

# U.S. Open Championship 2026

Monday, June 15, 2026

Southampton, New York, USA

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club

## J.J. Spaun

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are here with our defending champion J.J. Spaun. I know you were here for media day a few weeks ago and talked about this, but just reflect on the last year a bit.

J.J. SPAUN: The last year has gone by very fast. That's one thing that I've noticed. About the time the USGA reached out to send the trophy back, it was bittersweet, but it's been life-changing. A lot of great things have come from winning this wonderful championship. Just honored to be here as the defending champion.

**Q. When you look back at last year, obviously you had your family there. Are things lining up the same way in terms of your preparation? Who's here with you this week? Are you replicating Oakmont?**

J.J. SPAUN: Trying to. Trying to do the exact same thing, same blueprint. We still have the same amount of kids, so we're full.

Yeah, it's fun to be together as a unit. I've got my daughters with me, my wife, my caddie. We're all kind of just hanging out and just trying to have fun and enjoy. The biggest thing for me this week is to really enjoy it.

**Q. Hopefully two healthy kids this week, unlike last year?**

J.J. SPAUN: Well, my oldest one has been through the ringer recently. She broke her collarbone at the Truist, so like a month ago at the day care. Then she had a tooth pulled on Wednesday, poor thing.

Her weight wasn't heavy enough to get the right sedation medication, so they're, like, you need to fatten her up to be able to get -- she needed a filling done. She had a cavity. But by the time she was big enough to take the medication, now it turned into a root canal, but they just said, let's pull it.

Hopefully that's all out of the way for at least this week.

**Q. Then if you could bottle up one thing in your game**

**or between the ears from Oakmont and use it this week, what would that be?**

J.J. SPAUN: I would say resiliency. I was pretty resilient that week. It was nice to get off to a really hot start in the first round, but I think that's the biggest thing at U.S. Opens is being resilient, taking all the punches that are thrown at you, taking your medicine.

It's not going to be easy golf. It's not going to be ho-hum, very boring golf. But the way I persevered and was resilient last year, I've been trying to use that since then, as well.

But I think I'll lean on that more, especially this week.

**Q. You mentioned you saw the back nine today. Just some reactions to the golf course and how it's playing so far?**

J.J. SPAUN: It was playing very long. We had a northerly wind today, so a lot of the longer holes were straight into the wind. Like the par-3s were all into the wind. I played it last Monday with a south wind, so it was a lot different.

But conditions-wise, it's in great shape. A little bit soft from the weather last night, but it's going to be in good shape for a really good test.

**Q. There's obviously a lot of footage of past U.S. Opens. There's drone flyovers. Do you do that sort of research ahead of a week like this?**

J.J. SPAUN: Actually I did. I kind watched of a hole-by-hole tour of it. I think before I ever came out here, that was the only time I've seen it, virtually, I guess, and the one thing you don't realize is how much more undulation and rolling hills and perched greens there are around Shinnecock. It's nice to get on property and see it in real life.

**Q. Would it be fair to say that the PGA was one of your worst putting weeks that you've had, and what did you do after that that unlocked some better play and some**



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## **better finishes?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I think Aronimink was tough. I was playing good. Like I finished fifth at Quail Hollow the week before, and that's a very demanding course tee to green. I putted well, too.

I just think I got a little caught up in the putting portion of Aronimink. My putting has been very hot and cold this year. That's kind of been the only thing holding me back.

I got too caught up in, like, thinking I was the only one putting poorly at Aronimink, but apparently everyone was, like, three-putting. I think if I would have just accepted that, I would have done less of three-putting, and maybe it would have been a different week.

I just worked really hard on some technique. I had some technique issues with my stroke, and that's cleaned up how the ball is rolling off the face. The strike, the path is a lot cleaner on my putting.

I've seen some good rounds with that feel the last couple weeks at Colonial and Memorial. I'm definitely trending on the upside with the putter.

**Q. When you spoke at the Ryder Cup, you mentioned that your daughter had helped you with some career struggles with "Frozen" and "Let It Go." I wonder how much you look back at last year, which was a remarkable year with THE PLAYERS playoff, The Open, the Ryder Cup, and the beginning of this season. How do you harness what you did last year and come back to this place as defending champ on this upswing, besides the PGA?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, the whole "Let It Go," that was definitely a mantra that I had kind of all year. I felt like I didn't have anything to lose. That was what kind of carried me with this confidence, without being in those situations in the past is like, well, I have nothing to lose. It's kind of easy to play that way.

I think that was the difference between actually really having nothing to lose last year, and then to the start of this year now all of a sudden I'm a top-10 player in the world, I'm a U.S. Open champion, Ryder Cupper. I felt like every week at the start of the year I had to be that guy that needed to show up and play well and kind of validate where I was in the world rankings and what I had achieved this season.

So it was the complete opposite of letting it go. I put more pressure on myself, put way more emphasis on outcome instead of just focusing on my process.

It was a nice corner I turned at THE PLAYERS where I tried to just forget about trying to be this perfect golfer that I thought I was last year, when in reality I just was doing the same things. I just was mentally a little bit more nice to myself, I guess, and not so worried about being perfect. That's what led to better golf.

Yeah, there are some things technique-wise that were a little off, but I think trying to be this perfect golfer that I thought I needed to be to start the year really dragged me down a lot harder in having to play just solid golf.

**Q. Knowing Oakmont and Shinnecock are often talked about as some of the tougher U.S. Open venues, having last year's success at Oakmont, do you sort of relish that harder test versus maybe more of a birdie-fest?**

J.J. SPAUN: Totally. I think USGA wants you to get every club dirty. That's what they like to live by, and it's going to be true. It's a course where people aren't going to run away with it. You can't win it the first day, but you definitely can lose it.

I've been a guy that when I'm playing well, fairways and greens are kind of my MO. It's hard to make a lot of mistakes when you're doing that pretty well, especially at a U.S. Open.

That's what I did at Oakmont. I just kind of played my game, fairways and greens, fairways and greens. I putted really well that week, too, and that's what led me to being in contention and ultimately winning the championship.

Hopefully I can do that again this year.

**Q. There are a lot of putts here where you could have 20 feet, and you're playing 10 feet of break. I'm interested, how do you simulate that in practice, whether it's at home or maybe in some tournaments leading up to this, whether it's putting or ball-striking or lies that you'll get here? How do you simulate that to get ready for this week?**

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, so putting is difficult to simulate, considering I live in Arizona. We don't really have crazy, undulating greens right now, especially this time of year. Everything is really slow because it's so hot. They're keeping the grass alive.

What I did a lot last week was really -- because I know Shinnecock is known for being very windy, and it can be breezy, so worked a lot on, like, my technique on flighting my shots and understanding what feels I've got to feel

when I need to flight certain clubs and what shape that takes to hit, like, a flighted draw.

More of that, instead of airborne golf, working on your carry numbers, because that's kind of what's not going to happen this week, especially the first few days. Yeah, I just tried to simulate what kind of shots I will be envisioning myself hitting throughout the tournament and just really worked hard on how to get comfortable with a template as far as how to execute those shots.

**Q. Contrast this course, if you could, to Bethpage. They're both on Long Island. They're relatively far apart and relatively different in terms of what you see out there.**

J.J. SPAUN: I would say, first off, conditions. It's a lot windier here. I don't know if we're closer to the ocean or not than Bethpage. That could be a terrible guess. Sorry. I don't know if that has anything to do with it.

But there's I feel like more undulation, more elevation changes. Visually it can look similar, but there's more tree-lined -- not tree-lined, but there's more trees kind of in the surrounds of Bethpage that kind of brings it in a little bit.

But you've got the fescue out there. It's very similar in ways visually, but I think it plays a lot differently. The greens are a lot slopier. A little crazier, I would say, around the greens.

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