

2015 US Open Championship

Monday, June 15
Press Conference

Jason Day

An Interview With:
JASON DAY

BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon, welcome to the 2015 U.S. Open Championship at Chambers Bay. Very happy to have with us this afternoon Jason Day, who is playing in his 5th consecutive U.S. Open. He's had some real nice success in the last few years with three top 4 finishes, including a tie for 4th last year at Pinehurst. You said you've been here a few days and played a few nines at Chambers, can you give us initial impressions of the golf course?

JASON DAY: It's different. Just going over it looking at the changes of elevation, the way they can kind of trick this course out, it's pretty interesting. Just thinking about it, it's obviously not a traditional U.S. Open golf course with regards to that, but with regards to the setup I think they can definitely make it tough or as easy as they'd like to. I know that the conditions of the course are pretty steady right now and I believe they're going to maybe quicken the greens up a little bit. But it's surprising to me when you're playing in the morning compared to the afternoon, how quick and firm the greens are in the afternoon and how the pace in the morning is a lot slower, the firmness of the greens are a lot slower, even on the fairways, as well. So it's a totally different golf course from when you're playing in the morning to the afternoon. But overall, this is kind of one of those golf courses, when I first arrived, I was driving down the driveway, it caught my eye in a way that I really was going to enjoy this week, regardless of how I played just because I was going to enjoy the challenge of this course because it's just one of those courses that just got me excited. And it's very rare to see that because I guess we play kind of similar golf courses out here, especially on the stateside of things. But it's interesting. I'm excited about it, and I'm looking forward to the challenge.

Q. With regard to that, there was so much publicity leading into it by some of the guys that had been here, some of the guys that had heard about stuff here and there was some criticism. Can you see where the criticism comes from, or do you have to embrace it?



JASON DAY: Yeah, I can see the criticism in it. I can see that with the way they have the setup currently. I mean, you take 9, for instance, it can play 37 yards downhill and 2 uphill on two different days. You're hitting across fairways. You're changing pars of the holes on different days, 1 and 18 become par-4s and par 5s and vice versa the next day. And that is kind of -- it gets tricky with that kind of thing. But I think Mike and the team at the USGA, I think they're going to do a phenomenal job, it's not their first rodeo. They're going to be able to set the course up to where I think it's very challenging but in a way that they're going to try and find the best player that's going to win around here. And I don't have any problem with it. I keep saying to people, U.S. Open is all about controlling your attitude, controlling your emotional level and your stress levels out there because it can be a very frustrating week if you let it be. And for me personally, I think the biggest thing is not to beat myself out there. And you've just got to keep grinding and grinding and grinding, and hopefully by Sunday you're somewhere around the lead. And that's how I've taken that into every U.S. Open I've played pretty well. And I'm looking forward to trying to get across the line this week.

Q. Is there a handful, maybe two or three holes, you think could -- oftentimes you look at a course and say these holes may describe a tournament. Are there key holes that you think will have a bearing by weeks end?

JASON DAY: You're saying --

Q. Key holes.

JASON DAY: Key holes. It totally depends on how they set it up. I was talking to Tiger about it this morning, I said it would be awesome if they can do a drivable par-4 16, alongside 17, and I said par-5 18, but he said par-4. This golf course requires length. There's like 4 and 7, say, for instance, if you can carry it over 300 plus yards, you can definitely have maybe four clubs shorter than if you couldn't carry it 300 yards plus. So if you have the distance and the carry, you can definitely make the course a lot easier with regards to shorter clubs. With that said, it's very forgiving hitting the fairways. This course, it looks tight, but once you're down in the fairway it's wider than you think. And this is definitely a second-shot golf course. Even with my height of -- I feel like I'm one of the highest ball flight hitters out here and the ball is still bouncing pretty far.

It's crucial on where you need to land the ball on here, and sometimes you may need to land the ball in the same exact position all four days, just because the green complexes are so tough.

Q. You mentioned sort of imagination, and what might be needed here. Your strength, given the way you've grown up with golf, you can maybe see things that others don't. When you get on the course, you'll be able to imagine your own way, execute, as well. Is it something you see as a strength for you this week?

JASON DAY: I'm trying to play different shots. We are so used to just getting up there and hitting a 60 degree wedge and chipping around with that. Hitting a 9-iron, hitting a 3-wood, maybe a 1-iron, putter, and really just trying to get comfortable with hitting certain shots. Around the wedge area, just over the last couple of days I've been hitting a lot of 9-irons trying to get the ball on the ground as quick as possible, get it rolling, make a putt. The fairways are so tight here. It's very easy to get the ball bouncing pretty quick, especially with a lot of bounce in your wedge. You don't quite hit it the way you want to and sometimes it will roll too far or check up pretty quick. The imagination comes from that around the greens. The next part is preparation and planning and really understanding where you need to land it. Sometimes we're going to have to land off the green sometimes. And looking at the course, there's certain areas you don't want to hit it maybe short or at the side of the greens. There's a lot of undulation out there, and if you play it too far up the slope -- say for instance maybe on 11, you play it too far, it may roll off the left side and have 40 yards back up the hill. So there's certain areas where you have to be cautious. You don't want to hit it straight at the green there, because you pull it down there anyways, but you want to make sure you go on the right edge of the green, just so that if you do end up hitting a little right it will feed up the hill and come back down. But there's certain situations like that. But it's just -- once again, you need creativity. I wouldn't be surprised if a European Tour player or a bunch of European Tour players that have played a lot of British golf are up at the top of the leaderboard. But I think I'm still sticking to my guns, I think a long player is going to win it this week.

Q. Can you give us an update on your health? You had some issues, but --

JASON DAY: I feel good. I had three sleep studies done. I had a lot of blood tests done. I had an MRI on my head and my back -- my head and my neck. And everything came back negative. So I have no idea what that was, other than I just may have been exhausted. Sometimes -- I was training so hard, I was doing two-a-days every day coming into tournaments

and then on top of it I was doing practice, playing competitive golf and then trying to balance that with family, as well. It's just a full-time kind of gig there. And I think I just ran out of gas and I wasn't feeling good, so I had the shakes and the tingling up my arms. And the loss of energy and strength was probably caused by that. I've got severe sleep deprivation, so I guess that's part and parcel of having a kid. As probably everyone knows that in this room. And that's just life. So you've just got to deal with it. I feel good this week. I just literally walked into the room and come off a half an hour nap, so I'm all good to go.

Q. Just as a spectator, there seems to be so little differentiation between what is green and what is fairway. And I'm just wondering as a player what the relevance of that is and even telling when you're on one or when you're on the other?

JASON DAY: Yeah, you've got the white dots around the greens. And I think if people do know -- if people don't know, that's to define where the green starts and/or ends. And I think they've done a good job with it really because they've put most of them on slopes to where the ball probably won't stop or won't roll down or won't roll away. Sorry, it will roll away, sorry. So with that said -- because if you look, you can't really see where the green is. If you're hitting into a flag, it looks like the green is all the way down the fairway. I don't think there will be any issue with people knowing if it's on the green or not because they are -- where the dots are, they're on the hills.

Q. You've had some success in U.S. Opens, it's probably been your best major results-wise. Do you take anything from those, because of the margin on those, with the win being so big, and the --

JASON DAY: I'm sorry, I could not hear you.

Q. U.S. Open has been your best major results-wise, but a couple of those weren't exactly close. Do you take anything from those or is the margin there, take that out of play, and more importantly is this venue just so different than anything that a U.S. Open has been played on?

JASON DAY: Yeah, it's -- when I first got here, I thought it was -- reminded me of The Open Championship, and typically that's not one of the majors that I have played well in the past. And I thought about it, and I think in previous starts here at the U.S. Open I've played well. I think because I wanted it and my short game was on point that week. And that's why I've been putting and chipping and doing as much work as I can, especially around the greens, because it needs to be sharp this week. I don't really know how to explain or answer the question, just because this is a different venue for us, especially at a U.S. Open. So it's interesting to see,

and I think -- I don't think it's going to get too windy around here. From what the locals say, it doesn't get too windy around here. It gets windy at the Open Championship, and that is a factor in what you do, especially on all shots. But, once again, I feel like my game is ready to play well here. But it's going to be a tough week. I can't really pull any of those last experiences into a course like this, because it's totally different. So it's just kind of hard to really answer it other than saying I'm feeling pretty good about my whole game.

Q. What is it about -- what makes a U.S. Open so unique compared to other tournaments?

JASON DAY: U.S. Opens, they're very unique just because -- I think by the end of the week, you probably lost ten pounds just from all the stress that you have out there. It's physically and mentally demanding. Usually it's physically and mentally demanding. This is going to be more so physically just because of the elevation changes that we have to encounter. And once you start bringing that into play, then if you start losing focus, you start making mental errors. So it's a premium on making sure that you're eating right this week, you're keeping the fluids up, especially this week, if it does get a little warmer. And just really trying to mentally prepare yourself knowing that you're going to make mistakes out there. And usually at the other events, it's just totally different, just thinking about it. I just touched on it a little earlier, this tournament is really how you -- what you learn about yourself the most. If you have the mental toughness to keep pushing forward, the right attitude and really the right emotions to control what you can control out there, because if you don't have the mental toughness -- if you're coming into a week like this and you're not really liking the golf course, you're not feeling right with your game, you're probably going to have an early week. And that's just how the USGA sets it up. Typically this is the hardest major to play in just because of the course setup. And it's a fun week, I think. It's more of a challenge. That's the way you've got to look at it. Instead of looking at all the negatives, you've got to look at what you can accomplish and go from there.

Q. A specific golf question, could I ask you about the 14th, that was one of the more interesting --

JASON DAY: The 14th.

Q. How you would approach that hole?

JASON DAY: If it's at the back?

Q. Both.

JASON DAY: If it's at the front, then I'm going to blast it straight over that bunker. And if it's at the back I'm going to try and aim at that bunker and hit it either way. I don't feel like I can hit it that straight. I hope I don't hit

it that straight, because that bunker is terrible.

Q. I guess what I'm getting at is how your approach changes?

JASON DAY: I'm going to try and play down the left side. And if I can get it going down there, I mean, I'll have -- that's what I was talking about. If you're a long ball hitter -- I can't remember how far over there it is. I think it's like 300 or 305. If you can carry that, say, for instance like a Dustin Johnson or myself, if I hit my Sunday best, you can carry that, you don't have to worry about it, depending on where the wind is. I played with Kevin Na two days ago, and the wind was into us, and I hit it down the left side. I hit -- I think 8-iron in or something, 9-iron, something like that. And he had like driver, 3-wood -- driver, hybrid, because he had to play up the right side because he couldn't carry the left side. With length, that's what I was getting to before, with length, you get more options out here. If you're not quite comfortable with driving it, you just play 3-wood or whatever you can to get down the fairway. But with driver and you have the length and you're confident, you can definitely play and attack the golf course the way you want to. Looking at it now, you look at 16, say, for instance, Tiger hit 3-wood down there on the left this morning and that's the fattest part. But if you really want to gamble it and take it a little bit farther, I had 100 yards in there to a back pin location. So it can -- you can definitely take advantage of length if you have it and really have shorter clubs into greens that are really rock hard, that are obviously tough to control, especially if you're hitting 7- and 6-irons into them.

Q. You've had your share of injuries, illnesses. You win at Torrey this year, things are looking really good, really strong early, and then you go through more of this stuff. Are you frustrated by that in these last couple of years that you haven't been healthy enough to play to what maybe you think your full potential is? Where are you at with that?

JASON DAY: It's frustrating, yes. But like I said, I got off to a great start and was heading in the right direction. I hit a plateau, and I'm looking to change that this week. I think this is a good week to change that. I don't know what it is, man. Every time I get off to a decent start, there's something that happens. My thumb last year, and then whatever I had this year, I ended up playing the Byron and having -- I'm glad it happened. I'm really glad it happened now, because then I can take action. I can understand what's wrong with me and then take action and move on, try and get better from it. Because over the last couple of years, I've been fed up with being injured, fed up with sitting out and watching the guys play without me being there. And it's been really frustrating and disappointing at the same time because I feel like I have the potential to go

out there and play well and win a lot. But with injuries it's tough to do, especially at the highest level. And that's why I've really tried -- I'm really trying to take control of my body. I hired a trainer last year, and we've changed a lot. We dropped a lot of body fat, increased a lot of lean muscle mass. I've cleaned up a lot of my diet. So the overall strength and improvement in my body is improving. We're still not quite there where we need to be, but it's a slow improvement. You don't want to drop too much body fat too quick. You don't want to put on too muscle too quick, because you start playing around with feel, and you start losing feel. With that said, it has been frustrating because my whole career has kind of been -- I've either been injured -- I've pretty much been injured most years. But I feel like it's more of an eye opener to what I need to do to prepare myself so that I don't get injured my more. And that's the way I'm looking at it. Because I've put -- like I said, I put a lot of work into my body now, and I need to put more so I stay healthy.

Q. Are you clear on what was wrong with you? Because you said all the tests came back negative. Do you have an idea?

JASON DAY: Well, I mean, I'm still waiting on one sleep study. But I have to talk to my trainer again today. I haven't talked to him for a week. We literally just finished up all the tests and I'm going to talk to him today at some point, to rule out everything that happened. I mean, it may have been a viral thing that I had going on that has stuck around in my body for months and that can play on some of your performance. But I'm going to talk to him and see how it goes.

Q. You played with Tiger and Dustin this morning. We all know that Tiger is coming off that 85. And I just wonder, as one of the young guys who has caught him, if not passed him, you, Rory, Dustin, Spieth, what do you make of where he's at right now and what did you see from him today in that practice round?

JASON DAY: Tell you what, if he could get on the fairway, he'd probably be back to where he was. His iron play is just ridiculous how good it is right now, it's really special. The driver and the 3-wood -- the 3-wood is okay, the driver is little -- gets a little wide sometimes. But I think that's the biggest thing for him right now is to really kind of get on the fairway. His short game looks pretty good. Who knows what's going on with Tiger right now. We're friends, but I don't get into his personal life and I don't want to. That's his stuff and he deserves his privacy. But when it comes to golf, it's very difficult because you could have all the tools in the world, but if you really don't want to be there or if there's something that's off course that's playing on your mind -- the game of golf is so mental and if you

don't have everything in the right order, it's very difficult to win golf tournaments. I've learned that very early. It really is amazing that some days you'll come out and you'll feel like you can beat anyone, and then some days you come out and you've got no confidence in the world and you can't break an egg with a hammer. Unfortunately, with Tiger, it's so hard because he's done what he's done in the past and everyone is expecting him to do that still. And we put him on such a pedestal that, where is the old Tiger and what's he going to do? When's he going to come back? We're just waiting for him to come back and win those tournaments like it was nothing, hunt down people like it was -- like he was playing a Wednesday tournament at the country club. But will we see it? I'm not sure. It just totally depends on the person, how hard he's working, because you don't get anywhere -- especially the top guys in the world, they're working their tails off. Everyone knows it. And then once again, it just depends on how much you want it. It's tough. He dominated the game for so long, and that's what I admire about him the most. He dominated the game so long, and he was so motivated to win. And I don't know how long he was No. 1 for, but he was No. 1 for a very, very long time. And it's hard to do that. Everyone, you're climbing Mt. Everest and he's fallen off it a couple of times and climbed back up there again. Once people understand how hard it is to climb Mt. Everest, it's hard to do it again. So it's pretty admiring to see what he's done to get back there a couple of times. And once again, I think if he could straighten out that driver, he'd play phenomenal golf, because his iron play and putting is on point.

Q. To keep up the theme of your practice round today, if you could speak a little bit to walking the course with Dominic from Ohio and what that mean to you?

JASON DAY: Yeah, I mean, since you brought it up, I guess -- I really didn't want to bring it up, but Dominic, his mother is dying of ALS. And I think she only has partial use of her index finger now, and it's hit her pretty hard. So I've got to know Dominic over the last few years. My wife is friends with Beth, his mom, and they got to come out to the U.S. Open. It was with a surprise I had Dominic come out and walk with us the last four or five holes. We kind of -- he was on the front nine, I was on the back nine, I ended up texting him to come back out, and we ended up meeting. And fortunately he was kind of -- he was nervous, because he didn't know who I was playing with at the time. And when he saw I was playing with Tiger and Dustin, I walked over to him and handed him the arm band and told him to come inside the ropes. He got to meet Dustin and got to meet Tiger and walk the last four or five holes. But it's not about me, man. It's something -- I said earlier, we are very gifted with what we do. We're very selfish in our time, but when we can give

back and make someone's dream come true, maybe meeting their idol or being able to walk the course with Tiger or Dustin, to be able to do that is pretty cool. In a similar situation, I lost my dad when I was 11. For me, I lost him in a couple of months. It was quick. But for him it's been an ongoing thing. And watching his mom over the last few years, couple of years, really turn from what she was before and now where she is now, it's really heart breaking just to see that. And for him to be out here with me and to be able to walk the fairways was awesome. No matter what you have in your life, whether it's great or bad, we all take it for granted sometimes. And there's always someone worse off. It's what you leave with people and the impressions you leave with people at the end of the day. I'm just trying to get back -- give back a little bit. Like I said, it's not about me. I just wanted him to have a good time and enjoy himself out there.

BETH MAJOR: Jason, we certainly appreciate you being so generous with your time today. We wish you the best this week.

JASON DAY: Thank you.