

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
October 12, 2021



JASON KOKRAK

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Jason Kokrak into the interview room, our defending champion at The CJ Cup at Summit, although it was at Shadow Creek.

Jason, welcome back to this event. Just talk a little bit about your thought process and your goals here to defend your title.

JASON KOKRAK: Good to finally to be here to defend my first victory. Even though it's not at the same golf course, still here in Vegas. Feels really good, comfortable here. Played Summit a couple times already, played nine holes today, so feeling good, ready to go and I got a lot of good vibes here in Vegas so looking forward to getting the week started.

JOHN BUSH: It's got to feel good to say to defend your first victory, that means you won twice last year. It was a great year, you finished No. 11 in the FedExCup. Just talk a little bit about the season and how much confidence that has given you going forward.

JASON KOKRAK: Yeah, winning twice was amazing. The first one was a big weight off my shoulders, but nonetheless I still wanted to play good golf and continue the process. You know, it gave me a lot of confidence to be in the Ryder Cup conversation and it verifies what I've been working for and been working on the golf course with my coaches and my caddie, David. A ton of confidence going in. A little rusty after taking a month off last week, but we'll turn things on this week.

JOHN BUSH: Before we open it up to questions, Jason, I wanted to ask you, it's nine straight years for you advancing to the FedExCup Playoffs. Talk a little bit about what that consistency means to you.

JASON KOKRAK: Consistency has always been a big key for me on the golf course. Everybody knows that I hit the ball far, but I didn't want to be known just for hitting the ball far, I wanted to be known as somebody who was getting better in all facets of the game. My iron play has come a long way. Putting last year was incredible, I don't know what my exact stats are, but I'm a pretty good driver of the golf ball. If I can tighten up some wedges, we'll continue to be consistent and I think that's what I would like to do for the rest of my career.

Q. Jason, you got to go around nine holes today. Just what are some of the impressions that you have of this golf course and some of the challenges that you will a the players are going to have to deal with this week?

JASON KOKRAK: Well, it's a big golf course, it's a big place here at Summit. It's definitely a tough walk. You can kind of get turned around direction-wise. So it's not supposed to be

windy anymore, but I think that could be a factor out there. A little bit more elevation closer to the mountainside.

You know, it's just a good golf course. There's a little bit of depth perception I think for the players are going to have to deal with this week as far as looking up or down. The carry numbers for some of these bunkers and lines, it will be a difficult test. But the golf course is soft. Just coming out of reseeding, it will play softer. The wind will help keep it a little firmer, but it will be a nice test. I don't think it will be quite as tough as Shadow Creek, but it's a fun golf course to play.

Q. Jason, you kind of covered a little bit of what I was going to ask, but do you see any similarities between Shadow Creek and here at all? And then also, when you stepped on the grounds this week, since it's a completely new venue, do you feel like the defending champion?

JASON KOKRAK: I can't say that I do feel like the defending champion, but I did walk into the player locker room about 20 minutes ago to grab a quick bite to eat and my picture's up there with Justin Thomas and Brooks Koepka. Kind of a surreal experience to see myself up there on the board as a past champion and it gives me -- I feel good going into the week after stepping out on this golf course knowing that I played here a couple times. Not probably as many as a couple other guys out here, but nonetheless, I feel really good to be here to defend.

Q. Any similarities to Shadow Creek whatsoever?

JASON KOKRAK: Yeah. The greens are very, very smooth. I would say this is a little bit more of a desert golf course than Shadow Creek is, but the grass is the same, the greens are -- they're kind of the same. They're very smooth, but they're definitely not as firm as Shadow Creek was last year.

Q. Jason, are we at high enough level for the elevation change to matter much?

JASON KOKRAK: Here in Vegas I think with the temperatures we're going to see this week, we're going to play around 5 percent. I think a lot of guys are right around that same number. When it's hot here in Vegas, 90 to 100 degrees, we go up to about 10 percent. You'll see a little bit of elevation out here but not a ton, and with the wind dying down, it will be kind of easy to adjust to around 5 percent.

Q. Okay. And the USGA and R&A came out with a new rule today that tournaments starting in 2022 could limit the driver length to 46 inches. Could I get your reaction to that, please?

JASON KOKRAK: I've always used a 45-inch driver, really not too much longer than that, so I know it's not really going to affect me. I'm already a long ball hitter, so I kind of go with I want the accuracy more than the distance.

I mean, 46 inch, I think people want to see the golf ball go far and if somebody can hit the ball straight and use a 46-, 47-inch driver, I'm all for it. Nonetheless, they still made the decision to go to 46 inches. But again, it doesn't affect me so I don't have to worry about it.

Q. And lastly, I was there when you spoke at Valspar, the pretournament thing at Valspar last year. You talked about picking out a goal every year going into a new season and your goal was to get much better in putting, and you certainly accomplished that goal.

Is there a specific part of your game this year that you're concentrating on?

JASON KOKRAK: I think strokes gained around the greens, chipping, pitching and wedges, if I can get a little bit better in that, bring that stat into the double digits instead of 100-some, I think I'll continue to get better and better.

I've always been a pretty good driver of the golf ball. Struggled as of the latter part of last year and then maybe the last few tournaments or whatever I cracked the face of my driver. Other than that, I think if I can get better around the greens and continue to work on the other things, I'll continue to climb up the world rankings.

Q. You're probably pretty qualified to answer this question given the sponsor on your hat, but with the proliferation of sport betting happening right now, what's the first thing that comes to your mind about sports betting and golf and the PGA TOUR and how that impacts, if at all, and just what your thoughts are?

JASON KOKRAK: I think it does affect the fans that are coming out. It's driving a different market. I think you see a different group of people coming out to the golf course to either cheer or not cheer or, you know, root against people. It's kind of interesting to play with all the sports betting. I think you'll see more and more of that going on the more states open up to allowing the online betting or whatever. I think it's going to be interesting going down this road, but I think it's good for golf.

Q. Have you had conversations with other Tour players and what are the discussions about that out there? Do you guys discuss odds or what it's like or anything like that?

JASON KOKRAK: You know, I think a lot of us like to gamble a little bit. Most of the time it's not -- it has nothing to do with golf. I think a lot more football, baseball, hockey, basketball, that kind of thing. Not too much as of right now. It will be interesting.

We all sign a thing at the beginning of the year not to, you know, give any insider information and whatnot about what players are hurt or who's playing well or whatever. So it's definitely something that we're going to have to address down the road, but I think most guys are pretty honest and trustworthy out here and that's not going to happen.

Q. One more thing about Summit here. When you guys show up at a course that most of you have never seen before, how much of an advantage is it for players like Collin and Maverick, who are members out here and know every bit of the course?

JASON KOKRAK: It's a huge advantage, just like my advantage last year at Shadow Creek. I mean, I was probably one of the only players that had north of 25 rounds at Shadow. So those guys definitely have a huge advantage. They know how to play the golf course, they know where not to hit it and that was a big key for me last year at Shadow. It will be interesting. It's softer so it's not going to play as difficult, the ball's not going to be bounced around, but they definitely have a significant advantage knowing the golf course, knowing the clubs that they like to hit off these tees. But each one of us is a professional and we get a good game plan and we try to stick to it.

JOHN BUSH: Jason, thank you for your time and best of luck this week.

JASON KOKRAK: All right. Cheers, guys. Thank you.