

US Open Championship 2016

Sunday, June 19, 2016

Dustin Johnson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good evening and welcome to Oakmont Country Club, site of the 2016 U.S. Open Championship. It's my great honor to introduce the 116th U.S. Open champion, Dustin Johnson. Dustin, have you had a minute to let that sink in and enjoy the moment yet?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, not really. But it's starting to sink in.

THE MODERATOR: We heard you say on television earlier, Greatest Father's Day ever. Can you talk a little bit about your emotions about winning your first major on Father's Day with your family here.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I couldn't be more excited, more happy, and more proud of myself, especially with the things that happened last year at the U.S. Open on the 18th hole, you know, to come back this year and to get it done, it's definitely bitter sweet. It was a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

Q. Dustin, because of the close calls you've had over some time here, can you kind of describe if there's more element of a satisfaction to this? You had to work harder probably for this than a lot of people might do for their first major.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, obviously, winning any tournament, there's a lot of satisfaction, but to get it done in a major, especially I've been so close so many times, it's just an unbelievable feeling. I don't even -- it's hard to even describe.

Q. Dustin, does the one-shot penalty you were given at the end bother you at all in retrospect?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Seeing as how it didn't affect the outcome, no. I still didn't want the penalty. I didn't think that I did anything to cause the ball to move, but at the end of the day, it didn't affect what happened. So it doesn't bother me at all.

Q. Dustin, what does this win mean that your brother was on your bag? And what kind of assets does he bring as your looper?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: My brother being on the bag, he's my best friend. So to have somebody you really enjoy being out there with you, it definitely makes things a lot better. We've spent a lot of time together. A player and his caddie, we're spending a lot of the day together

every day, especially during the tournament.

So you've got to have someone you really like to be around. To have my brother out there with me, it's been awesome the past 2 1/2 years. It's just getting better.

Q. Dustin, you had six top 10 finishes in your last nine events coming into this. How much of a factor was it to be playing good golf entering the weekend?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I felt like I've been playing well all year, just hadn't quite got it done. So this was definitely a good time to get it done. But I had a lot of confidence in my game coming into this week. I've been driving it well. I've been hitting my irons well. I've been kind of doing everything pretty well.

So coming into a golf course like this, especially where it's a huge emphasis on driving, to come out and drive it like I did definitely is an advantage. Throughout the week, it definitely helped.

Q. Dustin, can you talk about the conditions, where they went from earlier in the week with the practice rounds to today with all the rain?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, it started out in the practice rounds, it was firm and fast. Similar conditions to it was today. With all the rain on Wednesday and Thursday, the course softened up, and it played pretty soft the first three rounds. Today it finally started to get a bit of heat.

The greens were fast every day. Today they were even that much faster. With the pins they had out there, I thought the golf course played really difficult. It was really hard to get it close to the hole. And even when you were on the green, I had a few putts that I felt were close putts, inside 15 feet, but you're almost putting defensively because you don't want to run it four, five, six feet by.

Q. Dustin, just curious, when you found out about the potential of the ruling on 12, how did you put it out of your mind? Or how did you allow yourself to think about it in the context of your strategy over the last seven holes?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: They said they were going to review it after I was done. So at that point, I just --



there's nothing I can do about it, so let's just focus on this shot and go from there. So all I tried to do was just focus on that tee shot on 12, trying to get it in the fairway there. So that's what I did. And, you know, that's what I just tried to do from there all the way to the house.

I know this golf course, it's very difficult, and it's very difficult to close. So, you know, from 12 to 18, all I was trying to do was just one shot at a time and not worry about what anybody else was doing, just focus on what I was doing. And I just kept telling myself, it's just me and the golf course. You know, I'm just playing the golf course today.

Q. Dustin, can you tell us what the rules official said to you on the 5th at the time of the incident? And secondly, what do you think of the scenario where almost seven holes later someone comes to speak to you about it again?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, on the 5th green, the rules official, I called him over and told him what happened. Lee was standing right there. He saw it. So we both agreed that I didn't cause the ball to move. So I just played on from there with no penalty.

Still, watching the video, I still don't think I caused the ball to move, but the USGA, they said I did. So with the rule that -- I don't even understand the rule, but I got a penalty. It didn't matter at the end of the day. That's it.

Q. I just mean with the scenario where they spoke to you about it again so many holes after it happened. What did you think of that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't even know what I was thinking. I wasn't even worried about it at that point. Like I said, I was just trying to focus on the shot that I was about to hit. I'm not worried about that. I just told myself, we'll worry about it when I get done.

Q. Dustin, you've been through a lot, not just in the major disappointments that you've had, but off the course, you've had challenges as well. How difficult has it been to get through that? And do you feel that you're a stronger person to be able to go and win these tournaments now for everything that you've been through?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, for sure. I've got a great support system with Paulina, my son Tatum, my family, my team that's around me, a great support system. So it's been a great road. I'm definitely a stronger person coming out the other side.

Q. Dustin, so obviously, the story line coming in was would you be able to win that first major? Now that you've done that, do you feel a little bit like the

monkey's off your back? Is it great to just silence all the doubters that were saying otherwise?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah. I mean, it's definitely a big monkey off my back. You know, coming into today, I've been in this situation time and time again. So I know it what to expect. I know how to handle myself. For me to finally get it done on Sunday in a major, it's a huge monkey off my back.

I don't know. You know, it's fantastic, and it feels really good for sure because I've worked so hard to get here. I've put myself in this position many times, and to get it done is definitely sweet.

Q. Dustin, you've said in the past you don't want to be a good player out here, you want to be a great player. Does this help open the door for you to be a great player?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I think it does. It's definitely a good start. You know, this week, I felt like I played really good. I don't feel like I played great, but I played really good. So it's definitely a start to becoming a great player.

Q. Dustin, as everything was unfolding during your final round there, social media was alive with outrage actually from your fellow Tour pros -- Tiger, Keegan, Rory in particular rising up to your defense. How much are you aware of that now that the round is over, and how does it make you feel knowing they were there having your back?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Obviously, it's great, and it just shows the support the guys have for each other because we've all been in that situation where -- I mean, there's no way that I feel like that I caused that ball to move, and they understand that because it's happened to all of us at one time or another. So to have them supporting me and stuff, it's definitely nice, and thank you to everyone who was supporting me.

But at the end of the day, it's ultimately up to the USGA to make the final decision, and just fortunately, it didn't affect the outcome.

Q. Dustin, if you think in your mind that you did nothing wrong, as you're playing those final seven holes and you look at the leaderboard, what are you thinking? Are you thinking you're tied for the lead, one shot down? How did you approach that? And secondly, with everything that's gone wrong -- Whistling Straits last year -- when they approached you on 12, is there any part of you that's thinking, here we go again?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Maybe a little bit for sure. Just one more thing to add to the list, right? Honestly, I knew I was in a good position, just from the way the crowd was, but I tried my best not to look at the

leaderboard because no matter where I stood, I was playing the golf course, and I was playing each shot how I was going to play it no matter if I was one back or one ahead.

You know, this golf course, that's what it demands of you. So that's what I was trying to do is just play my game and not worry about what anyone else is doing.

So even on the 18th green, after I hit it in there close, I had to ask my brother, I'm like, Where do we stand? I'm pretty sure I'm ahead, but I had no idea.

Q. Dustin, considering all the weirdness, as Doug mentioned before, that you've endured in the past, does it seem fitting that maybe there was one more obstacle thrown in your way? And does it make it a little bit sweeter that you were able to overcome that and handle it the way you did the last seven holes?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it definitely makes it sweet. Like I said, it's nothing new at this point. It's happened so many times. I kind of expect it now. So for it to not affect the outcome is fantastic. It just shows how well I played.

Q. Dustin, the other ruling at 10, could you just walk us through that ruling. And did you get a break? How far could you have hit that ball out of the rough?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, the lie wasn't terrible. It wasn't good. I mean, it was definitely a break to get it out of the deep rough and to be able to -- you know, the scoreboard and camera tower was in my way. So under the rules, I get relief. For me to get to drop it in the first cut was definitely very nice.

Q. How far could you have hit that out of the rough?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't know. I didn't have to hit it (laughter).

Q. Dustin, you mentioned that from the 12th onward, you reduced it to just sort of you and the golf course. Was this just a different day from past majors, or are you a different person now to be able to handle it in that way?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, yeah, obviously, I'm different. I've grown up a lot. Having a son and starting a family has definitely made me grow up a lot. But I felt like I've handled myself very well in the past in the majors, just hasn't -- you know, just didn't quite get over that hump. Today, you know, I finally did.

Q. Dustin, knowing that all your fellow pros were behind you in this Twitter issue and knowing that you didn't think you did anything wrong, do you

think you would have been penalized if this was a Tour event?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Probably not.

Q. Dustin, given where you were on the 17th tee, what went into your decision-making process about what club to hit at 17? What was your strategy there today?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I didn't know where I stood honestly. I didn't. You know, I just approached the hole, what's the best way for me to get a birdie look? And I thought hitting driver and trying to get it in the right bunker is the best chance to get it on the green. Because if I do lay up and I happen to miss the fairway, I've got no chance to hit it on the green from the rough.

So that was my play, and I hit it up there in the bunker. Didn't have that great of a lie, but that might have been one of the better shots of the day for me because I had to hit that on the green, and it so easily could have hit and gone across into the bunker, past the pin, which I did not want to do. So that was a key shot coming down the stretch there on 17 is getting that ball on the green.

Q. Dustin, I know you have no say in this, but in retrospect, if you had your druthers, would you have rather known -- when the official came up at 12 tee, would you have rather known, yes or no, whether you're getting a penalty rather than to have to play another two hours without knowing? Obviously, that was more of a challenge you had to deal with.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't know, it's hard to say because that's a situation where he told me, he's like, when you're done, we need to look at this. So at that point, in my mind, it could go either way. So from there, I just tried not to even think about it.

Q. In your mind, what would have been better, knowing yes or no you were getting that penalty or not, or to wait two hours and play the last seven holes not knowing?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't know. At the end of the day, it didn't matter. So I have no idea.

Q. Dustin, you said you didn't think your ball striking this week was great. It was good, but not great. The last time I think we saw somebody drive the ball as well as you did on Sunday at a U.S. Open was you last year at Chambers Bay. Can you talk about, just from a driving standpoint, how this week measures up as far as you're concerned?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I mean, for being a U.S. Open, these fairways aren't very easy to hit. It's definitely probably one of my best weeks driving the ball. I think, if I count -- I did not have to hit out of the

deep rough. I mean, maybe a couple times. So I hit a lot of fairways, and it seemed like, when I missed the fairways, I was just in the first cut.

I think a couple times I hit it in the rough, it was with an iron, not with my driver. To me, this is one of the best weeks I ever drove the ball for sure.

Q. Dustin, to follow up on your talking about coming up on 18 not knowing where you were, with the possibility of a one-stroke penalty, how come it wouldn't have been more important to know where you were exactly so as to possibly make that one shot obsolete if it had come to that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Because, I mean, for me, I'm playing, and I'm trying to hit every shot as best as I can to the best spot, and then I'm trying to make every putt. So whether I have a penalty or not, it's not going to affect the way I'm playing the hole. I'm still trying to hit good shots, leave myself with a good birdie putt, and I'm trying to make it. So at that point, it just really didn't matter.

Q. Dustin, so just one thing on the 10th hole, just a bit of confusion. I haven't had a chance to ask an official. Why did you get two club lengths from the nearest point of relief there?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I didn't get two club lengths. I think they're called temporary, immovable obstructions. So you get the flag, once you can see the flag, then you get a club length from there, and then you drop in the second one. So that's just how the rules say you do it. I don't know. Ask a rules official (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Dustin, congratulations again. Thank you for joining us this week. Thank you all for your coverage of the 2016 U.S. Open Championship.