

Cognizant Classic

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. We would like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview room here at the Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches. Jordan, welcome. You're making your debut this week. Can you just let us know some opening remarks on how your game is feeling this week?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, we came off a deep freeze in Dallas last week, and we decided that was enough of that. I'm excited to be here. I played here in junior golf. I've obviously watched it pretty much every year. It's got one of the most exciting closing stretches in the game. Actually, all four of these Florida tournaments in a row do, have pretty amazing closing stretches.

Yeah, it's exciting. I feel like the West Coast was kind of a let's see how everything is feeling post-surgery. I missed the first month of the season. I just wasn't ready to play any of those events yet. And it was really nice to get back and then even to get into contention one week.

So my goal now, as we look towards the Masters, is to try to play difficult golf courses and work my way into contention and just see what I can improve upon by the time we get to Augusta.

Q. You mentioned that one of your best bits of advice was no one has ever come back too late from surgery. I know it seems kind of obvious, but athletes are competitors, and you just want to get back. So take us through that process of the patience it took to make sure you didn't come back, and then how it's felt week to week as you've played.

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I set a goal to play in the desert post-surgery, which I then ended up not doing. About a week and a half, two weeks out, I was just -- everything right now, commitments, tournaments, whatever, a lot of it is just up in the air just because I have to -- it's better to do that last minute than to commit and have to drop out.

So that was my goal, and I ended up waiting another two weeks to play and started at Pebble Beach.

I believe your question was, how --

Q. The patience it took.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I mean, it was actually -- it was pretty easy for the first 12 to 16 weeks because I'm just following directions, and there weren't other tournaments being played. I believe if I had this done, this surgery, this week, and then you watch the next 12 weeks, that would be incredibly challenging not to try to rush things.

But given the timing of when I did it, I felt, obviously, once I was going to be able to start practicing again, I was going to be pretty far behind and have to play catch up. But the first 16 weeks or so were pretty easy.

And then from there, it was a challenge because some days were better than others.

I started out as, maybe, a low- to mid-single digit handicapper as I came back, and I needed to work my way about 15 shots better by the time I were to play a tournament, and that didn't quite happen, but then it got better as the stretch went on.

Yeah, it was a unique experience that I don't wish upon anybody, and hope I don't have to go through again. But I had a great team around me that, you know, I had directions in place that, you know, what could have been an eight-week recovery, was pushed to 12, that turned into really 16 before full go, for no other reason than just to let everything heal and take away the 1 percent chance that anything bad could happen, is really what my surgeon was saying. He's like, You're probably better early. If we had to rush it, we could, and 99 percent chance you're fine, but you have the time; let's take the extra 1 percent.

It's not normal. I don't wake up in the morning and my two hands feel the same by any means. But by the time I get going, the idea is that once I tee off on the first hole, I don't think about it all day, and I was able to do that, for the most part, in the last three weeks. There was a couple stretches here and there where it bothered me, but from the guys I talked to that have had similar operations, that's normal, and about the year mark is when they really started to



forget about it.

So it might still take a little while, but I didn't feel like -- when it was warm out, I didn't feel any restrictions. I had a harder time when it was cold.

Q. At this point in your career, you've played most of the TOUR events. Your debut here this week, how different is your approach having never played the Cognizant? And have you, in fact, never played here, even in juniors and in college?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure if they still do. They had one of the most prestigious junior golf events that I played in November, the Polo. I think it was in November.

I remember playing it because it's a bear of a golf course for teenagers.

But yeah, I can't remember -- other than certain major championship venues, I can't remember the last time I played an event that I hadn't played before. So, my prep will be different. I plan on touching them all today and spending quite a bit of time on and around the greens.

I think it'll be fun because it's -- sometimes I think if you play a course a bunch, you kind of are like, well, I'll go see nine and get a little -- I know a couple shots to hit around the greens, and that's nice. You can check the list. But it's almost kind of like a fun learning experience to go out and -- I know the pins are going to be in the four corners, so what days do you attack and what days --

And then, after you watch this tournament enough on TV, especially the closing five or six holes, you've got a pretty good idea of what to do, which is just hit the center of the greens and try to birdie the last.

Q. Jordan, yesterday's policy board meeting, when you go back to last week's meeting between the TOUR and the Public Investment Fund and the White House, there seemed to be optimism coming from the TOUR following that meeting. After yesterday's policy board meeting, do you share in that optimism, and if so, why?

JORDAN SPIETH: I was on yesterday's meeting to get through the governance for Camilo essentially to roll over into the player and enterprises board. So after that, I couldn't tell you because I was on for the governance at the beginning, and I'm not on either board anymore.

Q. One of the things that you would have been involved with is possible changes to the TOUR Championship format. Why did you feel like -- if there

is going to be changes, why do you feel like they need to be made?

JORDAN SPIETH: I had heard out some early propositions, maybe going back to pre-New Year's, and I think in general, again, I've been out of specifics because it was Camilo's position -- he was elected to take over, and I was just assuming the rest of Rory's Inc. board. Then there happened to be two boards created, and then it was just about getting the governance done by first quarter this year. I felt like it was my place to not -- to have the elected player mirror both boards, as I think it's going to be going forward.

So again, I can't, in specifics, answer your question because I think that was talked about a lot yesterday, too, but I wasn't on it anymore.

I think the idea is just to make the fan experience the best, make NBC, get them very involved in what they think is going to be the best option, and ideally, you end up having the most exciting Saturday-Sunday situation that's easy to follow with the most drama you can have that goes all the way down to the last hole.

We've had a couple different iterations of it. In the first iteration, I think the push-back was, whoever it was, didn't want two different champions; it was confusing, on the same green. Then you go to the stroke format, and although easier to follow, I think the idea is the TOUR, the networks, and from polling fans, I think that they believe there's a possibility of a better format, whether that involves any kind of head-to-head matches, it involves less guys on Sunday all playing for it. I think everything is pretty much on the table, and I'm not sure what they've narrowed it down to since.

Q. Two questions, if I may. The first, to follow up on the answer about the wrist. When you have a procedure like that, is it expected that there's a point where you say, I'm back? Or is this a new normal?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, my hope is that it's not a new normal because I don't enjoy the way it feels waking up, and if it's every day, it's okay by the time I play, but it's not ideal because I would like to be able to feel pretty good in all conditions, and it wasn't that way on the West Coast.

Having said that, it was my first go at it. So I think a better test will be post-Hilton Head maybe, where I go through a couple more stretches of tournaments. And ideally by then, it's feeling a little bit better each morning.

Anytime I had any road blocks, anything that stung when I hit or whatever, I would take a little break, work it back up,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

and then by the time I hit the same shot again two weeks later, it didn't hurt anymore.

I had some real experiences that tell me that everything is going to get better. I'm just trying to find the right balance of rest and playing because it's not -- I rested it for six days straight last week, and I came back, and it was way worse the first day. It was 25 degrees, and I was hitting off a mat.

But it was still worse, as in -- you know, putting some force into it since it's healed can sometimes actually loosen it up, can make it better. So it's trying to find that right balance on these full days. It was a lot easier when it was on a smaller ball count and you could take the time to mess with different options.

Now, if I'm committed to -- if I need to stop, I'll stop for a little bit. I just feel like it's power through. I'm not in pain, it just gets tight.

Q. The decision to play here, like you said, it's a bear for teenagers; it's a bear for grown-ups, too, at times. It's five or five-plus hour rounds. If the wind changes, it's hard. It's not a place that a lot of guys flock to for a lot of reasons.

Was it just you need to play? What went into the decision to say, I'm going to try it this week? Is it because it's warm? Was it a combination? What went into it?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I mean, I haven't played much in the last six months, so even though I played a few events -- now, this used to be the one week between what was the West Coast, a World Golf Championship, and then THE PLAYERS before that. In the schedule before Texas leading into -- I've always played the Texas events. It was quite simply a scheduling issue, so I've never even looked at it.

It wasn't because I looked at it and didn't want to play. It was just quite simply, I've got to take a week off or else I'm playing eight out of nine or seven out of eight to start, and it's just not what I do.

So this year, the fact that I hadn't played much, and then I'm not sure exactly what I'm going to be able to play going forward, I think this year's schedule is just a little bit up in arms for me as I try to get my feet under me. I also am playing a bit of catch-up. I don't like finishing outside the top 50 with the new system.

If I'm healthy and feel like I can play -- I called my coach, it was Thursday or Friday last week, and I just said, Hey, you know, what's this -- he comes here every year. What's the golf course like for me. He goes, I think it's a great fit.

You've got to drive the ball, obviously, precise, but tough golf courses in the wind on Bermuda, that's kind of what I grew up on. He thought it was a really good fit, so it all came together in 12 hours, essentially.

I was like, well, it's still under 32 year at home, and it was just a weird cold spell, and South Florida sounds nice.

Q. Jordan, this field is mostly rookies, guys trying to improve their status, things like that. Where do you stand on the whole scarcity debate that there needs to be fewer tournaments, the TOUR needs to be leaner? Where do you stand in terms of your personal opinion on that?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I think a lot that's been done was reactive and appropriately so. I believe that, again, through -- the TOUR, ideally, is going through -- I know they're going through their process of future product model stuff, involving networks, involving fans, involving sponsors. Those are the three that need to be involved, as well as, obviously, finding the right situation for the players, being at the forefront of their mind.

I think it's more -- I don't know if I have a great take on it personally. I think more so, it's just figuring out exactly what the best future product model is, and we'll have to see what happens within future investments, what that means, and then everyone trying to -- if the game comes together ideally, then you kind of figure out what is the actual market, what is the right number of events, what is the right number in the events, and whether it's more elevated type events but more players, or it's back to what it used to be. That, I don't know, because I've taken myself out of those conversations.

I think we'll have a good gauge off of this year of if this type of model works, and that doesn't mean that adjusting it on certain field sizes and whatnot wouldn't happen. It's just off to a good start in general this year. A lot of that probably has to do with, one, we've had great champions so far, and then I think when you get bad weather everywhere, ratings go up, too.

You've got great Florida Swing golf with drama-packed finishes, so it should continue these four weeks.

Q. And then, just to follow up on that, how much do you hear from guys who feel like maybe their voice isn't heard on TOUR and things like that? And in these board meetings, do their concerns get discussed?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I would say over the last year and a half, I spent actually a lot of time, more than ever, listening to guys, reaching out to some, plenty of guys

reaching out to me and hearing what they're saying.

And then, yeah, I mean, what's ended up really happening with the solution to when guys have -- I don't want to call it complaints, but when things come up like that, it gets directed to TOUR management that go through either a statistic analysis on what they're saying to give them more information, stuff like that, where it's -- if it's the points difference and then saying, hey, we're willing to adjust, we just want to see a season first, stuff like that, and that has been done. That was done for this season.

The idea is to try to get everything as fair as possible while creating the most opportunities for the top guys to be playing the best golf courses and the best tournaments as often as possible together, and having pathways to create stars coming up from Canada, Latin America, through the Korn Ferry, on to the PGA TOUR, being able to have Ludvig come up and immediately make an impact into the biggest events. Those kind of pathways are what the TOUR has always been about.

So having a combination of the bunch, I think is what's going into the future product model, and everyone ideally is being heard.

Again, I'd like to emphasize again that I'm no longer involved and can't speak for everyone in the past few months. But prior to that, I'd spent a lot of time talking with a lot of players and trying to direct them -- not giving my opinion. I don't have the answers -- but trying to direct them to the people who have the answers.

Q. I know you said you haven't looked forward much, but barring anything unforeseen the rest of the Florida Swing, do you have that mapped out?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure yet. All I know right now is THE PLAYERS, and other than that, I'm not sure. I'm going to try to work my way in, play in to next week and go from there.

Q. I believe the wrist issue started almost two years ago, May of 2023?

JORDAN SPIETH: That's right.

Q. Was there ever a time in that span before the surgery that you felt like you could play your best, or has it been that long since you've actually gotten out there and said, this is the best I can be?

JORDAN SPIETH: It was certainly -- I would have done something about it if I felt there was a chance I couldn't be at my best. I would have done something immediately.

But my original incident I got an MRI right away and it was a tendon sheath tear, but we don't operate on those, the docs who I saw in Dallas.

I just iced it and taped it up all year, which limited my mobility in my left wrist, which has always been a weapon of mine in my swing. So certainly I was limited a little bit through the rest of that year.

Then I thought I was on top of it in the fall of '23, and then I had another incident that was just a random dislocation out of nowhere. I didn't put any pressure. It was like a non-contact injury almost. Just very weird. Those are always the worst, right?

Then I was like, wait a second, what's going on here. Again, it wasn't until it started to happen all the time, really from about this time last year through the end of the season that I was worried it could dislocate at any point in time. I started being able to just click it back in on command, and that's not a good thing.

I would hold it down right here and just shake, and it would go from not being able to turn my hand to I could hit driver at full speed. It was a very weird deal.

I wish I had done something earlier, but I asked the right questions, tried to get on top of it, until I found -- there's a few docs that do it, and players have had it done before, and it was time for me to do it.

Q. A lot of your good buddies live here locally. I'm wondering, are they excited to have you in town? Some of them are playing, some aren't, but are you going to have any hospitality, any home-cooked meals from Rickie or Justin or anyone who lives here?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, they both reached out -- they offered to stay with them, and I decided to just stay closer. Yeah, I do plan on going and seeing them and having a couple dinners and hanging out. They're not far away.

I've just not spent much time in this area at all, which is very surprising because it's such a professional men's golf mecca between all the guys that live here, all the great golf courses, obviously this tournament. So you have everything here.

I just have oddly -- it's like the one place I just haven't spent much time. But I'm really looking forward to checking it out this week. And yeah, I'll go see those guys at their homes. They both have kids now, so it'll be fun -- we hang out on the road all the time, so it'll be fun to see them in their home.



Q. We heard you might have added a new hybrid to the bag recently. I'm curious about that change and the process that might have went into it, and then any other equipment changes you might have made in the bag recently.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I was looking at -- at Torrey Pines I was looking at -- it's just so different than the desert. I put in a 7-wood, but then now I've got back to the hybrid. But the new hybrid, the GT.

For me, it's all about distance gaps. For a hybrid, it's about the look, first and foremost, and then can I hit a draw that spins enough, and from there the club is pretty easy for me. It passes the look test, hits the yardage window, and then I can turn it and have it stay in the air, are the combinations.

I play a driving iron a few events a year, and then I've almost always played a hybrid. The only times I've played a 7-wood are the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines and then the tournament a couple weeks ago. It's a good club. I was just hitting them last week, and the hybrid was just a little bit more consistent in accuracy for me.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Jordan. Good luck this week.