

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
NOVEMBER 11, 2021



JASON DUFNER (-4)

Q. Delay to start the day, but opening round 66, tell me how the first round went.

JASON DUFNER: Yeah, pretty good. I think the course responded pretty well to the weather we had. It was a pretty strong storm that pushed through. Thankful that it pushed through pretty quickly. It was soft early, but sun's out now, the wind's blowing a little bit, so the course is drying out.

I thought I played pretty well. I was pretty happy for the most part everything I did, but a couple key parts kind of in the middle of the round a couple times helped kind of glue that round together and maybe turned a 70, 69, 68 into a 66. So I'll take those two shots or three shots with those saves and look to improve on my ball-striking.

Q. Like you said with ball-striking, how important is it to capitalize on those par 5s out there?

JASON DUFNER: Yeah, there's only two of them, both of them into the wind today. I don't think I birdied either one. With the soft conditions, not really reachable for me, but this is a good golf course for me. It's a tough golf course. The scores aren't going to run away from you, we're not going to be in the 20s winning this week. If I can keep it in that 2 to 4 under every day, I think I'll be right around there on Sunday.

Q. You played this course last year. How has it changed? Has it matured some? What's the biggest difference?

JASON DUFNER: Yeah, I think it's matured some. New golf courses take some time to settle in. Last year it was extremely firm, and I think they've maybe redone a couple of the green complexes it seems like, 9 and 15 stick out to me at the moment, softened those up. I think in three or four years' time the course will really settle in and be really nice.

Obviously it's a public golf course, so it gets a lot of play, but they're new to it here at Memorial Park, hosting an event, and they'll figure it out. The Tour does a great job helping them along with the agronomy and all those things. I look forward to being a part of the event year in and year out.

Q. The 15th hole, a little different than a lot of the holes and how they made it like kind of, you know, a little -- the more atmosphere, get the fans engaged. This is just Thursday with the weather, but this weekend, what do you think that hole will be like?

JASON DUFNER: I think it will be good. I actually like that tee we're playing now, it's a little

bit better angle. There was another tee we played last year that was a weird angle, the green sat on a weird angle, didn't look visually right, looked like you were going to hit it in the water left every time, but now it's kind of sitting right in front of you. They've done a good job.

I think this event will continue to grow. Houston loves golf, they've had an event here for who knows, I'm not sure exactly how long the Houston Open has been around, but it's been a long time. I know the community supports golf. I know being here in downtown, easy to get to, I know people come and do things downtown, so I think it's a win for everybody in the city of Houston and the Houston Open.

Q. You were out here last year and just had a few fans wandering around. The crowds had been hurt today because of the storm, but what's it like having fans out there with you and along the way?

JASON DUFNER: Yeah, obviously we need to have fans out here supporting the PGA TOUR. I think sometimes some of us wish we could play without fans occasionally, depending on how you're playing and how raucous the crowd is. But after, I think this is my 17th or 16th year on Tour, you kind of get used to all that.

You know, it's nice to have the fans. Like I said, I think this weekend you'll see a big turnout here for the Houston Open. I think what they've done moving the event here will really help just making an event that people don't want to miss in the city of Houston.

Q. Yeah, they're going for the party atmosphere, which I think won't take a lot of effort.

JASON DUFNER: Unfortunately, sometimes they forget we're working at their party.

Q. At 15 they're going for that stadium atmosphere. It's not like Phoenix, it's not big like that, but it could get, you mentioned -- you said the word "raucous," so it could be a really crazy hole come this weekend.

JASON DUFNER: Yeah, I think those last four holes are all kind of unique challenges. You have a short par 3, sometimes 16 is reachable with water, 17's kind of a birdie hole and 18's a tough one. So I think what they've done with those last four holes trying to bring as many fans as they can into that area of the golf course I think will be really nice on the weekend. I think they'll have big crowds. A lot of things can happen on 15. You can see guys make a double or a triple.