

**ROUND 4 INTERVIEW
APRIL 3, 2022**

J.J. SPAUN (-12)



DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome the winner of the 2022 Valero Texas Open, J.J. Spaun.

J.J., congratulations. I know you've been working hard and long for this. With the win you move to No. 10 in the FedExCup. I couldn't help but overhear earlier, you were telling somebody about this time last year you didn't even know if you'd be out here playing golf. So obviously this is a special day for a lot of reasons. If we could just kind of get a little recap on the week and how you're feeling.

J.J. SPAUN: I feel like I've been playing good for a really long time this year, even starting back in the fall. Just been staying patient, and I know this course is a good course for being patient and hitting fairways and hitting greens and short game is a big deal around here and I think I chipped it fairly well.

Yeah, it was just one of those weeks where I kind of had a good feeling about it all week long. I've just been playing well and it was about time that I was due to string four good ones together and fortunately that's what I did today.

DOUG MILNE: Now that we're on the other side of it, I can ask you this: When you doubled No. 1 today, what was your mindset?

J.J. SPAUN: I was pretty upset, but the only thing, the saving grace to that or the thing I learned from that is it's the first hole. Like if I was 2 over through 5, it probably would have felt different, but I knew because it was only the first hole, like you've just got to forget about it. I actually thought to myself if I was at 8 under starting on the fourth round and playing the first hole and I made par and I was 8 under, I would be happy because the first hole is actually really tough, especially with that wind. So I just didn't let it bother me and I just tried to overcome and I did.

Q. J.J., I think you were 10 under on Friday.

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, yeah.

Q. And then to drop back a little bit from that, how did that affect your week and how did that affect your thinking heading into -- I think that was a 9 on Friday, wasn't it?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah.

Q. So a lot had to have gone through your mind since then.

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I think I got it to 10 and I finished at 7 under. I dropped a shot on 6 and I hit some -- I hit a poor shot on 7 and then made a sloppy bogey on 9. It's a lot of golf, there's a lot of golf left. And I knew with the wind picking up halfway through our second round that it was only just going to get harder and I knew I would still be in a good position. I wasn't getting lapped out there finishing on 7 even though you would like to have a cushion or be the front runner, but maybe that made me feel comfortable kind of coming from behind and chasing the guys up at the top.

It's obviously really hard to play with a lead and I've never even done that before; I think the best I've been is tied for first going into the final round. Yeah, I didn't really care, I just tried to stay in the moment and put up the best number I could.

Q. J.J., Doug mentioned a year ago today you didn't know where you would be, right, a year later. Well, here you are. A year ago today or a year ago approximately you missed the cut at the Texas Open. Can you describe where your head was at after that?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I was -- I technically lost my card the COVID year, but they gave everyone that didn't keep their card another year. Basically, we were in like a reshuffle category, kind of like the rookie category I'm in now, or I was. I was just playing bad, like I was lost. I didn't know where my swing was, I didn't know what to do. I had been like working hard at it, too. That was the thing, I was putting so much into my game and getting nothing in return and just playing worse.

But I had a lot of things going on and I just, you know, I started thinking like, what am I going to do? There's no way I'm going to keep my card, I've made 60 FedExCup points and I have potentially 12 tournaments left if I shuffle up at any point because I'm in this reshuffle. No start is guaranteed in that category.

Yeah, it was dark. And I think losing my card was probably the best thing to happen to me last year. I went to Korn Ferry Finals and fought hard and won it back in the first tournament. I didn't win, but I got it back finishing tied for second or second place.

I think that's kind of what I needed maybe. It wasn't a lack of effort or being lazy with my game or anything. It kind of was like a switch that needed to be flipped and maybe something with confidence that I needed to find once again.

Q. With all that in mind, just what does it mean to you overall to now have this first PGA TOUR victory under your belt? What are the emotions like right now?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, it's still unbelievable. Like I've -- I knew I could win out here on Tour. When I first got out here, I was playing really good and then obviously had a setback kind of two years ago. I don't know, it's just, just perseverance, just trying to push through and just stay strong.

It's a great feeling to be in the winner's circle and now it's like a game changer. I'm just happy with the people I've surrounded myself with, and my caddie's been such a great influence on me. We just started working pretty much a year ago this week. I think our first tournament was New Orleans and he's so positive and so instills confidence in me that it sometimes gets annoying where it's just like, you're just being patronizing kind of in a way. But, you know, him just nailing it into my mind like every day, like just being so positive, it's helped me. I think a lot of credit has to do with that.

Q. You mentioned perseverance and we see that some even within your rounds, I'm thinking also of the tee shot on 18. What are the nerves like before and after that one?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, so I didn't -- I should have just hit like a 3-wood because there's -- we were going to lay up no matter what, but I hit -- I've hit a terrible tee shot there every day and I wanted to like make a point, make a statement, like I'm going to do this. It was kind of a stubborn thing.

Yeah, I just -- so yesterday I hit it like 50 yards right, but it was a different wind and it was in off the left, but this one's down off the right because I feel comfortable with that because I like to just hold my fade up there and I just completely smothered it, I did not want to go right. I was like, oh, my God, please be like on the property or something.

I got up there and I got a lucky break. It was a good lie. There was one little rock in the way, but it could have been really bad. But I think that was just one of the lucky breaks that you've got to get to win and it came at the right time.

Q. And what does it mean to you now to be heading into the Masters next week?

J.J. SPAUN: It means the world. You've only dreamed of playing there for most of us. To think that we're going to be heading there tonight or tomorrow is incredible. I'm really looking forward to it and I can't wait. Hopefully I can have another good week there, too.

Q. J.J., you mentioned some of the adversity you fought through getting your card back. Do you think that kind of helps you with perspective when you are out there and struggling and when you have a bad hole? You just mentioned "I don't care," which I don't think you don't care, but I think you keep that mentality straight. Does that perspective of the last couple years help you in those moments?

J.J. SPAUN: One hundred percent. Perspective is everything really. Like the perspective of, yeah, I doubled the first hole to be at 8 under, but I was like if I was 7 under and I birdied the first hole, now I'm only two back. It's easy to kind of go to the negative side of things, and I think just not letting it affect me and accepting the terms that happened was the best thing to happen and just pushed through as best I could.

Q. J.J., what are the top three things you're looking forward to at Augusta National?

J.J. SPAUN: Magnolia Drive, the par-3 contest and a pimiento cheese sandwich. Not too many, though.

Q. Coming down the stretch you weren't bombing it with the putter, you had four-, five-, six-footers. How were you feeling over the putter with as much tension as there probably was out there?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I felt pretty confident. I was just trying to reflect on the clutch shorter putts I made all day long. Fortunately, a lot of the putts I had were like simple reads. Like it wasn't tricky and it wasn't like a downhill slider, it was all kind of like uphill or right to left, just play it right center and just knock it in the back of the cup.

I changed my putting grip a little bit this week from what I've used in the past. It was very uncomfortable at the start to like commit to it, but it started to get good because I knew technically it's what I had to do, but just the comfort was tough. I'm glad it was comfortable during these clutch situations, too, because I was like, oh, no, new putting grip, six-footers to keep leads and stuff, but hey, it worked out and it was a good switch.

Q. What exactly did you change in your putting grip?

J.J. SPAUN: So my right hand, it gets a little too on top of the grip, so like my right forearm gets higher than my left so it kind of -- it's not like a perfect plane with the shaft and your arms, you know. So I had to kind of strengthen this right side to get it more -- to get it more underneath the grip so it's more like in my lifeline, like in my fingers versus kind of on top like an actual golf club.

So that got my hands and forearms more on like the same sort of squareness instead of it being outside. So when it was on top, it would be kind of left, so I would be kind of hitting these like wipey putts, but this is more like down the line like easy.

So I think that's how -- the biggest thing with that would be like contact issues, like because they're just not kind of all aligned properly. Now my contact was pure and that's kind of what you need on those short putts is just to hit the center of the putter head every single time. That's the only way you can really put a true roll on it. It was a good switch that I made on Saturday of last week and I stuck with it and it paid off.

Q. Just slightly strengthening?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, just kind of getting this right hand more underneath the grip, like gripping it like that versus too like on top because this right hand forearm gets on top and then you start -- you have to manipulate the path of the putter to really get it online, like a straight true stroke. So it was just one little tidbit that my buddy told me and it worked out.

Q. One last thing about your round today, where on the golf course today, what

moment did it occur to you that this would be your day? I'm assuming it wasn't No. 1.

J.J. SPAUN: No, no. No. 1 I was probably like, what do I have to do to top-10 this week?

I want to say when I chipped in on 9. Like a hit an 8-iron from like -- it's just a hard hole to hit, you know, the green in regulation. I kind of like tugged it and it just flew with the wind and one-hopped over. It was a -- it's the best spot to leave it there for that pin, but it's not a good spot. It's the best, but it's not -- it's not good. Like you want to be on the green. I just hit this like high little softy kind of flop and it just trickled out, and I ran up the slope because it was a blind shot, I could see maybe half the pin, and it was just like trickling -- I thought I left it short but it just kept going, going, and it went in. I think it was like the third hole-out I had all week. And after, yeah, that was kind of like where I was like, okay, now I'm at 11? No, 8 -- I don't know, was I? No, I was at 11, I think. And I knew 10 -- I knew Beau was at 11 or 12, so I was like, okay, to chip in like that from that spot, that's kind of like good things are happening.

DOUG MILNE: A write-in question from Philippines media that wants to ask about your heritage, family heritage. Do you still have family there? Just kind of bring us up to speed on family heritage.

J.J. SPAUN: So my grandfather on my mom's side, he's from -- he's not from the Philippines, but his parents were. But they moved to California and he was born there, but he spoke Ilocano, which is like a dialect of Tagalog. It's from a very small island, I wish I remember what it was. My whole mom's side, they're all half Filipino and half Mexican, so that's what makes up my heritage. Sadly, he passed a few years ago, but he was -- he was kind of the main Filipino person in our family.

DOUG MILNE: Any family still over there?

J.J. SPAUN: Not that I know of, not immediate family, no, but that's just my heritage.

DOUG MILNE: Okay. J.J., congratulations. We couldn't be happier for you and certainly wish you the best of luck down the road this week.

J.J. SPAUN: Thank you, Doug. Appreciate it.