

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**J.J. SPAUN**



**DOUG MILNE:** Like to welcome the defending champion of the Valero Texas Open, J.J. Spaun.

J.J., thanks for taking a few minutes for us. Just a few comments on being back to a place that's obviously near and dear to you. Maybe take you back a year and if you could just kind of recap it a little bit and how special it was to win and be back here to defend your title.

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, it's great. Obviously my first time defending on the PGA TOUR and it's nice to be back here, very familiar place.

It was strange coming here for media day back in February to be in the hotel and see the golf course but not even have my golf clubs. It's nice to have my golf clubs this week.

The course looks very similar, it's in great shape and it's very reminiscent of how it was last year as far as conditions and stuff. Looks like we're going to have similar wind, too.

It's nice to be here. I've got my family again. Valero and the team here that run the tournament have been so great to us and put us up in a nice place here at the Marriott. Get to go to the water park with my daughter and spend good family time. I think that's what this tournament provides for us players is to kind of get a break from golf; work in a little bit of golf, but to spend time with family and have fun activities.

With all that going on, it's nice to be here and the game's feeling good. Had a solid performance last week at Austin for my first time there. Yeah, just trying to build on that and excited for the week ahead.

**DOUG MILNE:** I was going to ask about how you're feeling coming into the week. You've had I think seven top 25 finishes and your top 10 last week in Austin. What are your most confident with as part of your game as you're coming into the week?

**J.J. SPAUN:** I'm pretty confident with almost everything, everything is pretty tight. I don't think there's one thing that stands out that's extraordinarily better than one aspect of my game. Everything's pretty tight and I think I'm managing my game well as far as mistakes and I'm not making big numbers hopefully, knock on wood.

Everything's pretty tight and I've done a good job of staying in my lane and sticking to my strategies where I kind of stick to the game plan and hit fairways and hit greens. I think the weeks where I putt well are the weeks that I can really contend. So I think if the putter heats up a little bit this week, I'll hopefully be back where I was last year at this time.



**Q. Last year I think you told us that you (inaudible) up at Disneyland running around (inaudible.) How much was last year this week then to go from there to Augusta, how much did that live up to that fantasy week for you?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, it literally -- I've heard the cliché, like the "pinch me" moments and "am I dreaming." That's kind of what I felt for like the first time in my life going from the win here and then literally like flying over the next morning to Augusta and then registering. It just happened so fast that I felt like I was in a dream because I was there signing the registration book at the player office at Augusta National and I'm just like everything's happened so fast, like I can't believe not only did I just win my first Tour event yesterday, but now I'm here at the Masters already like preparing to play my first time at Augusta.

It was definitely a fantasy as far as like the whole experience. I was super happy to be there and to also have a good week, a good showing at Augusta. I know what I've got to do this week to get back there.

**Q. Doug said you've had a pretty successful season, but you had a little dip kind of January, February in there. What do you attribute that to and have you figured out whatever it was that went wrong?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, I just kind of -- I got a little wrapped up in my golf swing and like my coach has been hurt for like four months. He broke his pelvis in December, so like he can't really travel. He normally travels out here every week and he's been pretty much like bedridden, can't really walk, he's not very mobile.

I kind of got off on my swing and I kind of started trying to figure things out myself because he's at home and he can't really help. But sending him videos here and there and I think I just sort of got in my own way as far as trying to perfect like my swing and why did it change from Maui and Sony to L.A. and Bay Hill and those events where I was kind of just going down the rabbit hole of trying to make my swing look like how it was just a few months prior instead of just playing with what I had, which probably would have ended up being better for me.

I missed a couple cuts in a row back-to-back sort of swings I think on the west coast and then in Florida, but they're all by like a shot. It was just kind of one of those things where if I saved a shot here or there, I would have been playing the weekend and maybe salvaging a week.

But I got it figured out. Had a good week off before Austin and trying to just stay out of my own way and hit good shots and I think I'm back to that now.

**Q. Is there a planned trip on Monday to Houston if that's the case, watch the Aztecs in the National Championship game?**



**J.J. SPAUN:** Unfortunately, I have my family, so my wife's not a big basketball fan, neither is my 2-and-a-half-year-old daughter and this would be two weeks on the road. Maybe I can kind of talk them into it.

Who knows, hopefully they make it to the final. I know they're in the Final Four, we'll see what happens. It's a pretty exciting time to watch them compete just on TV in general. If I was able to be there, that would be great.

**Q. Sticking with the college athletic scene, Valero announced yesterday that Valero Collegiate Texas Open, the winner will get an exemption into this event moving forward. Just want to get your opinion on kind of the state of college golf and how many new opportunities are coming onto the radar for college players?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, that's awesome. I think Valero's doing a lot of positive things to grow the game in just outreach communities in general out here. It's cool to see them kind of doing something special for the college guys. I think that's the best way to sort of showcase college golf, amateur golf.

I even remember back in, when I was at San Diego State there was this amateur qualifier and it was an amateur, you could be a mid amateur, you could be a college am, you could be a junior amateur, there was no age restriction, but it was a one-round tournament. I think the Century Club, I'm not sure if they still run the tournament but they were hosting it. But the low guy at Torrey Pines South, like just this random one-day tournament, low guy got a spot in the Farmers. I remember those days and how nice it was to have an opportunity just to even have a chance to play in the Tour event.

The fact that Valero's doing that for college kids is really big. I think it was an exciting time for me because it was like something I would always prepare for the most, like this is my one shot to get into a Tour event as an amateur instead of having to do the whole Monday qualifying process and all that stuff. I think it's great.

**Q. Following up on last week in Austin, another great week with shifty winds, Texas conditions. What is it about this place that you love?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, I don't know, I think I'm just comfortable here. I like the style of golf, I like the wind, I like the challenge of creating shots. Greens in regulation are a premium, especially when it's tough conditions and especially at a place like Austin Country Club and here. In order to do that, you've got to be in the fairway most of the time and that's kind of my premium as accuracy and greens in regulation.

So hopefully I can keep at that this week and give myself a shot on Sunday.

**Q. J.J., how are things different teeing off potentially here as a defending champion tomorrow versus other tournaments? Does it change your mentality at all?**



**J.J. SPAUN:** Mentally, like, I don't think consciously I think of anything differently, but just being announced in the pro-am as the defending champion, that felt really cool and it felt really good because it's something I haven't heard in my career yet, especially on the PGA TOUR.

I think there's nothing that I am going to take away differently from being in that position, I'm just going to still go out and try to execute my game plan and see where I stand on the weekend and on Sunday. Nothing really changes, but it's nice to have kind of that target on your back like you're kind of the guy that, you know, is one of the favorites maybe at this event this year.

**Q. A lot of guys are in the position you were in last year where if they punch their ticket to the Masters with the win here. Does that sort of change the environment for the tournament or the atmosphere for this event knowing it's the last chance?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Sure, there's perks to every single win but I think this one's kind of extra special and extra meaning because it's your last chance to get into Augusta.

It's weird, last year I wasn't even thinking about that and I know maybe that's kind of what mentally kept me in the present and not thinking ahead and not putting too much pressure on myself. I'll try not to think about it too much. If I play great and win, we'll kind of go through that whole cyclone of a mess, I guess, in a good way of going from here straight to Augusta. But that would be awesome. Yeah, there's definitely extra meaning for being here for the last chance to go to Augusta.

**Q. How do you size up the field for this event in general? A lot of guys have already turned the page for next week. How do you look at the guys who are here in this group that you're going to be playing with?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, I think we still have a great group. I'm surprised that not many more players want to play the week before a major. Granted, there was a WGC last week and that's a long week as it is and people don't want to make the Masters their third week in a row.

I still think it's a great field. Obviously the Tour is so deep, like anyone can win this week. Not to count out any of the rookies or the veteran guys that are playing this week, it's still up for grabs for anyone. I don't think -- I think maybe there's some slight favorites, but at the end of the day it's still 72 holes and the guy that gets the ball in the hole in the shortest amount of strokes is going to win.

Good field overall still and I've got a good group, got Hideki and Rickie, so hopefully we'll light it up on Thursday, Friday.

**DOUG MILNE:** All right. J.J., thank you for your time. We wish you the best of luck this week.



**J.J. SPAUN:** Thanks, Doug.

