

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 12, 2020



J.B. HOLMES

SHARON SHIN: I would like to welcome in J.B. Holmes to the interview room here at the Genesis Invitational.

J.B., you're making your 14th start at this event already and you own five top-10 finishes. Can we get some comments about your return?

J.B. HOLMES: Yeah, it's always exciting to be here. It's my favorite track we play on tour, so it's always exciting to get to come here and play this beautiful golf course. Like I said, it's always a good time.

SHARON SHIN: And you're coming off three consecutive top-20 finishes already this season so your game is in great shape. How is it feeling coming into Riviera?

J.B. HOLMES: Good. I've been putting really good, so hopefully a few swing issues we'll figure out this week and hit a little bit straighter, hopefully get a little bit higher up on the board.

SHARON SHIN: Coming back as defending champion, does that add pressure, especially to an invitational?

J.B. HOLMES: Not really. You've got good memories so you get to come back to a place where you've got good memories and enjoy playing. You've already got some good feelings starting before you get going.

Q. Having won here, what kind of course do you consider this as it relates to, gee, is this a bomber's course, is this more of a Hilton Head? Where do you put Riv?

J.B. HOLMES: That's what's so great about it, anybody can win. You've got Strick that's won here, you've got long hitters that's won here. You've really got to hit -- they've got about the same amount of holes that go left, the same amount of holes that go right, a drivable par 4, you've got short par 3s, long par 3s. This is one of those tracks you can go around and hit every club in the bag, so I feel like anybody's really got a chance here. I mean, almost any golf course, you get a bomber and they're playing really good, they have the advantage, but, you know, anybody can win here. It's just a really good track.

Q. Just on that, why do you think then Tiger hasn't won here?

J.B. HOLMES: He hasn't shot the lowest score.

Q. Do you think there's like something to it specifically, like maybe --

J.B. HOLMES: There might be something that he doesn't like about it or that he doesn't -- you know, he's obviously done really good at Bay Hill and a couple of the other ones he's won seven or eight times. There's got to be something that he really likes about those courses and maybe there's something that he really doesn't like here. I guess you have to ask him.

Q. In more general terms, does it sometimes, is it sometimes hard to get past the mental side of things if you haven't performed well or as well as you expect at a place to sort of come in fresh every time?

J.B. HOLMES: I mean, you obviously have better -- you have a better attitude -- not a better attitude, but you feel usually a little bit better going to a place you really like. A place you haven't played well before doesn't mean you can't play well there, but you know, you always enjoy going places you won, places you have good memories. So that's always -- and if you haven't had great success at a place -- I know Tiger still really wants to play well here, it's his tournament. But like I said, I really like it. You talk to a lot of guys, I think it's one of the best courses we play all year.

Q. Have you had a course where you've had like not very good success at all but you keep going back, and if there's a course like that, why do you keep doing it?

J.B. HOLMES: There's not -- usually not a ton of them you would keep going back to. More of just scheduling, where it falls. If you need to play would be the reason you go back to it. If you really, really don't like a place, you usually don't go back to it.

But there's some of them that you really don't like and you just don't go back, and there's some of them you're like it's okay, I don't love it and that's the ones to tend to play because if you just play the golf courses you love, I don't know how much you play it, you know, because there's usually four or five you really love and some other ones that are okay. But usually the ones that you really don't like, you don't go back to.

Q. How has your distance changed over the years off the tee starting from I guess all the way back when you were a junior to now?

J.B. HOLMES: I guess I've lost a little bit, but your swing speed just goes down a little bit. They didn't have all the TrackMan and stuff when I first came out, but my swing speed when I first came out I'm guessing was around 130, I don't know. But now I'm getting -- I can get to 124 or something like that.

But your cruising speed's a little bit -- I think when I was younger my cruising speed was like 126 or something like that. It's definitely not that now, so it lost a little bit, but I still get it out there.

Q. How about when was the first time that you felt like you were a big hitter? Was it when you were like 6 years old, was it later than that?

J.B. HOLMES: I mean, I was always pretty long for my age group, so when we started playing I think I was hitting it around 300 yards when I was 13. I've always been hitting it past people, but when you get into college and you're still hitting it past all the really good players, you figure out that, wow, maybe I'm really long.

When I came out on tour -- the tour's got a lot longer so there's a lot of guys that hit it out there, now but when I came out on tour I feel like I was almost 20 by almost everybody.

Q. And I guess just to follow up on that, do you have a reaction to the new distance insight reports that have come out from the USGA and R&A or any feelings about whether too many guys hit it too far?

J.B. HOLMES: What was the report? I didn't --

Q. I guess that's a good reaction. It was just suggesting that people may be hitting the ball too far for the courses.

J.B. HOLMES: Yeah, that ship sailed, though. They've been doing that for I think a while. They've changed a whole bunch of golf courses now. I don't know, it's a game everybody's got the same stuff, so it's not like one person's got something else and he's using a different thing. Everybody's got the same equipment.

To be honest with you, I just think there's better athletes now playing, and when you get better athletes, they're going to hit it further. Just like any sport, they're going to hit it further, they're going to jump higher, they're going to run faster. We don't have any of the jumping and running, but we can hit it further.

Q. Besides your five wins on Tour, you obviously have several top-10s. I'm just curious, have you ever left a tournament with a top-10 that wasn't a win and felt satisfied or is it in your mind basically winning or nothing else?

J.B. HOLMES: I mean, you can, yeah. I had a couple top-10s where I really hit it terrible and just golfed my ball around and had a good week and you're like, wow, I can't believe I finished 10th the way I hit it. Then there's times where you've hit it fantastic and not get out of your game what you want and you're very frustrated. When you get up there real close, you always want the win and at the end you're like, well, it's still a good week, but we're out here to win. I mean, disappointed might be a strong word, but if you lose in a playoff or something, yeah, but if you finish fifth and you missed it by two shots, you'll think about the two shots you could have got. I don't necessarily say disappointed, you know.

Q. Do you get more -- would you say you get more satisfaction out of like a backdoor top-10 where you play really well on Sunday or maybe one that you played well the

first three rounds?

J.B. HOLMES: I feel like when you play well the whole week and you're kind of right there, those kind of feel the best. The backdoors, they're always great, but you've got to throw a great round in that last day.

Q. Assuming you were the longest player on your high school team from age 8 or whatever you were, do you remember the first time that somebody poked it past you, whether it was college or here and did it annoy you?

J.B. HOLMES: No, I don't really. I mean, if I mis-hit one and somebody hammers one that goes past me, I'm not likely to hit it further. The guys out on tour, there's a couple guys out here that you hit a really good one and get it out there.

But when I was younger, I never felt like anybody could hit it further than me. It was more that I let them hit it further than me because I was trying to hit a shot here or there or whatever, but if I'm trying to swing out of my shoes, I pretty much felt like I could hang with anybody playing golf.

Q. This is a little bit skewed because you won so early, but did you find winning to be hard? Did you come to that realization more before you won for the first time or after?

J.B. HOLMES: After. It was my third event and thought, oh, this is going to be easy. So it's difficult. Everything just lined up really great for that first win for me, played fantastic, was putting really well, so it was a great experience. Then there's a lot of good players out here, it's hard to win. You've got to be playing really good that week and then you've got to get some bounces and you've got to have some stuff on your side, too. It's definitely a challenge for sure to win out here, but definitely after that. Young and naive, you come out here and just went like top-10 -- like 25, top-10, win, so it felt pretty easy at that point.

Q. And do you remember from winning Phoenix and then if it wasn't the next week, it was the week after, you were supposed to play with Tiger on Saturday and he didn't show up on the first tee? Do you remember that?

J.B. HOLMES: Yeah, it was here.

Q. Exactly. Do you remember any disappointed?

J.B. HOLMES: Yeah, I was disappointed, I was wanting to play with him. So that was not frustrating, but disappointing. Been playing great and get to be paired with him out here, and I think he had the flu or something.

Q. He might have been ducking you.

J.B. HOLMES: He might have been ducking me, yeah, it could have been that. Yeah, it would have been cool.

Q. Just randomly, because we know you were very young when you were playing junior golf, were you a big kid? Like were you strapping or were you this little guy pounding it past bigger kids?

J.B. HOLMES: I mean, I wasn't -- no, I wasn't that big. I wasn't small, but I wasn't considered like huge or anything by any means.

Q. A lot of kids would be like --

J.B. HOLMES: Yeah, they were all pretty much the same size as me.

Q. You always seem to pop up on the west coast a lot. Like what is it with the early part of the calendar year that has you doing well?

J.B. HOLMES: I don't know. If I knew that, I would try to fix it. I just really like the west coast here. I feel like I'm coming off a really good break and I'm really ready to go. I think later in the year it gets to be a long season and maybe the drive isn't quite as strong as I would like for it to be. But also, some of my favorite golf courses are on the west coast, so I really enjoy playing here. Just some of these courses really set up really well for me.

Q. Your wider career story from these junior days right through to now is actually fascinating and has a lot of twists and turns. How satisfied are you with what you've done in your career given everything that's happened?

J.B. HOLMES: It's just like everything else, I'm very proud of what I've done. I've had a great career and hopefully still have more to come, but in some senses, too, I wish I would have won a little bit more and seized a few opportunities. But with the ups and downs and the brain surgery, I feel very blessed to have achieved what I've achieved and playing on winning Ryder Cup teams. You set it down and start lining up the accolades, it's a pretty solid career.

SHARON SHIN: Thank you for your time and good luck this week.

J.B. HOLMES: Thank you.