

Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Jordan Spieth

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview room here at the Valspar Championship. You're making your sixth start at the tournament this time and coming back first time since 2018. What kind of inspired you to return this year?

JORDAN SPIETH: I planned on playing here in 2021. I had COVID. Then last year my brother got married this weekend. So it was kind of -- I had a couple years I didn't play, and then it was where it was in the schedule, and then I was planning on it the last couple years and just wasn't able to.

So I'm excited to be back. I love this golf course. It's as full as I've ever seen it. I know it's been awhile since I've been here, but these greens and the rough around the greens are just full and pure, and it's in just the best condition I've ever seen the golf course in. Again, it may have been that way the last few years. I don't know.

But very excited about that, considering it kind of makes you have to golf your ball even more around what's already a very difficult track relative to the rest of the season. So I like it a lot. I'm excited to be here and kind of on this Florida Swing where I feel like I've had some good things going, but no fireworks yet and hopefully can draw back on some old ones I've had around this place.

THE MODERATOR: It's certainly a challenging course, and I wanted to ask you, you performed well at Bay Hill, had a pretty good tournament last week at THE PLAYERS, all difficult golf courses. What's it like playing a three-week stretch where the courses are really challenging like that? And how taxing is that on you mentally and physically.

JORDAN SPIETH: Physically it's not too bad because they're actually flatter courses, firmer ground. But mentally it's tough. Bay Hill always takes a lot out of you because you just -- you feel like sometimes you hit a shot, and you're like, well, that could be good, it ends up good, and sometimes it just never stops moving and it end up in a tough spot. Last week can have a little bit of that too.

But I feel good. Took yesterday off for the first off-day in probably a month. That felt nice. Just kind of not overworking these couple days and just try and carry on from last week. I just made a couple bad decisions, lost a few strokes with my driver, mainly on just shot shape versus actual misses. So just trying to get my body right so I feel like I'm turning the right way and kind of back to driving it the way I have been this year. That's really important around this place.

Yeah, I feel mentally and physically just fine, given the last couple weeks, but obviously quite a bit of a stretch ahead with this week, next, and then Augusta and Hilton Head.

THE MODERATOR: Take some questions for Jordan, please.

Q. 10 years ago this tournament is where you secured special temporary membership with the top 10 after Puerto Rico, and with it being 10 years ago, I was wondering if you could reflect a little bit on your memories from that week and that stretch and what comes to mind and what that meant to you at the time to cross that threshold.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it was everything at the time. I didn't have any status anywhere and I had made a decision not to go secure Korn Ferry Tour status the week prior, and go to Puerto Rico instead and played well, and then got into here. I wasn't expecting to play this tournament at all and I got up-and-down out of the front bunker on 18, made probably like a 6- or 7-footer that I didn't know if it was going to get me to the dollar amount or not, but I knew it was important. I think it was T-7 or something.

I mean, that was huge. That opened up all the opportunities for the rest of the year that kind of was a springboard for getting all the way to the TOUR Championship and then the Presidents Cup and just really, really great memories that I wouldn't have had if it were weren't for the finish to this event.

I holed a shot on 17, like, a flop shot and then got up-and-down on 18, and I played the back nine today between the 2013 memories and then 2015, closing it out



on number 17. It was just kind of fun to relive those shots, it always has been, coming back here. It had been a little while now, so tried to have some fun with it. It's a special tournament that -- I don't forget about that. The way things go over 10, 11 years, there's some tournaments when they change in the schedule, you just can't make it, and this is one I'm glad, and hopefully I can continue to come back to.

Q. It's definitely a common thread kind of talking to guys through the years how those moments, kind of those fork in the roads of getting status are always just something you remember --

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah. I mean, you get a job, right? Like, you're trying out to try and get a job. Although things were looking good, I mean, without playing well there, there's no security if you don't have at least temporary status somewhere. So yeah, it's massive. It gave me a lot of freedom and tournaments wanting to give me starts and essentially being able to play a full schedule until eventually winning later that year, which then you actually get to choose where you want to go. So it was a massive opportunity because of this event.

Q. On Sunday you got asked a question about the run Scheffler's been on and you gave a pretty insightful answer, in-depth answer, as to the feelings that you have when you're on that sort of run, and yet at the same time you sounded maybe a little bit wistful, like wishing I was back sort of in that zone. I don't even know if that's the right word. But I wonder if you could describe maybe what that's like to know what he's doing, have done it yourself, maybe trying to get back to doing that again.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I didn't necessarily mean to sound that way. I mean, I don't know, is that a synonym for jealous? (Laughing.) I would say -- no, I know, I'm joking.

Of course. I mean, it's the greatest feeling. It's such a hard sport. When you feel like you're mastering it, there's nothing cooler. He's got to be feeling that right now. He's had to have felt that way for quite awhile now.

But that's what's fun about this sport as well is you can get knocked down, you can feel the lowest of the lows and the highest of the highs, and if you're willing to kind of want to play that game, that risky game in it, then the reward is massive. That's the goal is to try to get to that level. There's a lot of steps to get there.

So I think your question was, do I feel that way, and absolutely I do feel like it is challenging when you're like, man, I know I can do that, but I'm not doing it, but why not? But if -- I've tried to play that in my head and take care of it

in a day and it doesn't work that way. It's a process and you have to love the process. You have to love the practice. I mean, I've seen the hours Scottie puts in. This isn't just a he shows up and does it. He grinds. He's a grinder. He puts a lot of time into it. You have to. And he prioritizes it.

If someone's going to knock him off, they're going to have to be doing the same thing and have the talent that he has, and there's not a whole lot of people that have that.

Q. You practice with him a good bit, you play at home. Is it a fine line, the difference right now? I mean, it's not like --

JORDAN SPIETH: It's always a fine line. It's always a fine line. It's a fine line between PGA TOUR professionals and Korn Ferry Tour or top college and then fine line between top amateur play. It's little things. It's always just in the margins.

But also, like, Scottie's got an it factor. He's got an ability to get out of trouble when he's in it. He's got incredible athleticism. He's always had that. But now he's kind of got that kind of confidence like, hey, I'm just going to play the patient game today. Someone else is going to make a mistake. I'm going to play the course the way it's supposed to be played.

And when you start winning and you kind of get that feeling of house money, it's a little bit easier to just be okay with that, that kind of freedom that comes with that. You would imagine like maybe someone like myself should just feel that way, but if you're not doing it consistently, you lose a little bit of that, and you got to kind of just force your way up there in order to feel it again.

Like, I went through a few-year off spurt of winning after winning a few events a year, and that first one back took -- I mean, I was in position a few times that year and didn't pull it off, where I may have if I was still in the same mental place as I was a few years before. But you kind of almost got to build it back up to remember how to kind of close it out again sometimes.

Every once in a while it just goes your way. I would say Hilton Head just kind of went my way. But sometimes you do everything right and it doesn't too. So it's a crazy game. But he's playing the patience game well at the top now, and you got a couple guys that have all traded off that No. 1 position and there's a little bit of a gap below that, and that's where I'm trying to work hard to get into where I feel like week-in and week-out I can be in the same position those guys are in.

Scottie's got a chance to win most every week, and you get more and more comfortable the more often you're there. That level of comfort is something that's intangible and it's what propels you to continue to win multiple events a year and he's at that right now.

Q. You alluded to kind of having the ups and downs of the career and I wanted to ask about Max Homa. He's someone who has lost his card twice and now he's up to top 10, 8 in the world. Kind of from your perspective, how impressive is Max's story and arc and knowing him and just what he does that allows him to create this kind of arc that really hasn't been seen at that level kind of in golf?

JORDAN SPIETH: I mean, he doesn't really have a weakness. I'm not even sure what his weaknesses may have been when he was struggling. I don't have that information. But I've played quite a bit with him in the last couple years and paired with him quite a bit and it's really fun to watch him play the game. He's a really easy person to play with because you want to swing it like him. You want to putt it like him. His relationship with Joe Greiner, I mean, Joe's an incredible caddie, a high-level player, huge high IQ. As a golfer, you kind of listen to what they're saying and it's kind of fun to listen in. So they have just got -- it's a really good situation going on. He's a friend of mine. I've known him for awhile. Not super close for a long time, but having played with him more recently and him being a new dad and just kind of spending some time with them, he and Lacey and Cam, it's been a really kind of cool relationship over the last year or so. And I'm always rooting for him. He's so likeable. Obviously his social presence has made him super likeable. He's a fan favorite too. But that's who he is in person, so it's really cool and easy to root for him.

Q. What does it say about golf in general that someone can have those extremes of losing their card and then becoming top 10 in the world?

JORDAN SPIETH: He was not the first to do it, he won't be the last to do it. Like I was saying before, it's just the way the game is. It can bring you down and it can bring you super, super high. He's somebody who is willing to ride out the down because he knew his potential and then went and worked for it. So that's what makes it such a cool story. You just have to be willing to risk it like that for it to pay off.

Q. It appears next week will be the last WGC event. The China event seems to be unclear. But either way, do you just think they have run their course or do you feel, is it sort of unfortunate that they will no longer exist or maybe the designated events have sort of

taken over for that?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well I think it was prior to the designated events situation. So I don't think that had a whole lot to do with it at all. I actually really don't know what happened there. I don't, I'm not, I guess I was maybe on the in for a little while we lost Akron and Mexico ended up going away during COVID, I think, it was right before that. I don't, I'm not really sure. I don't have the information. It is kind of odd, I mean, the idea is that the designated events be a similar situation where you try and get those who are playing the best in the world at the time all playing in an event that's not a full-field event and you're guaranteed guys being there all four days for fans and whatnot. But I don't know why that's the case. I think it was just different things for each event, to be honest.

THE MODERATOR: Jordan thanks for your time and enjoy the week and have another good experience.

JORDAN SPIETH: Thank you.

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