

# US Open Championship 2017

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

## Jordan Spieth

### Press Conference



BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon. Welcome again to the 117th U.S. Open championship at Erin Hills. It's my pleasure to introduce the 2015 U.S. Open champion, Jordan Spieth, who is playing in his 6th U.S. Open championship this week. Jordan does have some familiarity with Erin Hills, was a quarterfinalist in the 2011 U.S. Amateur, and has been here several days practicing and preparing. Can you talk about your preparations for Erin Hills this week.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yes, similar to other majors and other U.S. Opens, nothing has really changed. I don't think you have to adopt too much to this course, any different clubs or ball flights or whatnot. Hopefully the weather stays away and it can play firmer and faster, which I think is pretty cool for this place. It was pretty brown when we played it in the U.S. Amateur, and I thought it was fun that way. I think it's a really well designed golf course. And we've had a good time preparing. The game feels like it's in good shape.

BETH MAJOR: As you've gone through your preparations over the last few days, anything that can stuck out, when you look at 2011, in addition to the conditions, as compared to now.

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, it's weird, I don't remember much from 2011. I remember the closing four holes, and then each hole starts to kind of reappear when I go out and play it. I remember No. 1 and I remember the last four prior to getting here on Saturday. So I needed to do some extra work. That was six years ago and didn't do the same kind of homework that I do these days with golf courses.

There's a few changes. I think No. 3's green is significantly changed. And maybe another one somewhere -- maybe No. 9. But it still feels like a pretty new golf course to me. It's going to play different with the fescue right off of the rough and the difficulty in staying extremely focused off the tee and not hitting any foul balls. Because there's essentially two water hazards -- two hazards on each side of every single hole. You have a wide enough area in between to where it's fair and yet tough. But if you hit it into that stuff there's a chance you'll just have to hit back to the fairway with pretty much taking a penalty stroke, and you might get a chance to hit the green.

I think it's a well-designed, well-bunkered golf course

with a bunch of tee box options. It's kind of tough to prepare because there's three or four tee boxes on almost every hole that we could be playing from. We'll just get out there and -- I'm doing a lot of work around the greens. And other than that, just see what they give to us.

**Q. In what ways does this feel like a U.S. Open? Are there some ways where it doesn't?**

JORDAN SPIETH: It feels like a U.S. Open just walking the golf course and off the course, just the size of the -- you know it's a major, the size of the grandstands, the size of everything that's built around, the amount of people that are in this interview room (laughter).

You know it's a major. In some ways it doesn't because it's a different golf course. It's a new golf course. I think Chambers Bay felt similar to that where it wasn't one of the rotation, the go-to golf courses that we're going to see in the next foreseeable future.

I was actually thinking about that yesterday out on the course. I know it's a U.S. Open and certainly walking and seeing the difficulty, but at the same time it also kind of felt like it was a really difficult PGA Tour event, just walking through the rough, just because it was a new golf course, not one that I'd watched majors on TV going back or played in myself.

**Q. How do you feel about a par 5 as a finishing hole in a major championship, either as a leader or a guy who needs to make up a stroke or two on the leader?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, it's exciting I think if it's played the right way -- the right way is subjective. But I think most people would agree that if you have an option for an eagle and you've got options for six, and I think that the 18th hole here can produce both. It's a very difficult green with the prevailing wind because it's so flat on the green. It actually pitches from the middle of the green to the back. And downwind, if the greens are firm, which it doesn't look like they're going to be, but if it was firm, it leaves an almost impossible shot if you're outside 120 yards just to hold the green.

So trouble lurks on the 18th off the tee. If you hit a good tee ball you've got the option of going out, playing the angles. You can go towards the green, depending on where the pin is that might leave an easier third or

you can take it down the right side. I think it's an exciting finishing hole. I lost my quarterfinal match on it by going bunker to bunker to bunker, and you can do that on that hole. But I think depending on what the wind is doing and what the conditions are of the golf course, I think they'll be able to move tee boxes around there to make it an exciting finishing hole for a major.

**Q. Kind of speaking of Chambers Bay where you won a couple of years ago, can you give us a tee-to-green comparison of that golf course and this one? And considering all the new U.S. Open courses you guys are playing lately, do you think somewhere like Chambers deserves a second chance to host?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I certainly wouldn't mind a second chance at Chambers. Tee to green, still very different. I don't think this course has much comparison to Chambers Bay, other than no trees on the golf course and therefore with the undulations that the tee box to the fairways present, whether it's blind or it goes down and the fairways are pitched at you, it's somewhat tricky with sight lines. And at the same time I think some holes it makes it harder and some holes it makes it easier.

But the fact that it's so undulating with some awkward tee shots, but also ones that seem so basic, standing on the tee boxes looking at your target, I see some similarities. But other than that, you know, off the sides of the fairways and the way the rough is here versus the lack of rough that we had there. The fescue even plays different in the two.

Chambers was much easier driving golf course and I thought it was more of a bomber's paradise at Chambers Bay. I thought there were more forced carries that led to the same or wider areas that would leave it easier for those who could carry the ball further, which is why a lot of the guys in the top 10 that week were very long hitters. But that's also where the top 10 in the world are, really long hitters. Tough to compare in that sense.

But I think this week it's a fairway percentage hit. I don't think it goes as much to strokes game, because strokes game brings in distance off the tee and I don't think that's as important this week. Saying that, I've only played the course when it's been firmer the last couple of days. Today I'll get a better sense if it's that long to where the distance will play a significant advantage.

**Q. I wanted to get you thinking about the spate of recent first time major winners. We've seen six recently over the course of the last six majors. Why do you think we're seeing this trend right now**

**in World Golf?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure. I don't know if that's -- I don't know if that's a trend or just -- if it's something that's trending that way, to continue to trend that way, or it just happened to be that way. They've all been world class champions, when you look back. Really exciting finishes that were won. So I'm not sure, to be honest with you, because I guess before that there was three of us had five of the previous six or something, before that. So maybe it's trends and maybe it's just the way that it -- I don't know, the way that it just happened to crumble there.

I wouldn't be surprised if it's a first-time winner here. But I also wouldn't be surprised if it was someone that won before. It's very difficult to win a first major. You're dealing with somebody that's been there before, I know that for a fact. So they're tremendous wins in their own rights. And with six more previous winners I would say the likelihood of someone to capture their second or more major is probably more likely now, because you have so many more major winners. I'm not sure, to answer your question, I'm not sure. I think it's just a roll of the dice.

**Q. For a first time major venue what factors will go into validating whether a golf course is major worthy?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Tough but fair. And I think each major it's a different conversation. I think at the U.S. Open it's very tough but still fair and exciting. You expect scores to -- you expect par to be an extremely good score in a U.S. Open. I think that's knowledge. And here early thoughts, I don't see par winning the tournament. I see closer to 5- to 10-under. Someone who has very good control of the ball off the tee will have plenty of opportunities to make birdies, given the conditions that we're expecting.

And I think the USGA is very much okay with that. And I think that they're looking for a really exciting championship that they'd like to be tough but fair. And if the conditions bring the scores further away from par, then so be it. I don't think there's going to be any kind of -- at this point I don't think there's a whole lot you could do to the course to speed the greens up even faster or grow the rough up even higher. Everything is kind of maxed, out in my opinion, and I still think that that's around what the score will be. But I say that -- a lot of people say that on Tuesday and you get to Saturday and all of a sudden it's 2-under.

So that's my initial thoughts. To make it great looking back, it's tough, because conversations are going to take place through the next year, and it's not going to be fir. Sometimes you need to compare it to first time venues, too. So I hope that answered your question.

**Q. You played well here at Erin Hills in 2011, and played well at Whistling Straits in 2015. Is there something you like about playing golf in Wisconsin, and have you checked out the local flavor, having brats or cheese curds or something like that?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, the people are extremely nice here. Sometimes you wonder if they're actually that nice, because they're so nice. But, no, we had a great time at Whistling Straits. I thought the golf course fit our game well. I think it does here. I think it's just -- I don't think it's a Wisconsin thing, I think we just enjoyed playing both these golf courses. I was also playing really welcoming into the U.S. Amateur week. Coming off a U.S. Junior victory a couple of weeks ago. So the game was on point, which is always when you're in form, you can't really compare the golf courses, you're probably going to play well anywhere when the game is on form.

But I have enjoyed it. I think I had cheese curds last night, actually. But I'll probably stay away from them the rest of the week until Sunday. Yeah, I mean it's fun. Logistically, I thought it was going to be a lot tougher this week having been here before. And I think from the player perspective they've done a great job in -- where the entrance is, and how you're getting in and out of this place and making sure that there's not too many questions on how much time you have to leave yourself before you go. Just where everything is located is very organized.

**Q. You mentioned your homework was a little bit different in 2011. Just curious if you looked back on any notes or watched a replay or anything along those lines, gleaned anything from that experience, particularly any notes?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I haven't. I couldn't tell you -- I said the USGA was organized, I didn't tell you I was organized. I couldn't tell you where that yardage book is. So I haven't watched any of it. We just started over and went with the information that we were presented early on and then do our work from there.

**Q. You're talking a little bit about the course. Apparently they're cutting the fescue back on four holes. Just want to get your thoughts on that?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm sorry?

**Q. They're cutting back the fescue it looks like on four holes.**

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure. I hadn't heard that. I'm not sure where it is.

**Q. It's 4, 12, 14, 18.**

JORDAN SPIETH: 4, 12, 14, 18? You know, I think 4, when I look at this golf course, I think No. 4 is one of

the most important fairways to hit, because if I don't hit the fairway I don't see a possibility of hitting the ball on the green in regulation, it's so flat. So maybe they're cutting it back there because it entices players to think they can hit the green. Cutting the rough back doesn't necessarily make it easier, and what I mean by that is you then are presented with a shot where it's almost a tease. You think, okay, they cut this back, this isn't too bad. And all of a sudden that rough grabs your club and you hit a full 8-iron instead of hitting out to a good wedge number and you end up in the left fescue, left of the green.

It can do some weird things to it if you try to do too much out here. When they get to a certain level where it looks like you can still play it, but it's still hard, that a lot of times can make it even tougher.

But at the same time you end up in a spot where it is easier. So I think -- I've hit it in the fescue multiple times over the last few days. I've had it to where I needed to hit gap wedge out about 100 yards into the fairway, and I've also hit an iron on the green out of it. It just depends on where it ends up, what the lie is.

It's not unplayable. It's not -- I don't think the golf course is unfair, by any means, because of the fescue. We have a wide enough area to hit it and you need to drive the ball well in order to win a U.S. Open. I think that's a fair thing to say.

**Q. There's this idea that the newness of this golf course is going to level the playing field in some way. That all else being equal, the top players may have a little bit of an advantage because the course is new to everyone. I think the last four first time U.S. Open venues, you won, Tiger won twice and Payne Stewart won. What do you think of that as a concept and what does that mean for you?**

JORDAN SPIETH: You think it would level the playing field to -- historically -- it would level the playing field to where someone would win their first one.

**Q. Where the top players have more of an advantage, because everyone is seeing the course for the first time?**

JORDAN SPIETH: I would say if the top players have more of an advantage I wouldn't call that leveling, but I would say I don't think there's much to the me, Tiger, Payne Stewart, because it just depends on the golf course. And all of those golf courses were very different.

I would think that a brand-new golf course would limit any kind of experience players have. So any experienced major contenders may have -- everyone has the same amount of work to do. No one has the

advantage of seeing other stuff that other players haven't. Like Oakmont, I think if I played it -- if Jim Furyk had played two Oakmont U.S. Opens before last year, I think that there he had an advantage over anybody else as far as his knowledge of the place going in, over anybody who has played less. So I think in that sense it levels it, but I don't think it's going to make much of a difference. I think we could see anything.

**Q. For the first time in a long, long time, there's no Tiger and no Phil, or probably no Phil. What is that like for you?**

JORDAN SPIETH: It's a little weird. I didn't think that would happen at this time. But Tiger, coming back from injury, and Phil putting family first, these are reasons that keep you away from golf. And so be it. We've got to go out there and do what we do.

But when -- I hadn't thought about it at all until you just said that. When you say it, one, it kinds of makes me feel like we're maybe ten years down the road. But at the same time it is what it is and you certainly hope that they're both back playing their best in the near future.

**Q. One other thing, at Augusta we always ask players to wax poetic, but when you think of the U.S. Open, what comes into your mind. When you were growing up what impressions did you have of the U.S. Open?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Just a mental test, just dealing with the mental side of the game more than any other tournament. It's always a physical test. It's a big golf course. It's a tough one to walk. It's a tough one to -- the rough is always thick. You're just putting more effort into each round. But then most of all it certainly tests the mental game more than any other place in golf. And I've witnessed that on both sides of things. If you came for a stress free tournament you didn't come to the right place. And we know that going in. And I think everybody does. So you just prepare accordingly, and you just try to have a level of patience.

**Q. What do you think of Hideki Matsuyama? Do you think he has a chance to win this time?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Absolutely. He had a fantastic fall and carried it into early in the year, which he's also had a tremendous career, going back to his time in Japan and his time on the PGA Tour. He's a world class player who I've said multiple times, who I believe he'll have a major, sooner rather than later. So I think it could happen anywhere. His game can travel anywhere. So it very well could happen here if he's on.

**Q. I read that growing up you attended Catholic schools. So you mentioned the stress of majors.**

**I'm wondering if you ever rely on that faith component when dealing with the stress of competing in a major tournament or on Tour in general?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, sure. I think it's useful. I don't remember actually -- I don't remember -- when I'm on the golf course it's all -- so much is going through your head-on the actual preparation of the course and your breathing techniques and stuff like that. But definitely off the course. On the course there's a lot going on and it's all kind of golf and preparation-related. But certainly off the course.

**Q. When you were playing U.S. Amateurs, I would assume that was always the toughest course setup maybe for what you were playing at that level. U.S. Open is probably similar. How would you compare and contrast those extremes as it relates to the experiences here the Erin Hills?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Similar feelings. Similar feelings. I remember you go into the U.S. Amateur and you think about everywhere you've just been playing. And you know that this golf course is that much harder. And when I say that much, that's the same kind of that much that I feel right now. Although the golf courses that we play on a regular basis are more challenging than they were back then. The step up in the U.S. Open is similar in caliber to the step up the U.S. Amateur was.

I think the USGA does a tremendous job in mixing it up, but not too much or too little. Does that make sense?

**Q. After Sergio's breakthrough win at the Masters there was an outpouring of support from the golfing community. Obviously you want to win week in, week out. But describe what it's like to see a fellow pro grab that emotional victory?**

JORDAN SPIETH: Sure, I spoke about this at The PLAYERS. With everything that Sergio has gone through, so many positives, and he's definitely had that chip, that negative to the career, that, if he wasn't so good, wouldn't have been there. But the fact that he was that good of a player and everyone was like, wait a second, why don't you have a major? That's why it became a thing. And it became a thing that I think bothered him.

It was something I've been playing with him and hear yelled out from the crowd, from being at the PGA last year, to the Ryder Cup. And for him to power through that, that noise, that seemingly there's a lot of -- some of the world against you type thing and to kind of carry that load and come through on golf's biggest stage, was phenomenal. I thought it was a really impressive win. And I think that it was well deserved and it was a

little -- I think he's deserved at least a major or a couple prior to then. But that was his time. And I think he's certainly embraced it. You saw the emotion he showed and what he's said since then.

But I thought it was fitting, personally.

**Q. At Memorial you indicated you planned to get here early, play a lot, and then maybe taper down playing going in. I wonder if that's still your plan or has the rain maybe changed it? I notice you're playing this afternoon.**

JORDAN SPIETH: I got here Saturday and the conditions were not ideal for practice. It was just blowing too hard. So it was actually a good time to go out and see the course. I played nine. And then kind of sat back and Cameron was getting in Sunday, and so I kind of wanted to pick a plan for the week. And I thought Sunday and Monday would be the heaviest days, and dial it back a little today and tomorrow.

Having said that I'm still going to go out and play nine holes each of the two days, today and tomorrow. But just a little bit shorter days. I'm going in the afternoons, getting a little more rest in the mornings. So, yeah, just tapering it back just little bit.

But I'm really excited for this week. Everything feels good. I like the golf course, just got to go out there and execute at this point.

BETH MAJOR: Jordan, thanks so much. Always great to have you with us. We wish you well this week.