

**ROUND 4 INTERVIEW  
NOVEMBER 14, 2021**

**JASON KOKRAK (-10)**



**HALEY PETERSON:** We would like to welcome our 2021 winner of the Hewlett Packard Enterprise Houston Open, Jason Kokrak.

Jason, welcome. Happy to have you sitting here right now.

**JASON KOKRAK:** Happy to be sitting in this seat right now.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Just tell me about the ups and downs to get to this point and finally capturing this win.

**JASON KOKRAK:** You know, Tuesday I played a practice round and I hit it really bad, so Tuesday afternoon I just decided to get on the driving range with my ear bud in, Coach Drew Steckel in my ear, D-Rob sending him a few videos. I knew it wasn't too far off, but I knew it was just something small that I needed to feel or tweak.

Contemplated actually withdrawing because I was hitting it so bad, but felt some nice things on the range and got it going in the pro-am and got off to a nice start. Made a couple stupid mistakes, but really kind of ups and downs all week. Played nicely on Thursday, Friday I played a great for 11 holes, and then Saturday morning I don't know what happened, if I slept too much or whatever. Something happened and I just did not play my best golf. I had a really, really poor nine holes, but stuck through it, made some nice putts coming down the stretch and then started hitting more greens, which made this golf course a lot easier.

**Q. You just touched upon coming down the stretch. What was clicking for you, one birdie after another, and what was the confidence level? Did you know where you were on the leaderboard at this time?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** I had an idea, but I knew nobody was going to get too far ahead of me. I told D-Rob, I forget what hole it was, maybe coming off of No. 10 there, hit a good putt, just a couple wobbles on the green, I told him all I can do is keep hitting good putts.

I hit a nice putt for par on 12 and then I was a little uncomfortable. Chipping around some of these greens is really tough, so I decided to lay it up on 13, made birdie there, gave me a little confidence. Really nice to roll in that birdie on 14, long par 4 into the wind. And then scary little -- it's a wedge, 52-degree wedge 115 yards, 118 yards, it was nice to hit that shot there. And then a little mud on my ball on the par 5 just kind of got in my head and D-Rob said, let's lay up. Laid it up and wedged it nice. Picked my spots and I had good feel all day. And the speed on the greens was nice today. It was a little faster than the rest of the week.

**HALEY PETERSON:** You were joking about your previous win not too many months ago was in Texas.

**JASON KOKRAK:** Yeah, yeah, I like to win tournaments in good states, the state of Texas and won the CJ CUP out in Shadow Creek out in Las Vegas. Very blessed and very happy to be sitting in this seat now .

**Q. Two wins in Texas where Longhorns held the 54-hole lead. As a guy who maybe prides himself as being an underdog, do you enjoy that situation?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** I don't know if I enjoy the situation, but I definitely, I'm comfortable in that situation. I guess you can call me an underdog, but the last couple years I've played some pretty solid golf, so I wouldn't exactly say that I'd be the underdog going in.

I guess this week I would be because my game was not in top form and I definitely made the best of it, made a lot of birdies, made a lot of nice putts. The putter was hot this week and tried to give myself as many looks as possible, and when I was out of position, I just tried to limit the stress.

**Q. And walking off 18 yesterday to finish your second round, did victory seem at all attainable? What are you thinking as you're finishing up that second round?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** Well, I just didn't know how far away the leaders were going to get. So the golf course was a little windy, it's a big ballpark, there's some long holes, there's some birdie holes. At the end of the day, I didn't think I would have as good of a chance coming into today as I did, so a couple guys came back towards me and gave me a shot.

All I can do and all I can control is myself and what I can control around the golf course. I made do and limited my mistakes. I believe I went bogey free today, but I'm not 100 percent sure. Nonetheless, I played some really good golf the last 27, 36 holes.

**Q. Not just the Saturday morning debacle that you had, but you didn't play the back very well in your first round either. Did anything through those first few rounds on the back nine and that series of holes set you up for what happened today on the back nine? Because obviously you figured something out over those first few days that made you play that a lot differently.**

**JASON KOKRAK:** Well, easy with the "debacle." (Laughs.)

It was a debacle. I got into some uncomfortable situations for me and I compounded the problem myself, but I tried not to let that bug me, I knew I was playing some fairly good golf. I was playing really good in spots and really bad in spots, so I just tried to limit my mistakes and kind of plot my way around the golf course and give myself -- if I hit it in the rough, I just tried to hit the green or give myself a putter in hand to limit my mistakes. So that was the club that really saved me this week.

D-Rob and I really read the greens really well, so the speed was great the first round. I got a little off with a couple of putts. I think I just had a couple lies I just really didn't like and was uncomfortable with, and I tried to compound the problem as best I could. Nonetheless, I did a lot better job today, gave myself a lot of birdie looks and capitalized when I needed to. I missed out on some opportunities, but I also got a little bit lucky with a couple shots on the front side there. It was a good start. Nonetheless, I played some solid golf.

**Q. Did you have any history with Texas golf previously? Is it a place you played a lot as a junior, or you just like it here all of a sudden?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** I think it's just one of those things, I've always been a slow learner and I kind of went with it, and once I learn something, I normally get pretty good at it. Nonetheless, Colonial's not a great golf course for me and this is kind of the quintessential golf course for me; long, got to hit a lot of fairways, got to hit the ball high to keep it in some spots on these greens. Outside of the really bad eight, nine holes that I played, I played this golf course pretty outstanding.

**Q. Three wins in your last 38 starts is what I count?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** How about it?

**Q. How about that? Everybody would ask this question, I think. What's the difference, 233 starts without one and now three in 38?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** I said in my last -- I mean, I'm a slow learner, but once I learn, I get pretty good at it.

No, I think it's just a culmination of D-Rob and I getting comfortable with each other, a lot of great things my coach Drew Steckel and I have been working on just trying to be a little bit more consistent, driving it a little bit better.

After Colonial I drove it pretty good, but I ended up cracking the driver I can't remember how long after, but I struggled to find the one that I was really comfortable with. This week I drove it much better and hit the irons really good and putted well. I didn't pitch it very well at all, but I tried to limit that. That's why I kind of laid it up on a few of those holes down in the back nine, I knew I was hitting the ball solid and I just wanted to give myself looks around this golf course is key.

**Q. What was the -- what was maybe the adjustment you made in your golf swing? You said you weren't far off, but you went to Drew. What --**

**JASON KOKRAK:** Drew and I have been working together going on five years. I just think we work on staying consistent, staying quiet with my legs. I normally have quite a bit of leg drive and I think this week or past weeks before this I wasn't really in top form. I think I was

getting -- I guess I danced with the golf ball a little bit. I have a lot of leg action and I tried to sit back on that right knee, get a little bit more bend in there and I think I was getting it a little more straight, which if I straighten it out and re-bend it on the downswing, I tend to -- I never get over the top, but I tend to wipe across it a little bit more than I normally do. Try to sit back on that right knee and just fire through the golf ball like I know how to.

**Q. Last thing, I'm going to say that the putt on 14 might have sort of been the key putt, about a 23-footer on a hole that not many guys -- there were some bogeys on that hole and it's I think the toughest hole today. Was that maybe the shot of the day?**

**JASON KOKRAK:** I would say I would agree with that. I had a lot of really nice looks. I think I was confident with the putter, speed was good all day. I made all the short three, four, five-footers that I had out there. I gave it a lot of looks on the front side and I just knew I was rolling the ball well. When I saw that one go in on 13, I think that gave me a little bit of confidence. D-Rob gave me an incredible read on 14, I had a little less break, but that ball really hung in there nice and it crept right in the front lip. I had pretty straight putts on 15 and 16, so that made my life a little bit easier. Straight back and straight through, it seems easy but it's not.

Nonetheless, after those I knew that 18's a tough hole, 16 is a tough little wedge shot. There's some tough shots and tough holes coming in. I knew if I could take care of business there and make some pars coming in, I knew I would have a pretty good chance.

**Q. You obviously like Texas because you like winning here. Just wondered what you thought about the course and the setup and maybe the fan support you had this week.**

**JASON KOKRAK:** Fan support was amazing. Obviously not as many fans Saturday morning because it was freezing and that's not something we get here in the Texas area too much. Fan support was obviously amazing today.

The golf course, just the time of year, doesn't bode well for growing grass. I think somebody told me they had a frost or a freeze here not too long ago. Nonetheless, the golf course, the run-off areas were not great, but we made do. The greens were pretty incredible. I mean, not as firm as last year, but rolling very true.

But I think it's a great golf course. The topography is great considering how flat this area is. I like the golf course. Obviously it's a big ballpark and it's a long golf course, which bodes well for me, but I think this is a golf course that short game and putting is key. I didn't show it with the wedge, but I showed it with the putter.

**HALEY PETERSON:** Looks like that is all the questions we have. Jason, thank you again for taking the time to join us and congratulations on your victory.

**JASON KOKRAK:** Thank you very much.