAPP: I don't remember if he was more Jack or Arnold. He enjoyed the classic part to the game and the history of it, but he was just a huge like sports memorabilia guy in general. We talked about golf, but that's why he was so great, too; he never forced golf on me. Parents, the same way.

He was a big baseball and hockey guy. We covered all different sports.

Q. As a young kid was there one sport you would've



dreamed about playing professionally?

JAKE KNAPP: Not really. I always felt like golf was kind of any calling or what I enjoyed most. I love soccer and basketball and baseball, but I've felt like golf was where I was happiest.

Q. The officials changed No. 10 from a par-4 to par-5 to, quote, give you guys a break in the middle of the golf course. Is that comedic or brutal there? Do you appreciate that change?

JAKE KNAPP: Compared to last week it's a little interesting. Playing No. 4 last week into the wind off the right, there is not many holes I hit a good drive and I'm debating hitting a 4- or 2-iron into par-4. Yesterday I played No. 10 and had 7-iron into a par-5.

Most guys out here will tell you the par doesn't really matter. You're going to play it pretty much the same way. If anything, maybe it just helps you out on your scorecard when you make a 5 and don't feel as bad since there is not a square around it.

For the most part, yeah, things like that you try not to care too much about.

Q. Jake, you're playing, the first place prizes are life-changing money. In that scenario, what the value of the trophy you won last week?

JAKE KNAPP: I mean, the value of the trophy and all the things you get in terms of world ranking points and getting into all the other events, I'm not -- I don't have a wife or family to worry about. It's just me, so my life is pretty cheap.

I've been in this game a long time, so yeah, the money side is great, but getting into the Masters and the PGA and things like that mean a lot more to me than what the winner's check was.

Q. Second question about the trophy. So you pose for photos. Did you leave it behind and it's being sent to you, or did you say, I really would like to travel with it?

JAKE KNAPP: To be honest, I'm not even sure. I didn't ask what kind of trophy -- I know they said something will be sent to me. I don't think I get the one that I held there because that thing has been around since the '50s or '60s. Some pretty cool names when I was able to look through that thing. Lee Trevino and some other guys on there.

They did give me a big bottle of tequila and let me take that, so I got to ship that home at some point.

Q. Speaking of home, what kind of impact has your brother, Ryan, had on your career? Also, the Costa Mesa Country Club community.

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, I mean, growing up in the same area, I went to UCLA because I didn't want to go too far from home. My brother is three years older than me and a great player in his own right. When he first turned pro he realized the travel and the lifestyle wasn't for him.

But, yeah, he's kind of been like my wailing wall any time I need to talk something out. He's the first person to hold me accountable and remind me give myself a pat on the back once in a while. Same thing for my home course. My country club, Mesa Verde, they've had me there as an honorary member since 2012, and those guys are great. I saw some videos yesterday of everybody watching and cheering and everything. It's pretty cool to have that hometown support.

Q. Jake, you're paired with Rory this week. Obviously in a marquee group after the win. When you see that, see you're one of the focal points, how did that make you feel?

JAKE KNAPP: Very surreal to be honest. I've never met Rory, so super excited to play with him. You know, be a fun group. Be cool to see his action in person, and I'm sure there will be a bunch of people around and all that stuff.

But for the most part, I'm going to go out there and play golf. I heard he's a super nice guy, so looking forward walking inside the ropes with him.

Q. Where you are in your career, what kept you focused, motivated knowing a people like Mexico could come?

JAKE KNAPP: You know, I don't know. I just never really had any like quit in me for the most part. Just never -- like I said, I just kind of changed my goals in terms of needing to be on the PGA TOUR at this point or need to go win, and just changed everything internal. It's like if I just keep working hard, doing the right things, good things are going to happen.

Just put a lot of faith in myself that the things I'm doing are right. It's just kind of slowly started to pay off over the last few years.

Q. Jake, you started the year in that reorder category for the Korn Ferry TOUR. Seeing what the bottom of that category, how many opportunities those guys

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

have gotten, how much pressure was there early on to play well? And then secondly, you winning, do you think that maybe offers a little bit more inspiration for some of your peers to get themselves out by playing some good golf?

JAKE KNAPP: For sure. I mean, I remember talking to my caddie and friend, Mike, at the end of last season on the Korn Ferry. I think after Nebraska, finished like Top 5, and that kind of got me right around to the amount of points I was locked in but not 100%.

I told him, I was like, we can't settle for 30th, because that's still a priority list. 29th is better than 30th and 20th is better than 21st. We grinded it out to the end, and I was happy I did.

Obviously I've been -- Sony I was kind of on the bubble. Even coming into this week before Mexico I was only three or four spots in.

So, yeah, we knew it was going to be tough. Obviously it's kind of the same thing Korn Ferry last year. I only had four guaranteed starts, so you know you have to play well at the start.

For me, I feel like that first month of events, I would've liked to play better at Amex, but Torrey Pines I feel like fits me well. You try not to think about it. You figure good golf is going to take care of itself.

Yeah, definitely adds a little bit of pressure. I talked to a bunch of guys recently. Obviously given me a lot of congratulations. Hopefully it gives them a little bit of a like kick in the butt that they can come out here and win as well.

Q. You talked about being in the here and now, the Bay Hill coming, PLAYERS, but there is that other tournament coming up in April. How difficult is it to not let this consume every second, every thought, every breath, every everything?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah, I think it'll just be in my mind the entire time leading up to it. I think it'll be hard to ignore. I do a good job when I'm getting ready for tournaments, and especially starting today, especially just getting back to work, doing the stuff I need to work ton get ready for this week.

Then after The PLAYERS I'm going to take a week off and go home and let everything soak in, get settled, and build up my schedule for the rest of the year.

Yeah, for an event like that, I'm not going to try to act like

it's not a big deal or not think about it. I'm going to be okay soaking that one in.

Q. Have you heard from any Ducks past or present since your win?

JAKE KNAPP: Yeah. Ryan Getzlaf texted me. We were texting back and forth the last couple days. Good friend of mine. He has been a good friend of mine.

Lucas Bisa (phonetic), who retired a few years ago. We've been texting kind of nonstop. Few texts for sure.

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