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An Interview With:

JORDAN SPIETH

PETE KOWALSKI: We would like to welcome 2015 U.S. Open champion Jordan Spieth to Oakmont, and Jordan, if I can just ask you the opening question, first time playing the golf course, your impressions?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, it's lived up and passed the hype it already receives from everybody. What a great test of golf and a very tough but fair test of golf. You can already tell, we had a great experience, played 27 holes, played the back nine yesterday evening and 18 holes this morning. So, had a lot of fun with it and it's going to be a great U.S. Open this year, I think.

PETE KOWALSKI: Now, you didn't have your regular bag carrier with you today. What is the name of your caddie, and what you learned from his input?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, I had Danny, who caddies out here and has for a little while, and was very helpful. Same with Jim, who hosted us, they were both very helpful in pointing out, you know, different slopes on the greens, different -- kind of keep your eye out for short-sided shots and how a lot of these greens, quite a few of them, pitch front to back, which is unusual, I would say, for golf courses now, and it forces you to really -- you need to put the ball in the fairway.

I learned a lot. I learned a lot off of just playing a round and a half here. I have different impressions from what I already knew. These bunkers here may as well be bunkers in the U.K. They may as well be pot bunkers. You just kind of have to hit sideways out of them for the most part.

So, they are very much hazards and you really don't need a lot of drivers. I don't think either of those points were of importance until playing it.

Q. Last year, there were a lot of risk-reward par 4s and this year you had 17, you played it twice, could be the ultimate in risk/reward. What's your early impression of 17, especially as it would play as the 71st?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think what makes it is the way the green is sloped. You've got part of the green that pitches left to right on the front, you've got part of it that pitches right to left on the back and the reason that makes a difference is with the speed and the firmness of the greens during the U.S. Open, if you're on the wrong side of that, it turns -- and you go for it, you may miss it by 10 feet, but all of a sudden you're really struggling to try and make par.

I think that if you hit the right shot, you hit a 3-wood or driver off the tee and you hit it on the right line and you pull off the shot, you're going to have a good look at birdie.

It's one of the great par 4s, one of the great short par 4s in the world. It's tough for me to tell, so it seems like it will play that way. It was a great par 4 when we played it. It was soft and the rough wasn't up as high as it will be on the left side. But you could tell, it's going to be dicey trying to make decisions there depending on where you are and where you stand.

Q. Is this your first time in the Pittsburgh area, and if not what connections do you have to the region?

JORDAN SPIETH: I was here playing in the Sunnehanna Amateur. I think it might have been in 2009 or 2010. It's the only time I've been anywhere around Pittsburgh. That's my only

connection really. But got a lot of family, both my parents are from the Lehigh Valley area. So, it's a long ways away from here and quite a bit different, I understand that, but a lot of Pennsylvania connection in my family. Most of my family still lives in Pennsylvania.

Q. You mentioned about the bunkers. I was going to ask you what stood out to you that was different than maybe any idea you had from your simulator?

JORDAN SPIETH: I think they talk about how many trees have been taken out since, what, 1970, within the last I think 20 years, it's been something like 5,000 taken out, or more. It throws off your depth.

It's very difficult to understand, you get to a couple tee boxes, you think you can hit driver. All of the sudden, your ball has landed. You think it's on the right side of the fairway, but it's flown either 25 yards farther or 25 yards shorter than you thought. That's something that is nice having now played the golf course and understanding, not only going off the yardage book, but visually gaining knowledge.

But the bunkers are hazards out here; not just the Church Pews, all of them. The Church Pews actually potentially could play as easier ones compared to some of the others depending on where you go on them. But it's mainly just a chunked sand wedge out and play the hole in with a stroke penalty.

It's like playing in the U.K. It will be interesting to see the firmness of the fairways. I think that if the fairways firm up a little but not too much and the greens are really firm, it will be a fantastic U.S. Open.

If the fairways get too firm, it could potentially be scary and could be almost too challenging to hold them in certain cases. But the USGA does a great job of walking that line between, you know, finding even to a couple without not being rewarded for hitting good shots. And certainly at Oakmont, they know what they are doing here.

Q. Do you have any recollection of the last U.S. Open here at Oakmont? And what would it mean to join the list of great champions here that includes Hogan and Nicklaus, among others?

JORDAN SPIETH: I remember watching Angel just put on a clinic ball-striking. He can do that. I've played with Angel, actually in a U.S.

Open. I played with him at The Olympic Club for three rounds. I remember a little of it. I don't remember a whole lot, honestly.

But yeah, the history here, when you walk in and see the front half of the U.S. Open Trophies in there and who has won it, Hogan and Nicklaus, and Sarazen going back, Angel obviously won a Masters, as well.

This is a golf course that I was telling Danny as we were walking in, he asked my impressions of it. I said the best player will come out on top this week. You will have no crazy circumstance or bounces or this or that. You have to golf your ball around this place, and the person who is in full control of their entire game will win this U.S. Open.

Q. Is the mental preparation different for this tournament than any other just because the score is going to be higher, no matter what?

JORDAN SPIETH: Yeah, quite a bit. Especially on this course, a lot of these holes, you can hit 4-iron off the tee and then hit 8-iron into the green, and chances are you're in the fairway off the tee.

That way you're going to get a pretty good shot at holding the green and having a birdie chance. But you always can look ahead and see that 15- to 20-yard area that you can fit a 3-wood or driver into and hit wedge, and you just have to have that patience.

It's going to be a challenge. Especially if you fall behind early, you're going to want to try and make up shots here, and in any U.S. Open, you can't try and make up shots. You've just got to let the golf course come to you.

There are still enough birdie chances that you don't have to take advantage of every short hole here. You have the par 5s. You have some holes where you can hit 3-iron, like No. 2, you can hit 3-iron, wedge or gap wedge into that hole.

Even No. 10, if it gets firm, you can hit 3-iron, wedge. You're going to have -- if you are hitting your long irons well off the tee, you're going to have a good six to eight birdie opportunities, and that's really -- if you can do that in a U.S. Open, in any round on any golf course, you're at an advantage to the field.

So, mentally, you've got to realize that, and not only do you have to realize it, then you have to act on it. It's tough. Chambers Bay was a

bit different because it's a lot of drivers, and it's wider fairways. And sure, you can get into a lot of trouble there, but out here, you're going to have to curve the ball into these fairways to hold it in the right places and you've got to take your medicine a lot more.

Q. Have to ask you about what you remember about playing at Sunnehanna and if at that time you envisioned yourself being here as the defending U.S. Open Champion?

JORDAN SPIETH: I certainly wouldn't have at that time. I think I was maybe 16 playing in the Sunnehanna. At that point, I was looking forward to getting to college before I did anything else (chuckling).

I know that Oakmont is in the rotation and I know that if you win a U.S. Open at Oakmont, you can go ahead and say that you've conquered the hardest test in all of golf, because this is arguably the hardest course in America day to day. Normally the hardest U.S. Open, at least what history shows. That would obviously be a tremendous honor. Any time you win the U.S. Open, you've won the hardest test in golf that year, but this is potentially the hardest test in all of golf.

I didn't envision it then. My memory is there. It was a really fun tournament. I had great hosts. I think everybody kind of went on their own, traveled on their own to Sunnehanna and just kind of stayed in private housing. We all would hang out at night. It was a great time. I think it's held in, I want to say June, as well. So similar time frame to the U.S. Open up here.

Q. You talked about having a wedge in your hand on five, six holes, and yet you say how hard it is. No winning score is under par here. Doesn't that seem strange, you can have so many wedges in your hand in a U.S. Open?

JORDAN SPIETH: Not necessarily, when you look at holes like No. 9 being a par 4, and No. 1 starting out. You've got plenty of -- having five or six wedges, we're used to having even more than that.

So even though it's a shorter golf course by yardage, it doesn't play short. But you do have those wedges and on those holes, I'm not going to say it's challenging with a wedge, because we're professionals, with a wedge, we should be able to carve it into any kind of position from the fairway.

But there's just so many other tough holes that par is going to be a fantastic score. I'd sign for even par right now for 72 holes in June.

Obviously, given the history, but also having played it.

Q. You told a funny story yesterday about being in the supermarket shortly after the Masters and two women coming up to you and asking you if you were OK and if you were going to be all right, and it was funny. Do you get a sense the public at large is pulling for you after the Masters coming into the Open?

JORDAN SPIETH: I'm not sure. Hard for me to tell. I haven't played since. I'll get to The Players and kind of -- you don't search to try and feel what the crowd is giving you. You just hopefully, it's the same as normal. We've had great support in the past. I could start to feel that energy from the crowd even during that round after the 12th hole. We went on and still had a chance to win, when it was pretty easy to give up at that time.

We never take the easy route. The crowd realized that. They were still behind us and still believed we could win. So started to feel it there. So, hopefully have that kind of support here. If you're playing well, people seem to be pretty excited about it, so that's first and foremost.

Q. You said 3-irons, 4-irons off the tees. Where do you see possible drivers?

JORDAN SPIETH: Trying to go through the course in my head right now, it's tough. There's a couple really long par 4s on the front nine. All the par 5s, you can't hit driver. When the tee is up on 12, it's potentially a 3-wood, or when it's not this makeshift tee that apparently we are going to be playing at 700 yards. When you're at the normal tee up there, it could be 3-wood, just because there's no room on the right side.

But yeah, there's maybe two or three par 4s a side and the par 5s are drivers. Again, it just all depends on how it plays. If it rains, the rough is going to be thicker but the fairways are going to be softer, and it will play I think somewhat like Merion, if that's the case.

But I think the hope for everybody is that this plays like Oakmont and that means this fescue dying out, being a golden brown, being firm fairways and firm and fast greens, so weather permitting, even those holes I'm saying, these six or seven, it may only be a couple drivers for some of the guys. 18 is a driver. Don't hit it way right like I just did.

Q. Can you reiterate what you talked about yesterday, and how you got over the Masters experience to get ready now for another major tournament?

JORDAN SPIETH: It was 80 percent, 75 percent you have to do it yourself; and then 25 percent relying on my team, family, friends. And then mentors, messages I get from mentors, pretty much saying, hey, you've been in contention six out of the last eight majors, won a couple of them. Something like that; the wrong miss at the wrong time is bound to happen at some point. Whether you still win that major not.

I had the same exact miss at the U.S. Open last year. On 17 I made double bogey and kind of squeaked it out at the end, but that was potentially the same kind of experience as the Masters. You're going to be on the good end and bad end.

If you're in it enough, you're going to be on the good end and bad end of those situations, so keep putting ourselves in contention, and when we're on the good end again, I'll be able to enjoy it even more having experienced the other side of it.

PETE KOWALSKI: Thank you all for joining us.

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