

Myrtle Beach Classic

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, USA

Dunes Golf and Beach Club

Jonathan Byrd

Jackson Byrd

Press Conference



ONEflight
Myrtle Beach
CLASSIC

THE MODERATOR: We are here joined with five-time PGA TOUR winner Jonathan Byrd and his son, amateur Jackson Byrd. We're going to start off with you, Jackson. You're going to be making your PGA TOUR debut here at ONEflight Myrtle Beach Classic. Just start off with some comments on what it's like for an exciting week ahead.

JACKSON BYRD: Yeah, this week has been great so far. I'm just kind of getting adapted to the golf course and just the environment in general. But, yeah, starting to feel a little more comfortable as the week goes on and ready to tee it on Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: Catch us up to speed, for those who don't know, when and how did you find out about the sponsor exemption?

JACKSON BYRD: I think it kind of started in November. So pretty far out, but yeah, it was kind of confirmed probably two and a half months ago. So I was pretty excited when I found out that it was confirmed that I was going to be playing. So, yeah, just really excited.

THE MODERATOR: Jonathan, what is it like for you to be playing in the same event as your son?

JONATHAN BYRD: A lot of mixed emotions because I'm not getting in quite as many events these days, so I have my game to worry about and trying to get ready to compete and then probably too worried about him a little bit, wanting him to have a good week, wanting him to feel prepped and ready and comfortable.

So many of those things are out of my control. I had to get a little pep talk from my wife yesterday or, what was it, Monday night. She was just, like, You just have to let this go. You know, this is going to be a great experience no matter how it unfolds for both of us.

This is a bucket list item for me. Probably three, four years ago when I started to see him develop and become quite a

good player as elite junior player and win tournaments and represent his country in the Junior Ryder Cup and Junior Presidents Cup, it started to become apparent to me that this kid is probably going to have an opportunity to turn pro.

It was more about me being able to hang on long enough so maybe we could play in a tournament together. I probably felt more pressure than he did for this to happen. Mike Harmon was gracious enough to give us both a sponsor exemption this week. We're going to have a lot of family and friends come in town starting tonight and tomorrow.

This is kind of a dream come true for me to get to compete with him and just to see him in this environment. I hope he gets the opportunity to do this as a profession because I think he's very talented, and he doesn't need a whole lot of help from Dad anymore. I just have to let him run.

THE MODERATOR: With that, what advice have you given him for this week?

JONATHAN BYRD: He watches me play. He gives me advice. I give him advice. So it kind of goes both ways, but I just think it's just about relaxing.

Once this tournament starts, it's a bigger field and maybe a bigger atmosphere, but it still comes down to him getting lost in his process and playing his game and hitting the shots he's comfortable with and just trusting his abilities and staying athletic.

He's done a great job of that as we've transitioned from Monday to Tuesday and into today. He's doing his gym work. He's just approach it like any other tournament. There's really no other way to do it, you know? You can't make it bigger than it is.

I think he's more than prepared to have a good week.

THE MODERATOR: While not playing in the same group, but in the same wave, have you guys set any agreement or side bet for low score between the two of you?

JACKSON BYRD: No, we haven't, but we talked about it. We just don't really know what to put on the line. I mean, maybe something small.

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JONATHAN BYRD: Tonight we got a little family dinner, so tonight we're going to figure something out. We have to have a little side bet.

THE MODERATOR: Keep us posted. With that, we're going to open it up for questions.

Q. Jackson, I was just curious, what, if anything, have you done differently or what to prep for this event?

JACKSON BYRD: Honestly not a ton. I feel like I've played in some high-level junior events and some am events. I feel like it's the same.

I think we got here earlier than normal, but I feel like the main thing is just adjusting to just the idea of playing in a PGA TOUR event. I think it's more of an idea than -- I don't know. It's not a ton different besides the fact that it's a lot bigger and everything is run just really well. It's more about just enjoying it than really treating it any different.

Q. Presumably this course is longer than what you normally play. Would that be right?

JACKSON BYRD: Probably. Maybe a little. I don't know.

Q. You say no, Dad?

JONATHAN BYRD: The AJGA and some of these elite junior -- he played at tournament at Sage Valley, which is the junior invitational, which is in South Carolina. He gets to play such elite golf courses.

He had AJGA Invitational at Bethpage Black, a match-play event, where they're playing from pretty much the tips. He had a tournament at the Junior PGA last summer. He played Congressional. They play a tournament at the Wyndham, Sedgefield Country Club.

Junior golf, there's a reason why there are so many young guys that are so much better. The information is better, but the quality of courses and tournaments they get to play is pretty exceptional. I don't think this golf course is too long or overwhelming. He already hits it probably 30 past me. That might be generous.

I don't think the courses -- once they start putting the pins where they put the pins and the short-sided miss may be a little more difficult, but he's played plenty of hard golf courses.

Q. You mentioned he hits it 30 yards past you. Where is his game at this point in his life to where your game was at that point?

JONATHAN BYRD: It's really not comparable. You can only compare it to the other players and your competition. I was a fair elite junior. I didn't accomplish near what he's accomplished as a junior. I played more statewide stuff in South Carolina. I was a highly recruited player in South Carolina and a few other schools like Oklahoma and North Carolina, Chapel Hill, but he's gotten recruited by larger schools, better schools.

I would say he's much more advanced than I was at 18 from a just skill level.

Q. When you guys do play head-to-head, is it straight up, or do you give strokes? Does he give strokes?

JONATHAN BYRD: We're way past that. I think it's a pretty even matchup. Would you say?

JACKSON BYRD: Yeah.

JONATHAN BYRD: I win half the time. He wins half the time. We have a pretty good match these days. But I'm leaning more on experience, and he's leaning on just kind of raw youth.

Q. Jackson, how large of a role did your dad play in you choosing golf to pursue as a career? Was he ever your swing coach per se and that kind of thing?

JACKSON BYRD: I would say more when I was younger, I think he helped me more with swing stuff until I was probably, I mean, 10 or 12 years old. Then I started to kind of try to separate.

Obviously he helps me a ton now, but just try to distance a little bit golf-wise just so he could be more Dad than golf coach. I mean, he's taught me a ton more than golf too. Just setting an example for how you should act off the golf course as well as on the golf course.

I've learned a lot both on and off the golf course, but yeah, I would say he's helped me a ton on the golf course as well. Just even this week, I mean, we played a practice round yesterday. Just trying to learn, especially around the greens. Just trying to learn how to chip out of this rough and hit some shots.

I mean, he has a really good short game, so I'm trying to learn as well as just having fun with him, so yeah.

Q. I guess just as a bit of a follow-up, how much of a role did he play in you actually choosing golf? Were you interested in other sports when you were younger? Was it always just strictly golf?

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JACKSON BYRD: Yeah. When I was growing up, I probably started playing golf more seriously when I was 8 years old. Kind of started trying to play in tournaments, little local junior events and stuff.

Probably until about sixth grade I pretty much played every sport I could try to play. I played rec baseball and soccer and played middle school basketball in sixth grade, but then kind of realized pretty quick that I wasn't going to be a basketball player or baseball player.

I wanted to be a professional athlete, so I was, like, You know what, we'll give golf a try and keep playing, so that's what I did.

JONATHAN BYRD: Our relationship started to be very strained when I was trying to coach him. We would come home, and my wife in her wisdom finally said, Y'all are done. We were getting in too many arguments. He was looking to me to fix them all the time, and I started -- I'm a player. I'm not a coach, so I couldn't always help him.

The things I was doing, I remember having a putting lesson one time. He got to see Phil Kenyon, and I was telling him the exact wrong thing. I started to realize, you know, the more I get involved, it could be detrimental to his golf. I'm too emotionally invested.

I need to be the dad, the encourager, and less the coach. Everything has worked out better since then. He's got some great instructors that he works with and he's learned from.

Q. Jackson, do you have any specific memories or tournaments following your dad around?

JACKSON BYRD: Yeah. I would say we would always miss school from, like, January to part of February. We would do like the Hawaii and then California swing. So I would always miss a good bit of school for that, and I always liked that because you would go to Honolulu, and it was really fun. Then you would get to go to --

JONATHAN BYRD: Sometimes go to Maui.

JACKSON BYRD: Sometimes Maui, yeah, if you won. Then get to go to Palm Springs and San Diego, so you get to go to all those cool places. That was always super fun for me.

Traveling on the road for golf tournaments was always really fun for me because I had friends that were -- like most of my friends at that time from fifth grade and down were all sons or daughters of PGA TOUR players. You

kind of had your friend group. Yeah, it was really cool.

I still maintain some of those relationships today, one of my buddies, Zach Johnson's son, Will, is one of my best friends, and he's going to go to Clemson too. I've known him since I was a baby, so it's pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of missing school, being a senior in high school, what are you missing this week?

JACKSON BYRD: I'm missing my last week of school, which is kind of sad. I kind of got to say a little bit of my goodbyes last week. I was like, Yeah, y'all, I'm not going to be here next week, I have a golf tournament. It's a little weird.

I graduate next Saturday. Yeah, I have a business final that I have to do. Final project, not a final. Then I have to do a History of Rock, which is a class I take. I have to do a final project for them today too. That's all I'm missing, so not too bad.

THE MODERATOR: Dad, are you able to help him on his homework?

JONATHAN BYRD: No, he's pretty independent. He has his own little system for how he gets things accomplished. He's got some stuff he's got to do this week. He'll find the time. He'll get it done. Mom will stay on top of him.

I'm helping probably my youngest daughter at 13. I still help her a little bit, but I'm phasing out. It's getting a little too difficult.

THE MODERATOR: Be attending Clemson in the fall. What kind of went into that decision? Obviously a strong, rich family history with Dad attend there and uncle there. How was that decision made?

JACKSON BYRD: Yeah, I headed down to some really good schools. It was a tough decision to make, but at the same time, I mean, my uncle being the head coach and just the college that Clemson is, not even including athletics, it's just a great school and the environment. The people that graduate from there are all just really nice people that I have met. The facilities are great. The golf courses are great.

The two guys that are going in with me, I've known for a long time. So I feel like I'm going into a pretty comfortable environment, and I'm excited.

JONATHAN BYRD: Go Tigers.

JACKSON BYRD: Yeah, go Tigers.



