

# U.S. Open Championship 2021

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

## Jordan Spieth

### Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: We are here with 2015 U.S. Open champion Jordan Spieth. Jordan, talk about being here at a course you're familiar with for a U.S. Open.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it's really exciting. I remember watching the '08 U.S. Open and dreaming of being out there and competing on this course and this championship, and obviously what a phenomenal U.S. Open that was.

It's an incredible golf course. It requires a lot of shot making, a lot of precision. For the U.S. Open, even more so, but also quite a bit more touch around the greens and judging some of these nasty rough lies around the greens.

Played 18 yesterday. It seems in perfect shape for leading into this championship. For me, just trying to go through the same kind of routines I've been going through and get off to a good start. I had gotten off to some pretty good starts most of the rounds this year, and then I didn't at Jack's event and kind of put me behind from a chance to win. Starting out Thursday, trying to just stay real patient and recognize that it's a U.S. Open and par's a pretty good score.

#### **Q. What do you make of Tiger's win here at Torrey in 2008 facing such adversity?**

JORDAN SPIETH: You mean adversity as far as the injury? Yeah, yeah, did it end up being a torn ACL? Is that right?

#### **Q. Femur.**

JORDAN SPIETH: Something you shouldn't be playing golf on, then he went and won the U.S. Open on it, which if you're having to hack out of this rough, and obviously it's one of the tougher walks as well, that's something else.

The up and down on the 72nd hole from the rough, and obviously one of the most memorable putts in major championship history. I remember where I was watching it, and it was just so exciting. Obviously, he was an inspiration for all of us younger generation out here to go out and practice a putt like that the whole next week to try

to pretend it was to tie or win a U.S. Open.

#### **Q. A couple things. There was some chatter yesterday about an ankle problem with you.**

JORDAN SPIETH: I jammed my foot last week.

#### **Q. Jammed your foot, what does that mean?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I was carrying my clubs, and I jammed my foot, my heel, leaving the course. So it's been hurting, but it's nothing that I'm going to do more damage to or anything like that, so I'm fine.

#### **Q. How much time have you spent in the rough? How would you describe its difference now compared to January?**

JORDAN SPIETH: It's tough anyways in January, right? Then it's normally maybe some more moisture, but it's obviously higher -- around the greens, it's wicked. Spotters are going to have to really be on their game because around the greens you can hit some shots five feet off the edge of the green and really have to look hard to find your ball.

Then the rough, it seems like there's some graduated rough on some holes, and even that first cut on 12 and like 14 are the two that come to mind, even the first cut is mowed into you. So there's not a whole lot you can do. You're not really advancing more than a 7-iron for a lot of those lies, just trying to tumble it down the fairway.

Here and there, I think they left it down in some certain places, like left of 12, and certain places it might be popular that you could hit a pretty good shot and end up being able to reach the green on some of the harder holes. But I think they've done a really good job from the looks of it so far.

#### **Q. When you talk around the green, this isn't the first time you've played big rough around it, have you ever had to guard against a double hit?**

JORDAN SPIETH: The only ones where that comes into play are the ones where it's sitting really high on the grass,



and you've got to kind of slide it under and hit it a really short length. So if you short-side yourself but you get one that looks like a good lie, a lot of times, those are actually the hardest ones because you can slide right under it. Those are the ones you're passing at the same speed as balls coming off.

So, yeah, I hit a couple yesterday where I was like whoa, but if you cut it enough, you normally -- it doesn't come into play.

**Q. What's your take on the Bryson/Brooks thing in terms of is that good for golf? Is it amusing to you guys? What's your take on TOUR for players on that?**

JORDAN SPIETH: We've certainly talked about it like other people. So it's chatter. I don't know. I don't really feel like -- I'm not really sure. I don't really know how it all started. I don't know where they're at now. I don't know the severity. I don't think either one -- they didn't pair them this week and stuff like that, but I'm sure it will happen soon enough. Seems like people would be interested to watch that.

**Q. Would you be interested to watch that?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I'd rather be playing behind them on a Saturday, Sunday, so I don't really watch golf anyways. Yeah, I'd rather just be playing in the event.

**Q. If you were in that situation -- I know you're obviously not, but if those two were paired together today, how much, as a player, of a distraction would that be?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure. I guess it kind of depends on -- I don't think between the two of them it would be an issue. It would be more the crowd at both of them if people are taking sides or something like that.

**Q. Since the last time you were here, Jordan, how would you evaluate the way that you've played in the last almost five months?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, very well. I think, obviously, the results say that, but also just kind of progress that I've made and kind of the tee to green range. Then putting and chipping has been pretty solid here and there, a little bit streaky, but I feel like I've been moving the right direction with the flatstick as well.

Overall, everything's been quite a bit better, and there's reasons why, and I've just been sticking to the game plan and working on those reasons.

**Q. Was there a reason that formed around the last time you were here?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it was around that time. Just started to really get a good grasp on what things are supposed to feel like through impact, what I did that was such an advantage for a long time, my DNA and where I'd gotten off, and then working my way to get back to that feel through impact, kind of working impact backwards.

**Q. Any health limitations this week physically?**

JORDAN SPIETH: No. I played 18 yesterday, and I should be good. I'm having a hard time pushing off on some of the drives, but I think yesterday was better than the day before, which was better than the day before. So I assume just continue treatment and rest, and it should be fine.

**Q. Is it harder or easier to come to a major event that you play regularly knowing that you already have the ingrained knowledge? Or would you rather go to a spot where everyone's kind of starting with a clean slate?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I think at this point, being eighth or ninth year, out here, I'd rather it be this scenario. I feel like you can have -- especially when the course plays relatively similar, it's one of the more difficult, higher scoring averages in a PGA TOUR event. I think the fact it doesn't change a whole lot, your game plan's pretty much the same -- you're trying to hit the center of the greens and work from there. You're watching out for some of the harder holes, trying to put the ball on in two and walk off with four.

I think, in this case, I like that there's course knowledge versus learning a new place.

**Q. You mentioned the hack-out rough around the greens. Is it harder to have five-inch rough around the greens or a super tight shot that you absolutely have to clip perfectly?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I don't mind the tight lies. I feel like I've built a wedge with very little bounce, and I've always practiced off into the green Bermuda growing up, and I feel like it's an advantage of mine. So I like run-offs. Again, around the greens too, you throw out technique when you get some of these nasty lies and you've got to feel it. I guess, to answer your question, I don't really care. It is what it is.

There's some of both out here too. You can get stuck in some areas left of 15 and behind No. 9, there's some areas

where you can be in some trouble off some tight lies and need to play some shots as well.

It requires everything. There's not one. You've got to hit it low, you've got to hit it high, you've got to hit it left to right, right to left. This is one of those golf courses that you have to just be on, and it will eat you up if you're not.

**Q. During yesterday's practice round, Phil Mickelson was giving Bryson like an extended tutorial on how he hits a flop shot. It went on for like several minutes with video involved and stuff like that. How common is that during a practice round between players?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I think pretty common. I think especially on and around the greens looking at -- mainly chip shots, pitch shots, that kind of stuff. Guys will either go over and say 20 Bucks closest to the tee and put a ball down and try to act like it's a shot you'd have in the tournament. Then you're like, hey, how did you get that one to spin more or launch it higher? I think it's relatively common out here. I think that's probably different from, obviously, other sports if it's team to team, but most of the time you're playing practice rounds with people who you want to play practice rounds with and you're buddies. So I would say it's fairly common.

**Q. That's what I was going to ask. In other sports, competitors don't help each other out that way.**

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, on their own team, they do. Obviously, we're all different teams technically. So, yeah, I think it's just more we've all grown up doing it from junior golf on and they're buddies and -- yeah. You could just say, no, this is my secret, but at the same time, you could just stand there and watch it and figure it out pretty easily.

**Q. You've progressed a lot over the last four months. What was your mindset and thought coming into Winged Foot versus here this week?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I think Winged Foot was, oh, boy, here we go, and I think this week is I'm in a position where I think I can stand on the 10th tee on Thursday and win this golf tournament. As much as you want to say that you can fake it till you make it, I needed that confidence between then and now to really think that standing on the tee.

In a U.S. Open when you're really struggling off the tee, it's just not going to go well. You could get away with it at other places but not at a U.S. Open. I think I've had success maybe once on this course out of -- on the South Course, out of playing it five times, so I'm probably going to need to reshape the game plan a little bit to maintain that confidence through the week and kind of have the right

idea. I just -- I've got to play it. If I'm in a bad lie, you just can't force things on a course like this. If you have to punch out and hit a wedge close to make par, then do it.

I think being in a better place allows me to feel like I'm going to tee off with a little more patience that, if I do make a couple bogeys, it's fine, because I feel like I'm going to make some birdies, versus, oh, no, the wheels are coming off. I started that, I three-putted the 1st and left a ball in a tree on my 2nd hole of the tournament at Winged Foot, and from there it wasn't very good.

**Q. I saw several guys trying different clubs, not just wedges, from around the green. Could you see yourself using a hybrid or even a 3-wood or something like that?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I've never been one to use that. You see that a lot at the Open championship. I've never been one -- I've never practiced it. I haven't dialed it in. If I hit a bank shot, I'm using a 52 degree, maybe a 60, if it needs to barely trickle on. And if you're trying to -- I use two wedges to chip regardless of where I am in the world, regardless of the shot, I use 60 or 52 for any shot that's needed inside of 100 yards.

**Q. Which heel, by the way?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Right, yeah.

**Q. Thinking about the narrow fairways and rough, do you feel the South Course is set up similarly at all to Winged Foot last fall?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I think they play very differently, and here's why. I think at Winged Foot, the fairways were so firm that fairway percentages were going to be so low that essentially those who flew the ball the furthest -- and obviously, the winner was one of those. If you look down the leaderboard as well, they were such difficult fairways to hit regardless if you hit a good shot or not because of how they doglegged and where they'd bounce, that the shorter the club into the green percentage-wise, the better opportunity to hit it straighter, being able to get out of the rough, and so on and so forth.

Obviously, you needed to still hit a lot of really, really good shots, play the par-3s well, that kind of stuff. I think this is different. The grass type and the fairways, even if it firms up a bit, is still going to hold shots better. And there's more bunkers around the landing areas than rough. So I think that it's a different situation on that front. The greens are also smaller here. So even more emphasis on hitting fairways.

**Q. Knowing that you never arrive to where you eventually want to go in this game, do you ever find yourself or allow yourself to look back to where you were a year or two years ago and be thankful that the worst of it's over? Assuming it is. (Laughter)?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I would say yes, there are times where I'm like -- I was out here yesterday with Michael, and I'm like, man, I remember this shot just being no chance earlier this year, and now I feel really comfortable about it. It's kind of situations like that, whereas much as I want to keep pressing forward -- and, again, I'm still not where I want to be in my swing, even though it's working the right way, got a little off the weekend at Colonial through Jack's event. So still a little teeter tottering, trying to get it to move forward.

But I think back sometimes, and I'm like, man, I'm appreciative of where I'm at because I hope to be back thinking this way, feeling this way, when it didn't seem like I could get out of the way I was thinking and feeling.

**Q. Are you better for it, or do you wish it never happened?**

JORDAN SPIETH: It's hard. It's hypothetical. It is what it is. I'm where I'm at now, and moving forward it could be advantageous for me if I continue to progress.

**Q. You were asked about Bryson and Brooks earlier, and it dawns on me you kind of went through your same little moment here at Torrey Pines with Patrick. What was that like? The reason I ask is that you do a pretty good job of blocking out noise, but sometimes it's unavoidable. Do you remember that moment?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it stemmed from the Ryder Cup and wanting to play with Justin in some matches. It was more blown up than it was between he and I. He and I never really had any person-to-person issues. I remember walking on, I was paired with him, of course, and just sarcastically gave him a hug. We've always played really well when we've been paired with each other whether it's at a team event or we have good scoring averages individually with each other as well in regular events.

I embrace playing with him. He's a fun person to play in tournaments with. We've got somewhat similar games, and it's actually awesome watching his short game all the time. So I think that one is a very different situation.

**Q. Can you see Brooks and Bryson hugging next time they play together?**

JORDAN SPIETH: At this point, probably not, but who

knows what will happen over the next until they play again.

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