

US Open Championship 2017

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Jason Day

Press Conference



BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon. Welcome again to the 2017 U.S. Open at Erin Hills. It is our pleasure to introduce Jason Day, who is here playing in his seventh U.S. Open, with five top five finishes.

Jason, can you tell us, now that you've been here a little bit, can you talk about your first impressions of Erin Hills?

JASON DAY: Yes, so I got in Friday night and obviously I came here about a month ago, doing a Lexus outing. But I was on the 13th hole and I was 50 yards up hitting a wedge into the green, so it didn't really give me much.

But just seeing the property, seeing how large the property was, you know, the mounding, the shaping of the golf course, it's quite beautiful. It's a very pretty golf course. Playing it Saturday, I understand how difficult it can be with the southwest winds at 25 to 30 miles an hour and then playing the backside on Sunday, to be honest, two kind of quite different nines. The greens on the backside are quite severe compared to the front side, even though there are a few severe ones out there.

But what comes to mind is 14, 15 and then 18, the greens that come to mind, that are one of those things where everyone has to try and adapt their game to try to best suit the golf course, and try to at least beat the rest of the field to try to win the major.

BETH MAJOR: You mentioned the wind on Saturday, which was quite strong. What sort of -- how does that affect your preparation and as you go into the days leading into the tournament?

JASON DAY: I think it's a good thing that I came out. I mean for instance I was teeing off 1 and I hit driver and I couldn't cover the left-hand side. So that's one thing where obviously with certain weather conditions, certain tee locations that the USGA has to select, that I think is appropriate for not only a player that's longer, but also a player that's shorter. If I can't cover the left and I'm playing down the right-hand side, some guys may not be able to -- the shorter guys may not be able to cover the fairway if they don't hit a good one.

With that said, I don't think we're going to get that kind of wind conditions. I don't think it's going to switch. I

think the hardest thing for us is to go out and play a south westerly wind, which is the predominant wind at this time of year, know our lines, and somehow be prepared enough to know exactly where the lines are going to be when and if it does switch to a north easterly, which hoping that it doesn't. If it does switch to a north easterly then a lot of guys and their lines are going to be kind of messed up. There's going to be a big, drastic change in what lines you're going to take off the tees.

Preparation seems like it's coming along nicely. I haven't been doing too much. Like I said I played nine holes Sunday. I did a short session yesterday. I'll play nine holes this afternoon and probably play nine holes again in the afternoon tomorrow. I want to make sure I'm getting enough sleep. I want to make sure that the rest and recovery is up. Starting Thursday it's going to be a brutal test, not only physically, but mentally, as well.

Q. Looking at the course and the 18th hole, in particular, here, Rory has been talking about it. And I want to get your thoughts on it in general and its potential to provide, a par 5, a potentially exciting finish on Sunday?

JASON DAY: Yeah. The way I played it with that wind, that's kind of down off the right, you can take on that bunker down the center, center right, and try and sneak in between that 20-yard gap or so, which will give you probably an iron in. Or you can hit a 2-iron down the middle and hit a 2-iron just short of the green. It definitely is going to make an exciting finish if it is close because there's two different ways that you can play the hole. If you're coming from behind, you need to press, you obviously need to try to execute the best plan that you can to make that birdie. But the biggest thing is to try to stay out of the bunkers, try to stay out of the fescue, that's the ultimate goal this week is to try to keep that to a minimum.

I think the trickiest part about 18 is not so much the tee shot or the second shot, I think it's the green, actually, whether you're coming in with a wedge or coming in with a chip. If the pin location is left on that green, middle left on that green there's a potential chance of you chipping it off the back edge of that green and rolling 60 yards down into either the fairway or the rough. So there's a chance that it could be fireworks or



a chance there could be a lot of disappointment coming Sunday with regards to the green complexion 18.

Q. And just as a follow-up, we've been asking your fellow professional about their first major victory, going back six majors, so someone winning for the first time, not too far away from here. Use do you think that started the streak? The last six majors have produced first-time winners. If you had to put your finger on it, why are we seeing this trend, this pattern, do you think?

JASON DAY: I think it's just luck, to be honest with you. And I'm not saying luck as in because they're lucky people. I'm just saying we've just gone through a stretch guys have just popped up and won.

Yeah, but you've got to understand that if you look at the last six major winners, they're all different ages, all different styles of play, all different ages, from Sergio to me to Dustin Johnson so Henrik Stenson and the guys in between. The way we play golf is totally different. So it's really hard to kind of really pull it down to one thing, that's why everyone is playing well, because you can't, because once again they're different ages, they're different times in their career.

Henrik is, I think, close to 40, I believe, and Sergio is 37. Danny Willett was in his 20s when he won the Masters. Dustin has always been knocking on the door for a major championship and he has the game to do that you will a the time. And me, I was doing kind of the same thing, I was knocking on the door a lot. At Whistling Straits I kind of found my well because I drove it well and putted well that week.

But it's interesting that the last six major winners have been first time. But I don't think -- if it has to be another one this week, so be it. But I think looking at it now it just happened to be luck, to be honest.

Q. I get a chance to talk to Joe Q golfer every day. And every time you get to the USGA in -- the U.S. Open championship they look at scores.

JASON DAY: Okay.

Q. And they talk about scores. That's how we grade how great the event is. And personally, I think most of our listeners would love to see par or 1-under or 2-under win. With that being said, would that be an unfair golf course for you and the players today?

JASON DAY: No, I don't believe so. What won the U.S. Open last year? I can't remember. 4-under? What won the year prior to that with Jordan, 5-under? So there's been some years where guys have shot way over par and won -- not way over par, but over par and

won, and there's guys that shot decent scores.

I remember finishing second to Rory at Congressional. He shot, I think 16-under par, I shot 8-under par, and we got lapped by him. And just kind of a freak week where the scoring conditions were low because of the weather.

With that said, about 1-under, 2-under, even par -- they can set up the course whatever they want of the. I'm okay with if 5-over ends up winning, I'm okay with that. It means that everyone -- everyone, to a certain degree, is playing the same course, obviously depending on weather.

But you've got to get down to the U.S. Open is the toughest physically and mentally, one of those tough tournaments, where you have to understand that it may be over par that's going to win this week, you don't know. But you've got to try to execute the best job you can to try to win that week. Yeah, I mean, there's no complaints from me. If they say we want 10-over par to win, I'm okay with that.

Q. (No microphone.)

JASON DAY: I understand that. Obviously for a couple of weeks a year we get frustrated like every other amateur out there sometimes, too. I'm just here to try to do the best job I can. And if at the end of the week it's over par that wins and I get a chance to do that, then great.

Q. How much does momentum matter to you coming into a major? Not necessarily form, but more momentum?

JASON DAY: There's different momentum. What are you trying to get at with momentum?

Q. You were second a couple of weeks ago -- compared to earlier in the year.

JASON DAY: I say trending sometimes, but I just like the word trending, because it's overused a lot. And golf is, to a certain degree, how many times have you seen guys that have missed six cuts in a row and won one week. He certainly wasn't trending. It somehow just happened that he won on the seventh try after six missed cuts.

I think a lot of it comes back to sometimes you're in the right place at the right time. And one week you get up there and everything is firing and you win. And then other weeks I think over time you've just have been building, and the confidence is coming back. And I'm assuming that's what you're trying to get at with the finishes.

Q. Where do you sit in that?

JASON DAY: Yeah, I -- my last two finishes was second and 15th. I think I could have played a lot better at Memorial if I had a better first round. You put four rounds together, and obviously things pan out differently. Momentum, it's key -- I think momentum is more key during tournament rounds than actually looking at it. Because, yeah, I'm starting to get a lot more confidence over the last two events I've played compared to the first nine events that I played. But I look at more during the round knowing that, okay, the middle part of my round's, probably the hardest part of my round, per se.

Sometimes I get off to a good start, sometimes I get off to a bad start. But the middle of my round is where I look at most with regards to the momentum. That's where I'll either pick up momentum or head back the other way. And being able to take control of that is -- it's huge for me.

But getting back to the question of momentum I think it's more about the confidence levels that you build up over good results. It kind of works in a circle. You practice hard. You get the results. You gain the confidence. You want to practice hard again. And then you get the results, you gain confidence. So it works in a spiral that way. And it can also work the other way, as well, where you don't get the results, you don't want to practice so hard and you lose confidence. So that's kind of what we're talking about here.

Q. And just as a quick follow-up, what sort of feeling did you get about this course when you first got here and got a couple of rounds? Anything stand out to you?

JASON DAY: The golf course, itself, they say it's wide. It is wide when you're standing in the middle of the fairway. But the land, the property, itself, is so huge, that when you're standing on the tee and the way they positioned bunkers, it doesn't seem that wide. Visually you look down and you know it's wide, but it doesn't seem that wide, especially with wind and it being -- there are hills and a lot of jagged edges out here, and there's not many trees to stop the wind from whipping across the golf course. But it's visually tight in areas.

You say, for instance, 12, and you look at that ask you're standing up with a driver in your hand, and it's 285 yards to carry that top left hill there, if you don't, you're 60 yards back down the hill hitting a long iron into a green that's possibly 15 yards wide. And there's fescue left and more fescue right. You look at it and you go, I don't know if I can -- for me, some guys are different, but I look at it and go, that's pretty tight with the wind being out to the left.

But it's more the visual part. You've just got to get past that. Once you get past that and understand that you

don't really need to take on some certain bunkers. Like, say, for instance, 14, you don't really need to take on 14. Yes, you could take it on, try and get there in two, but that side of that hill there on 14 is pretty severe. I dropped a ball from the top of the green, kind of rolled down. Now you've got to get really unlucky, but if you roll it down into the bunker, it rolls down into the water 60 yards away.

So you've got to really pick and choose where you kind of take on things and lay back because these bunkers -- I mean I'm sure everyone has been talking about them, you can get some pretty if I lies, and there's a hazard. And unfortunately I think we've become accustomed to having certain depth, sand, thickness in bunkers, and know that we can get to greens from the middle of the fairways or off to the side. And we think that -- we should be doing that. But ultimately in the end it's a hazard and that's what they're there for, for you not to be in there.

I think what they've done with the golf course, the piece of property that they have had, and they've kind of fit everything naturally to the grounds, itself, is quite beautiful.

Q. Just speaking of the bunkers, I'm wondering just how different they are than what you normally see on Tour and have you tried to hit out of any of those little crevices there from the bunkers?

JASON DAY: Yes, I have. You have to be lucky. I think if you could be stuck outside the bunker in a hole. You could be in one of these small spaces that are like two feet wide. I think a lot of guys are trying to get used to the actual sand, itself, because it's not a typical sand that we usually play. There's a lot of kind of small little pebbles, and I think that's one thing that you have to really look out for on the greens, because it does blend into the greens very well. So a lot of those small pebbles are going to be in amongst or around the hole, if pins are cut close to those greenside bunkers. So you've got to make sure that when you're reading a putt you see, and it doesn't knock any of the balls off line. Because like I said, they do blend into the green pretty well.

But I've only played 18 holes. I'm going to play 9 today and 9 tomorrow. I'll get another look at the front side and the backside over the next two days and hopefully I can make a plan of staying out of those little ones. That's obviously the plan.

Q. Apologies to bring up a sore subject, but what did you think of the NBA finals? What does it say -- just in the nature of competition and expectations and all that?

JASON DAY: Yeah. I think Golden State, they played

great. Having Kevin Durant definitely helps. Steph Curry is obviously a genius with a ball in his hand from outside the three point line. The whole team, we were looking at it, our bench needed to play better than their bench.

It's hard to write -- I think if we look at it, in game 3, you know -- LeBron and Curry had an outstanding game. But unfortunately we kind of lost it in the last minute, 24. And it was due to Kevin/Durant having two free throws, and him pulling up and shooting a three right at the end and kind of took the wind out of your sails.

Like in any sport and any professional sport it's very, very difficult to win. I've never played a team sport, so I can only blame myself. I don't think there should be any blame, I think the guys played as hard as they could. Obviously, some guys could play better, some guys did a lot of work and it's a team effort when it comes to basketball, and hoping for a better result next year.

It was good to see him back there. It was a lot of fun watching them because they're the two best teams going around and it would have been nice to be able to get one on the road and have it extended a little bit more. But Golden State did a tremendous job, not only through the regular season but in the playoffs, as well.

Q. Jack Nicklaus used to love when players would complain about conditions at a U.S. Open. He would pick out and say, he can't win, if that's the way that he's acting. And I remember last year at the Open you said, I forget if it was Saturday or Sunday, you said I hope the conditions are tough.
JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. How did you get that sort of mindset? Why do you embrace that challenge, and how do you cultivate that?

JASON DAY: Usually when you hear people complain, it's one less guy you have to worry about at the start of the week. Their attitude makes up for at least 25 percent of your performance. And if you have the right attitude going in for the week, great. But you've still got to execute and know that there's a lot of other players that have good attitudes as well that are coming into the week.

I've heard nothing but great stuff about this golf course and how much everyone's attitude is great at the start of the week. Everyone is going to run into some sort of trouble out there, everyone is. It's a matter of how you handle yourself in that moment to prepare yourself to greatness. And like you said, I'd much rather the course harder than easier. Tough conditions, windy conditions, rain whatever it is, as long as it's harder, I

feel like I play a lot better in conditions like that.

But it brings in the mental aspect, as well. And the USGA, they do a fantastic job not only testing the physical side but the mental side of things, but also the whole game and the state of your game. The person that wins at the end of the week they want everything firing right at the right time.

Getting back to the question about having tougher conditions and that bringing in the mental part of your game, it brings in the desire how much you desire to win the actual tournament, itself. Because everyone has a breaking point and a limit or threshold that they'll actually reach. And they'll go, okay, do I actually want to push it even more or do I have enough in the tank to just -- I can just kind of cruise it in. And those moments are the moments when you learn the most about yourself, whether you can actually push more than you've ever pushed before in your life. And that's why I like tougher conditions, because it constantly tests that barrier to see if I can push even further and further and further mentally and physically with regards to playing tough venues such as the U.S. Open like this.

Q. Just wondering how is your mom feeling right now?

JASON DAY: Yeah, she's good, thank you, mate. She had scans done and got the CTs, actually gave them to my agent and we're sending them to the doctors now.

Q. Just a quick thought, how is it different for you to play golf now that she's doing much better compared to earlier in the year when you were so worried about her health?

JASON DAY: I've played through injuries before and I've had other things go on where it was kind of easy. Injuries are hard because sometimes it just hurts to swing a golf club. But you know that once you rest it and you're healed up you can go play again.

Going through spells where motivation is not the highest is tough, as well, but you know that you're going to get out of it sooner or later, as long as you keep working hard you'll get out of it.

But when someone has cancer and you don't know whether or not they're going to survive or what the outcome is going to happen -- and plus with my mom, who sacrificed a lot for me to be in this position today, it was tough. I mean it was -- I don't wish it upon anyone. It's something that I could never -- I didn't want to focus on golf. I didn't want to be on the golf course, because I knew she was at home.

My sister and my mom were here, and I made sure that

I brought them over, but they're in a country that is not their home and they're at my place and they don't drive on our side of the road, they drive on the other side. So they don't have a car to get anywhere. They're by themselves. There's a lot of worrying about their livelihood and also worrying about the health of my mom, as well.

And now that she's much better and she's healing there's still some things that pop up every now and then with her health, but my mind is in a better place. And the unfortunate thing about life is that everyone is going to pass away at some point, and it never gets easier as you get older, because once you get older it seems like more and more people that you know pass away. And it's just part of life.

You're born and you pass away at the end of your life. And as long as you've done what you've needed to do during the span that you're here and felt like you've done stuff for the better, for the good, hopefully at the end of your lifetime you've changed people's lives. And my mom has definitely impacted not only my life, but my sister's lives, as well. I'm sure she's impacted other people's lives through the stories that I've told. Because no matter how much I've worked on my game, I can't imagine going through what she was feeling like, raising three children by herself, not working, not having a lot of money, and making the sacrifice or decision to go, okay, I'm going to forego by daughter's colleges, and put my boy in the golf academy, take a second mortgage on the house, borrow money from my aunt and uncle, so that was a big sacrifice she made. So obviously everything I have in my life is due to her decisions back then giving me the opportunities now.

Q. Reading between the lines of Brian's questions, talking about the visuals, are you having any struggles or issues doing your visualization process on this course because of what you described?

JASON DAY: As in seeing the shot?

Q. Well, obviously that's a massive part of your game.

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. Are you having issues with that because it's a bit blind?

JASON DAY: Sometimes it works out either way. Sometimes you get to a golf course like this, you don't know where trouble is or you hit it and you don't realize that there's trouble down there and you hit it down the middle or you hit it right in the trouble and you don't realize it was there.

Biggest thing for a place like this is being prepared. I've done a lot of walking out there this week and taken a lot of photos on my phone, from each angle around -- around every green, off the tees and off the second shots just so that I can look at it every single night and go over it and see what kind of visual I'll have coming off every tee, every second shot. And if I do -- whatever pin location I have Thursday through Sunday, either in the morning or before my round I can look at where the best spot is to miss it just in case I'm out of position where I can get up and down, just so I can kind of familiarize myself with the actual golf course the best I can. Because, once again, it is new to most people here and I've only played it once. So I've got to do the best job I can to hopefully prepare and get myself ready to try and play one of the hardest golf courses I think that we play.

Q. I heard you were testing a TaylorMade 2-iron with 1-iron loft --

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. -- maybe for this week.

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. Have you determined if the club is going to go in the bag and how does it fit this course setup?

JASON DAY: It's going to be nice if it's dry.

Unfortunately, I don't know that it's going to be dry. But I've got an M2 2-iron. It's got a graphite shaft in it, low-spin graphite shaft in it. It's longer than my 2-iron, but I think it's got 13.5 degrees of loft on it. So my biggest thing is I want my 2-iron to go 3-wood distance, so I can take the 3-wood out and don't have to worry about hitting a 3-wood. Because I feel like I'm really good hitting the long irons. I shouldn't say I'm not good at hitting a 3-wood, in my times I'm good at hitting a 3-wood, I feel a lot more comfortable hitting 2-irons.

And with the weather conditions, it doesn't look like it's going to blow too ridiculously hard, if I'm looking at the forecast now. But with that said, I think if we can have a little bit more runout, it would fit perfectly because I can hit my 2-iron would go 270, 275 yards off the tee and then run another 30 yards and it would be 300 plus yards, and that would be perfect around here, because I could be very super aggressive with the lines, and I don't have to pull that driver too much. But with the wetter conditions you're going to have to pull the driver more than the 2-iron this week. I'm going to give it a shot over the next two days, and I'll find out more after Wednesday.

Q. Any sense of melancholy coming back to a state you won a major, and what would it mean to win a second in the state of Wisconsin?

JASON DAY: Yeah, it would be nice. I might buy a

house up here if I win again. I might start eating cheese. Yeah, it's -- there's a lot of good memories coming back. The people are fantastic. I love the people up here. Very, very nice. Very genuine people. If I pick one up here, great. That would be a really neat thing to be able to win my first two majors in the state of Wisconsin. Definitely like the golf courses up here. They're tremendous golf courses. But I'm just trying to do the best job I can. I know there's a lot of guys out there that are trying to win either their first, second, or whatever number it is. And I think everyone's kind of on a level playing field right now and the golf course is great. The weather is going to be either bad or good, doesn't matter, we've just got to go out there and do the best job we can. I'm excited about the week.

BETH MAJOR: Looking forward to it. Jason, thanks for joining us. We wish you well this week.