

JORDAN SPIETH

DOUG MILNE: We'd like to welcome Jordan Spieth to the interview room at the 2018 Houston Open. Jordan, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. Making your sixth start at the Houston Open this week, close call in 2015 with your runner-up finish, so obviously I'm sure a place you look forward to coming back to. Just a few comments on being back here this week.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I've had a mixed bag here at this event. I come in trying to regain some form and some momentum. Certainly this golf course forces you to hit pretty aggressive shots and fearless shots with the amount of trouble that's around the place. That's great, it's a great test. Looks like we're going to get some weather this afternoon that will make the golf course play soft, which is pretty typical. But by the weekend it should kind of firm a little back up so we might get a different golf course from the first two days. So probably some pretty low scoring to start and then it will show a little bit of teeth.

But excited to be back in Houston for sure. It's amazing what -- I haven't been into the Houston area, but at least this far north how well it's recovered from the hurricane, this golf course and just the areas right around it. The staff has obviously done a beautiful job getting this place ready.

DOUG MILNE: Your season, you started the PGA TOUR season with the calendar season, made I think eight starts, a couple of top-10s, top-20s in both of the World Golf Championships events. Just give us kind of a midterm grade on your season, so to speak.

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, not the start that I've wanted so far, but I would like to think that the season kind of starts next week. You put a lot of emphasis on peaking for four weeks a year and that first one comes at the Masters. Trying to obviously have a fantastic event here, which is the best way to gear up for that.

Q. Wherever you were when the hurricane hit, do your thoughts go to obviously the people you know, your friends, and do you then think about, my God, what's the golf course going to look like?

JORDAN SPIETH: It didn't go to the golf course at all.

Q. Just thoughts about what it would be like, what's going on here?

JORDAN SPIETH: Sure. We were in the New York, Boston time frame of the Tour schedule and I just remembered -- I don't really know that many people down here, but Dallas got hit by some rain, but just seeing what happened to the community down here was

devastating.

Then being able to kind of look at what JJ Watt did as just one example of thousands, seeing the boats line up, the bass boats line up down the highway to just come help, just volunteers, just kind of makes you kind of -- in a world that we live in where you see a lot of negativity on TV, when you see something like that in the midst of disaster, it kind of makes your heart happy to see how many good people are out there just wanting to help because they want to help. You know, they were the real heroes of the event. I say the "event;" the hurricane relief. There were many, many, many people who came to help so it kind of showed how strong the state of Texas is. There's a lot of pride in the state and a lot of people that are always looking out for others and it was cool to see that impact.

Q. In your lifetime also this tournament has been entitled the Shell Houston Open. Is it a little odd to be here with Shell's name not attached to it, is that kind of strange?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it's a bit odd not seeing it on 18 out on the tee box or out in the fairway. Yeah, they were a great sponsor for a long time. I was fortunate to play with a lot of people that made that possible in pro-ams going back. You know, hopefully we can continue to come to this Houston area and play this fantastic event going forward.

Q. This a mixed bag so far this year, Jordan. Has it been a bit bewildering to you, has it affected your confidence at all where you can get your season started next week?

JORDAN SPIETH: It's not bewildering to me because I know what it is, I just haven't been able to quite do it. It's simple stuff, it's setup stuff that just got off and I just haven't quite figured out how to consistently get it back on. I'm getting there, putting a lot of work in. If it comes by next week or this week or next week, great. If it doesn't, it will come soon.

I'm going to stay the course. I've got 20-plus more years out here and a few months of setup stuff isn't going to derail too much confidence. It has a little bit this year certainly, but I'm in a good place right now where I know I've got time on my side and these couple weeks aren't the be-all, end-all of my career. Therefore, I'm not going to let it kind of take over me and need to, but I am going to put in a lot of work to be ready for it because I'm going to have some time to rest after.

It's getting there.

Q. Jordan, when you're not holing the number of putts that we're used to seeing and you're used to seeing, I mean what's the sort of thought then? Is it almost it was bound to happen eventually or is it something technical? What's your approach to it?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, no, I don't think it was -- I don't think that really solid putting was a fluke for me. I think it's to my DNA going back to when I was a junior golfer and that's the belief I'll continue to hold, and instead right now, yeah, it's technical that's gotten away from that ability. But once that clears up, then it should get right back to where it was.

I've also over the last year and a half been striking the ball a lot better, hitting more greens. 2017 was actually my best year yet because you judge a year by -- I had my lowest scoring average in 2017. So pending -- to win a scoring average, to win the low scoring average on the PGA TOUR twice in three years is spectacular. And I didn't have quite the putting stats and that's because I couldn't. If I did, my scoring average would have been two strokes lower and that's just not realistic.

So the game kind of -- some other things will peak that will make other things kind of -- your putts per greens in regulation will go down because I've hit so many more greens. You can't shoot 8 under every single round you play. So kind of just the ebb and flow of the game is kind of, I'm starting to see within five or six years now how things can fluctuate within your own game.

And then it helps you stay patient, it helps you not worry about certain things, it helps you just kind of let them come to you and understand that you keep your head down and work hard. You know, I've been consistent enough over the course of my career that that consistency should stay there pending peaks and troughs.

Q. Is it also a consequence of working maybe more on your long game, putting has dipped just slightly?

JORDAN SPIETH: I certainly had a couple things I was working on from like the '16 to '17 season when I looked at the statistics that I put significantly more time into, and they were more wedge to short iron play and then a little bit in my real long irons and kind of hybrid play.

So yeah, I would single out areas like that, but then after this last season, you know, it was back to you try and figure out what was -- you know, parts of the game that really need improvement off of the previous year and it was certain lengths of putting for me after last season and then maybe a little bit of driving.

So I don't know if it's because -- you know, I've still put in a lot of work but obviously your focus goes to different areas to try to clean them up. And you can't have everything on, so something's got to fall. Yeah, again, that just goes back to the ebb and flow of the entirety of your game. The one thing that you really can keep consistent that you have to keep working on is the mental side of it. That you don't want to peak and trough, you want to be pretty level there, and that's my goal going forward now is to be very level there as I clear up everything else in the game.

Q. Jordan, you hear different guys talking about utilizing this week in different ways, some say maybe getting in contention, they want that feel, others hone in on a specific aspect of their game. For you to leave Houston and say this was a success to set me up for your goal next week, what needs to happen?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, I need four rounds of competition. I haven't played four rounds since Mexico. Four rounds of competition would be nice as a start, but I want to get a round going, I want to shoot a low round, something lower than 5 under par. Just where I get out there, I get in the flow of the round, I'm not living and dying on shots, I'm okay, this is an entire round of golf, set a goal, stay focused with it, let the golf course come to you, and then when you get to 3 or 4 under, push that to 5 or 6 under.

And it doesn't necessarily have to happen, if you catch a bad break here or there, but I'll know if I shot in my mind kind of a low round. Whether the score is 65 or 68, I may have played the same and just gotten a couple lip-outs or whatever it may be. You know what I mean. I need a round kind of that feels like that 65 or 4 that I can draw a lot off of.

Q. Even if you're not right now at peak, does that affect your attitude towards Augusta?

JORDAN SPIETH: Oh, no, I've gone into Augusta feeling, you know, lower than I am right this second about my ability to compete, or the ability to get into contention and win and still been in the last group or last couple groups. 2016 I was hitting it horrendously going into Augusta. I'm striking the ball a lot better now. I just putted extremely well starting from the first round at Augusta in 16. I came off missed cuts here I think in '14 and '17 and was in the last group, second-to-last group come Sunday with a chance to win.

In order for me really feel like at my highest level of confidence, then I'm talking what I was saying to George, but to be able to compete next week, it doesn't make a difference what happens here.

Q. Does it make any difference to you, Jordan, also that you're not in the -- I don't mean this in a bad way, that you're not in the talk of being a favorite next week?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, it doesn't make a difference to me at all. I don't care either way. We believe that if we go about our step-by-step goal and check all the boxes next week, then we'll have a chance to win. I don't really care who's on the other side, but it will be fun. It will be interesting to see who we're paired with. I know they've done the other three mayor winners in the past and Brooks is out, so that would be Justin and somebody else. So it could be a fun couple days in that sense. I'm not sure how they're going to work the pairings. We'll just get in there and try and go through the same process every year there.

Q. Who do you see has the pressure on their shoulders next week in terms of favorite? We've been writing obviously about Tiger, and with Bubba winning last week...

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, who's the favorite or who has the most pressure on their shoulders?

Q. Who do you think?

JORDAN SPIETH: Which one, because they don't necessarily go together.

Q. Probably just in terms of favorite then.

JORDAN SPIETH: I would probably say Bubba Watson at this point. But if you asked me the week before I would have said somebody else; you asked me the week before that, I would have had somebody else. I could sit there on Tuesday of next week and say me, and that's the goal is to do something this week that kind of gets it, a groundswell going that I can take, there's positive vibes and kind of help ride them. As someone who's won it twice already, a golf course that obviously fits his game and somebody who's played extremely well over the last couple months, Bubba's as hot as anybody.

Q. Does he have the most pressure on him?

JORDAN SPIETH: No, he doesn't have any pressure on him.

Q. Who's got the most pressure?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think the only person who should feel any pressure on -- actually, there's nobody who should really feel any pressure on them, but I would say Rory has the chance to within the career Grand Slam and I think that's something that he truly wants and so if there's one week a year that if he said he could win one tournament at the beginning of every year, he'll probably pick Augusta, and therefore he puts more emphasis on it. I still don't feel he should feel any pressure and he probably will feel just the normal championship pressure he feels every week.