

U.S. Open Championship 2017

Saturday, June 17, 2017

Zach Johnson

Quick Quotes

Q. Got out early and got a pretty decent number?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah. Today was better. A couple of -- two errant shots, one on 12, and my tee shot on 17 cost me. I guess you could say I made a good bogey on both holes, technically.

But, yeah, I got off to a good start, that was key. Actually had a lot of opportunities that didn't quite fall in. A couple of decent saves along the way, as well. A pretty solid day.

Q. How is the course playing and/or changing from day to day?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I was second off today, right? It's gettable, it's receiving shots, obviously. I had the most awkward yardage on the 18th hole. I'm in between my sand wedge and my pitching wedge. I'm playing 131-down wind. And you cannot hit it long there. Technically you shouldn't hit it short. Short's manageable. Trying to hit a 120 pitching wedge on a downhill lie uphill, that's just awkward. I couldn't quite get to 54 there. Plus it would spin too much. So I'm thinking take some off and it still held. Down wind, it held. It landed two or three paces short and I only had about a three- or four-footer.

So that's not normal in a U.S. Open. So certainly the moisture from last night, the rain from last night made it a lot easier.

Q. How did it go out there today?

ZACH JOHNSON: I played great. Got off to a good start. Finished pretty strong. I birdied my last three out of four, as well, so that was a good finish. Pretty solid in the middle just a couple of opportunities lost and a couple of saved, but all in all a pretty good day.

Q. Did the leaderboard take a different look to you now, because of where you are, you're within striking distance?

ZACH JOHNSON: I see that, but I think the -- there's going to be a number of individuals that will be in a controlled, aggressive mode. And if they're on -- I could see the lead anywhere from 8 to 11, probably. I'm not suggesting it will be.

It's not going to be any easier. It's there. I think a good round in the afternoon is still that 2 to 4-under. A solid day could be even par. I don't know what the wind is going to do. I don't know if the clouds will open up or



whatever.

My motivation was Cedar Rapids Gazette, because they came up here when I was teeing up second on Saturday.

Q. Being a part of the John Deere Classic, is it nice to see a former champ sitting up there at the top of the leaderboard with a chance to win?

ZACH JOHNSON: Shoot, I didn't think about that. He's my neighbor. We're good buddies, and his wife. And just good friends. He's a St. Simons boy, that's awesome. We played a lot this year together, both in the off-season at home and practice rounds. We've got a good relationship. I am the opposite of surprised. What I've seen with him is there's no weakness, he's got a great caddie in Scott. Hopefully they can just keep their pedal down, keep doing work.

Q. Where will you play between here and John Deere --

ZACH JOHNSON: I'm going to play Hartford next week.

Q. Do you feel like -- you're really rounding into shape and you'll be right where you want to be come John Deere week?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah. This is probably the best my game's been all year. It's certainly the most situated. And as far as from a contentment standpoint, this is the best I've felt with my golf bag all the way through.

I've done some changes to my putter. I've done some changes to my irons and my driver. PXG has really, really helped me a lot. I probably didn't listen to them enough in the beginning, you know. I think my stubbornness, you could see my arrogance got in the way. But those individuals at PXG have really pushed me and persuaded me in the right direction, I would say, over the last eight to nine months, which is really comforting.

I'm not suggesting I know -- I didn't have a good team, but it's one of those teams as a veteran I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing. You'd be foolish not to think there is something that could be better.

Q. Is this the windiest it's been?

ZACH JOHNSON: Today?



Q. Yes.

ZACH JOHNSON: No. My first day, Thursday, was the windiest I played golf.

Q. Thursday morning?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm thinking about the 5th and 6th hole. It may be close, I hit 7-iron into 5 and I hit a 4-iron 265 yards on 6. No one could hold that green is my point. But this is the windiest. That was the windiest day, for sure.

Q. A lot of the scores aren't going really low today?

ZACH JOHNSON: I haven't looked at the board. I'm second off.

Q. We're looking and there's nobody else --

ZACH JOHNSON: Oosthuizen is like 5.

Q. Another day of rain, another soft course?

ZACH JOHNSON: There's some tough pins. The tee boxes -- I thought some of these pin placements, I thought the tee boxes would be more conservative. There's a couple of pins even in the fairway with a 9-iron, 8-iron, wedge, whatever, you still have to be careful. You've got to play the highest point break and let it fall in. So there's a couple of difficult pin placements, in my opinion.

Q. This is your best score in a U.S. Open round.

Do you feel like it's one of your best rounds?

ZACH JOHNSON: I try to forget about this tournament when I get done with it. I'd really have to ponder.

Q. Why is that?

ZACH JOHNSON: Because the more you dissect it, the worse you're going to feel about yourself. You saw me yesterday. I was frustrated. I bogeyed 17 and 18.

18, I hit technically five good shots and tapped in for a bogey. I was frustrated. But I knew if I really got caught up in that, it's not going to do me any good.

Yeah, I guess it makes sense it's my best round. It's the hardest tournament of the year, arguably. So, yeah, anytime you shoot under par, let alone 4-under, yeah.

Shoot, I'm going to eat well tonight.

Q. Is this a home game for you?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, there's a lot of folks here. It's good. I've got relatives and a lot of friends in this state alone. I've got some Drake alumni friends that live up in this vicinity. And Chicago is not far away. I've got some relatives that came from Chicago. Yeah, this is northern Ohio, as far as I'm concerned.

Q. What attracted you to your equipment now? It seems like more and more people are starting to get familiar with the name.

ZACH JOHNSON: It wasn't a financial situation. At 40 years old, I'm just being factual, here, with what I've done, I'm not going to make a decision based on dollars. That's foolish at this point.

The number one reason -- well, there's two reasons. One, what I'd already seen with the equipment and what it had already done. And second, certainly without a question is the people. They kind of go both hand in hand. Bob Parsons and his people and the unlimited resources he's given these people is not normal. And it just bleeds passion.

And then from there I think I'd be naive to think there's not something better for me out there. And I firmly believe with Brad and Mike, the two R&D guys, what they've done for me, I think I would have been in this mode with any company, over the last year and a half. So to have these guys really push me and give me the freedom, but also give me their knowledge is pretty awesome.

I'm excited about the future. I hope it's a long, long continuous relationship because I'm hitting the ball farther than I ever have. The clubs are fantastic. My golf ball is terrific. It's a pretty awesome combination.

Right now it's really just about execution and getting the ball in the hole because I can't make any excuses. I have been, I probably was too much. But I think it's probably just the competitor. And like I said, maybe a little bit of arrogance and stubbornness, as well, that got in the way.

Q. You recommend them?

ZACH JOHNSON: For anybody. There's so many different kinds, too, different types. They've got everything. And the beauty of that -- they have everything and if one of us needs this or that, they'll make it.

Q. Early in the week Jim Furyk said guys like him, maybe you, Stricker, precision players, it's a bomber's paradise. Do you feel that's been your whole career?

ZACH JOHNSON: I don't know where it is in that. Golf courses lend itself to the straight and narrow, hit it to here, hit it there. But if the bombers are around with their 2-iron, does it really matter?

What I'm noticing and unfortunately what I had to go up against, I'd say the last so many odd years, is these individuals. Dustin, specifically, granted at the

beginning of the year he was on fire. When your 2-iron is my driver, and your driver is really good -- maybe that's an embellishment. And he beats me at my own game, meaning wedges and putting.

We've seen that with Jason. We've seen that with Rory and we know we've seen it with Dustin. Those guys -- everybody talks about their 320-yard carry tee shot, which is impressive, but they're scoring, too.

Q. You beat this course today not being a bomber.

ZACH JOHNSON: For sure. I think so.

Q. It still works?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, it still works. I can still work my way and have a game around this place and put up a number. I'm the guy, maybe more than I should, sometimes, to a fault, I'm the one aggressive. There are times you have to be aggressive. This is one you have to get at. Sometimes you have to suck it up and hit a shot at the pin, other times you have to know where to miss it.

Q. (Inaudible.)

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, absolutely. You can make a 5 in a heartbeat or a 2. You can make a 6. It's great. I didn't think I'd ever go for that hole-in-one shot, but I also felt the golf course would get firmer as the week went on and obviously it hasn't.

Q. Is that a back hole location?

ZACH JOHNSON: It's kind of a middle left hole location. But it's in a hole. So if you hit it left, you're struggling for a 4. You hit it right of the green, you can still get up and down, but it's not an easy pitch. Yeah, it's got everything.