

US Open Championship 2016

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

Jason Day

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Welcome to the 2016 U.S. Open Championship at Oakmont Country Club. It's my pleasure to introduce this morning Jason Day of Australia, World number one, who has three victories this season, including the Arnold Palmer Invitational and the PLAYERS Championship. Jason, can you talk a little bit about your play coming in this week at Oakmont?

JASON DAY: I feel good about where I'm at right now with regards to my game. Didn't really pan out the way I wanted to finish at the Memorial Tournament but had a week off and got here Friday and been prepping and trying to really get prepared for this tournament, even though this is probably the hardest venue of the season. Mentally and physically trying to prepare the best I can.

THE MODERATOR: You were in contention last year at Chambers Bay, went on to win the PGA Championship. Can you talk about those experiences and coming to Oakmont and being here this week?

JASON DAY: It's great to be here. This is my agent's backyard. I came here when I was 18 and played Oakmont for the first time. Almost feels like home, just because of where he's from. Yeah, and I played great.

I've been very close to winning a U.S. Open, especially the last few years. Had two second place finishes. Obviously, one of them wasn't that close, with Rory kind of blowing the field out. But, yeah, I mean, this is one tournament that is very stressful and I feel like I thrive under stress, and hopefully I can do that this year.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks very much. We'll open it to questions.

Q. You just touched on it there, how you like the tough stuff, everyone sort of whining and winging about how tough it is, the rough, et cetera. Does that play into your hands?

JASON DAY: I've always said it ever since I started playing major golf, is that you have to come in to Major Championships and your attitude has to be on point. You have to have a good attitude regardless of what situation is.

I mean, you saw it last year at Chambers Bay with a lot

of the professionals complaining about the greens. That just doesn't help. This year, we got tough rough. The greens are tough. Practically the whole course is tough. You just got to go with it and try and play your best and hope for the best sometimes attitude is huge. I think when you're in stressful situations like you are at U.S. Opens, where this is usually the toughest course we play every single year, you have to come in with a positive attitude regardless of what the outcome is. If you miss a cut, it sucks, but you've got to come with -- if you're going to have a bad attitude, you may as well not even tee it up that week because you probably won't play good anyways. That's just one less person you have to worry about at the end of the week.

Q. Good morning, Jason. Is there such a thing as a few holes or stretch of holes that are gettable here? And the converse, what might be the stretch of holes that are maybe the most difficult or where you have to be the most careful?

JASON DAY: The two starting holes, 1 and 10, are difficult. Then you have 3 is difficult. 9 is very difficult. And then I believe, what is it, 15, the long par 4 down the -- 500-yard par 4. Those are the kind of ones you kind of have to watch.

It's just really tough because you can't hit a bunker here. It's hard to say that, but you can get lucky if it just trickles in the front edge of the bunker and you can get out, but if you hit it with any sort of speed going into a bunker, it's going up the lip, and there's just no chance of getting to the hole.

So it's like 15, for example, I might hit a 2 iron off there and not hit a driver just because, if I miss it left in the Church Pews, I'm going to have to lay up if I get unlucky, or if I get upper left of one of the Church Pews, if I hit it right, I'm bringing in that bunker, and then I have to lay up. If I go over it, then I'm bringing in that hazard. I may as well hit a 2 iron down the center and hit a 4 iron somewhere up around the greens rather than hitting a driver and then having to lay up to the best I can and having a pitching wedge or 9 iron in there trying to save par. I'd much rather be around the greens and try to give myself the best opportunity.

I think you can lay back here at this golf course. You can try and overpower it. There are some holes out there that you can hit driver and go after, but the rough

is so thick, it's just a premium on hitting fairways this week. I think if you can dial it back a little bit, give yourself opportunities on the fairways, you're definitely at an advantage hitting a 7 iron rather than a wedge out of the rough this week. We always say each and every week, it's a bomber's course. For the most part, it's a bomber's game, our generation. It's not like that this week.

I played last Friday, and there was this shot that I hit ten feet out of the rough. You just cannot hit it in the rough in certain places, and I don't want to do that. So I'm going to try and do my best to hit the fairways and try and get it on the green the best I can.

Q. Jason, I saw a full-on headline that you're battling a cold. I guess we should ask how you're doing. When you think back about Chambers and the physical issue you had that day, was that a total nightmare?

JASON DAY: Yeah. Chambers was -- you can't control vertigo and stuff like that. With people that have vertigo, they kind of understand what I kind of went through. But battling a -- I mean, this shouldn't be a news and noteworthy that I'm battling a cold. I'm at the back end of a cold. You can probably hear it in my voice, but I'm fine. I'm going to do fine. It's not an excuse. I'm going to be ready for the start Thursday.

It's just that things happen. I was just going to say that I've never been more stressed in my life than right now. It's just because being No. 1 in the world, having a lot of expectations on you, having to practice so hard to keep that No. 1 spot, trying to win as many tournaments as I can puts a lot of stress and pressure on your shoulders. Sometimes your immune system gets a little heated, and you're more susceptible to getting some illnesses that way. It doesn't help that my father-in-law was sick during the Memorial, so that kind of passed it along to me.

So it is what it is. People ask me how I feel, I usually tell them how I feel, and that's just me being honest. I'm not trying to make any excuses this week. I just want to know that I was battling something. And usually, I tell people how I prepare. Unfortunately, I didn't get to prepare Saturday, Sunday, but I feel pretty rested, which is a good thing for me.

I think I'm going to need that rest this week with how tough the golf course is. So I'll be ready come Thursday.

Q. Jason, in the middle of this great run you've been on since last summer, you took a pretty long winter break. I know that was for family reasons. How much do you think it helped you coming into

this year to have had a real off-season? And as a follow-up to that, what were you doing all day when you weren't changing diapers at home for three months?

JASON DAY: Oh, man. You would have -- you probably would have laughed. I had a very boring life, which is fine. I like being boring. I just hung out with the family. I had three months off. I played golf once, played four holes. I had an RBC thing I had to do down in Florida. Played four holes, went to the driving range. That was a month and a half into my stint, and then a month and a half went by. So it was three months total where I practically didn't pick up a golf club.

I went to the gym twice a day. I really tried to work on my nutrition, tried to work on my body for the upcoming season. But really tried to spend a lot of time with Ellie, Dash and Lucy.

I mean, you have to take some time off from golf. If you don't take time off from golf, you get burnt out pretty quick. With how the wraparound season is -- and we call it kind of the silly season, where you can go around the world and play -- you can play golf pretty much every week if you wanted to. But that just doesn't work out that way because you'll mentally fry yourself and you'll be done. So I'll try to take a month, month and a half off at the end of this year before I head back down to Australia and play.

But I think it also keeps you very hungry coming in because you see guys that have already played maybe ten events or so in front of you. They've got such a big lead in the FedEx and a big lead on top of you with how many events they've played, that you come out and you kind of put yourself into a bit of a corner where you have to force yourself to play well. So it's a good thing.

Q. Just a follow-up on last year. What did you prove to yourself, your own toughness, to just get through that the way you did last year?

JASON DAY: With the U.S. Open, you're talking about?

Q. Yes.

JASON DAY: Yeah, the Saturday was obviously worse than the Sunday, but obviously, there were a few spots out there where I thought I was going to quit, just go I'm just done with it because I can't handle it anymore, because I felt like I was going to throw up and I just felt ill.

But, yeah, to be able to know that I can push myself a little further than you think, just trying to get that next step -- mentally, more so mentally than physically. Obviously, I was kind of struggling there. But it's more of a mental barrier that you've got to break through

when you have certain things like that go on. You've just got to keep pushing, keep pushing.

Funny enough, I end up shooting 68 on Saturday and kind of folding myself into a tied lead for the last day. It didn't work out my way on the last day, kind of pushed it a little bit too much. But, yeah, it was great. It was a good experience for me to really understand how far I can push myself.

Q. Jason, you said earlier you feel like you thrive on stress. Over the course of your competitive career, what's been the most stressful week or the most stressful round you've experienced?

JASON DAY: Probably the last day of the PGA was probably the most stressful that I've had, but I felt in control. It was the most stressful day that I've had, but I felt in control. The last day of Bay Hill was the most stressful, and I felt out of control. It was just one of those weeks where I did not know where the ball was going on the last day of the Bay Hill and somehow ended up pulling a win.

And then at the PGA, never winning -- haven't won a Major before, having the opportunity to win a Major, Jordan Spieth behind me and a few of the other guys playing well, that was probably the most stressful.

U.S. Opens are always stressful, but it's just a different kind of -- like that was kind of pressure stressful situation, and this, U.S. Open, you just get out there and it's like okay, I've just got to somehow survive this week and hopefully it works out.

Yeah, probably the PGA under controlled circumstances and then Bay Hill not controlled.

Q. I'm with the Japanese broadcaster. I wanted to ask, how much chance do you think Matsuyama has to win this week or any other Majors coming up?

JASON DAY: I think, as long as he gets his speed with his putts down this week, because he's such a good ball striker -- he plays -- from tee to green, he's a very good hitter. But if he gets his speed on the greens correct, I think he has a very good chance of winning this week with how good he hits the golf ball. If he can control that speed, then he can see the lines a lot better. Hopefully, if he sees the lines a lot better, has a good week on the greens.

I really like Hideki. I think he's a really nice guy, and I think he's going to be probably one of the best Japanese golfers to come out of Japan, obviously. This year, hopefully, he just keeps incrementally improving over the years and becomes more of a dominant player out there, especially on the PGA tour and around the

world as well and at Major Championships.

Q. Jason, before getting to No. 1, how important was it to believe that you were -- you really were good enough to be the best player in the world and that you deserved to be the best player? How important was it, and when did you start believing that?

JASON DAY: It's probably the most important part because you can have all the tools, but if you don't really believe in yourself -- you can be the most talented player out here. If you don't believe in yourself, there's somewhere or another, you're going to sabotage yourself to a point where you just feel uncomfortable and you go, okay, I don't want to be in that uncomfortable stage.

But I think I learned. Once I started saying to the media that, you know, it's okay to be uncomfortable and keep putting yourself there, putting yourself there. It's okay to fail, keep putting yourself there. Once I started saying that and really seeing that and believing in that, over time, it just gradually got -- not easier, but over time I gradually saw myself there a lot more. And then through seeing myself there a lot more, the results gave me a lot more confidence, and then when I gained that confidence, then I started really believing in myself that I could get to No. 1 in the world.

I think the biggest thing for me was to really understand I could win multiple times in a year, not just once, you know what I mean? Because winning once is great on the PGA Tour, you know, during the year, or winning once during the year is great. But really winning multiple times is a very dominant player, and I'm hoping to try and keep that level of play going forward.

The hardest thing for me is to really just try and want that and work hard for that.

Q. (No microphone.)

JASON DAY: Probably right after -- I mean, obviously, I won the Farmers Insurance Open last year. Probably right at British Open time, The Open Championship, where I kind of felt a calmness that I was ready for it, like I think subconsciously, I said to myself, I think you're ready to win. You've done the time, you're ready to go out there and win. You've practiced hard.

After The Open Championship, ** the failure and coming back the next week winning, something just clicked. From there, it was just like I'm going to win and I'm going to win every week. That's what it felt like to me. So that's kind of the mentality that I have to go into each and every week right now.

Q. Jason, Jordan Spieth came agonizingly close to

winning his second Masters title earlier this year. Golf can be unforgiving at times. What moment in your career had you down the most, and how did you recover from it?

JASON DAY: People always joke that I wasn't really going to quit, but I was going to quit before my first Major Championship at Augusta. I was done with golf. I didn't like it. I was okay with that.

Probably right before then, 2011, I just didn't feel good on the golf course. And no matter how much talent you have or how nice of a bloke you are, if you're not enjoying your job, you don't want to do it regardless, and it doesn't matter what people say if you're going to quit or not. It's totally up to the person, how they felt.

That time, where I was struggling on the golf course, and more mentally, I really felt like I was going to walk away from the game. And that's probably the hardest time I've ever had to be on the golf course was right around that time. Kind of after that, I just slowly got on my feet. Obviously, finishing second that year at Augusta definitely helped getting me back on my feet.

It's tough. Golf is a very hard game. You're out there, you're an individual out there, and you're kind of by yourself hitting. It's not a reaction sport. You're out there, and if you're in the lead or if you're not playing well, no one's going to be there. No teammate is going to be there to pick you up when you're playing bad and helping you along the way. It's all you.

It's a very mental game. You can get very fragile at times. When you're fragile, anything can set you off, and unfortunately, it's a game where those are the times where you kind of have to push through. If you can push through those times, hard times, come out better on the other side, you'll most likely succeed from there.

Q. Jason, Dustin Johnson obviously had a bad go at Chambers at the end of the tournament last year, and he's had a few of those, and he has not crossed over the line with a Major. Can you talk a little bit about how difficult that is when you have setbacks like that? Along the lines of what you've just been talking about.

Obviously, Jordan had the issue at Augusta, but he already had a Masters in the bag and the U.S. Open, so it was maybe a little less difficult to deal with.

JASON DAY: It's always easy from the cheap seats to say I should have hit it there. It's so easy to say that, but it's hard to do it when you're under pressure and you're trying to win a tournament. A lot of fans, a lot of people around the world just don't realize how tough it

is to win, especially trying to hit a little golf ball that size and get it in a hole 400 yards away. You know what I mean? It's very, very difficult sometimes, and we're trying to do it the best we can. Unfortunately, sometimes it just doesn't work our way.

I was there when Dustin Johnson, when he three-putted at Chambers Bay. I putted out first, trying to give him the opportunity, if he holed that putt, because it was very holeable, give him the opportunity and the glory to fist pump or do whatever he wanted to if he holed that putt to win the U.S. Open.

And then he hit the putt past, and then I'm sitting there going, okay, that's a pretty difficult putt coming back up. I didn't realize he'd hit it that hard. He missed a putt. He went in there pretty quick. He lined up pretty quick and hit it and then unfortunately missed it.

But with what Jordan did at Augusta this year, it just goes to show that the best players in the world -- we've gotten so used to seeing Tiger do it so easy and so effortlessly that we forget sometimes how hard it is to win a golf tournament. And Dustin, I think he'll definitely get one. It's just all in how you view those values.

If you think about it while you're out there and go, the last time I was in this position, I coughed it up or I played bad, that's the wrong attitude. Walk in with values like that and say yep, what did I do wrong last time? Maybe I three putted the last hole. This time, I'm going to try and hole it, but I'm going to try to mosey it down there some way. You've got to learn from it, try to get better for the next time. If you can learn, you can always improve. If you can improve, you can always win more.

So it's just, for him, he's just got to look at those values and say they were learning curves and hopefully, from there, he can win some.

Q. Jason, just to follow up on that, did you think Dustin was going to make that putt to win?

JASON DAY: Yes.

Q. Why? And also, because it was fairly treacherous, do you think that makes it any easier?

JASON DAY: It obviously had some speed. I think he got a little unlucky with the ball staying there. I think it should have come back down below the hole. But how far was it, 15 feet? Something like that, right?

Q. I think it was 12.

JASON DAY: Twelve feet. So I mean, from 12 feet, even though it is down the hill, I mean, the scenery

there was -- the grand stands and everything, it was just set up for a finish like that. With him holing the putt. Not obviously three-putting. And, you know, I definitely thought he had -- he's a good putter. I think he's a good putter with how long he hits the ball. He's got a good touch. I think he's a good putter. He wouldn't have so many good finishes in major championships without putting good. I honestly thought he's going to hole this putt and the crowd's going to go nuts and this is going to be me looking from the outside going that should have been me. And obviously, it didn't work out that way for Dustin. But I honestly felt like he should have won that event.

I think if it went to 18 holes on Monday, it would have been a very exciting match between Jordan and Dustin. I don't know who would have won, but it would have been exciting. Obviously, in my head, I thought that he was going to hole it.

Q. Jason, Dash is having his star turn on TV. Can you explain the genesis of that commercial? How did he learn his lines, deliver them? What was it like for you the first time you saw that?

JASON DAY: So he went down to, in Columbus, they went down to a studio. He had headphones on and Ellie was helping him out with his lines. I mean, the lines, he's only 3, so -- and people forget he's 3. He's a humongous toddler. He's very big. And you should see Lucy, she's even bigger. She's a fatty. It's fine. Like Ellie, I think she has protein shakes in those things. I don't know what she's doing. But for some reason, she's a very, very big baby. I don't know how other people have real tiny babies.

But anyways, I'm off point now. I can't remember what I was going to say.

(Laughter.)

JASON DAY: Thinking about Ellie. So, yeah, so he had his headphones on, Ellie was going through the lines with him. And then they started talking to him from Atlanta, and then he kind of got a little shy, but it ended up turning out great. I think Bud came to me and said Taylor Made wanted to do a commercial. And then when I first saw the commercial, especially at the end when he says, "I love you, daddy," I just started crying.

Yeah, it's so neat. He's going to have those memories to look back on. We're going to have that commercial forever and know that, like, when he's my age, he'll be able to see, you know, when he was little, he ran out on the greens when I won tournaments. It's pretty neat.

He always says to me before each tournament, on Sunday, make sure you win because you want to kiss the trophy. That's what he says to me all the time. So I

don't know if that adds a little bit more pressure on me or not. But it's great.

It's really fun. That's what it's all about. I mean, the memories that I have along the way now, if we don't do stuff like that, I won't have the memories, and that's why I'm starting to do more things like throw the first pitch out at a Pirates game or go to basketball games and sit courtside. Because usually I like to stay out of the spotlight when I'm off. I just want to kind of live low key.

But what better opportunity than now do I have to get to do this stuff and really look back on it and say I did some pretty cool stuff when I was playing golf, and Dash can have that exact same thought when he's growing up, saying that he did some pretty cool stuff. He got to travel the world. He got to be on TV and do some pretty fun things.

Q. You kind of touched on this earlier, but in terms of which was more difficult for you last year, going through what you went through at Chambers Bay or trying to win your first Major at the PGA? And then I'll follow up after that.

JASON DAY: Winning my first Major was tough in a way that I was healthy and everything was going great. I was driving the ball fantastic that week, and I didn't want to, I guess, cough up my third 54-hole lead in a Major Championship that year. I had the 54-hole lead at the U.S. Open, the British Open, and the PGA. I didn't realize that until I got into the final round, you know, watching the Golf Channel and they said, yeah, he's in his third 54-hole lead, and he's [indiscernible] in ** the last two.

The U.S. Open last year was a different story. I was battling something that I couldn't control. So I was just trying to get through the tournament and hopefully give myself an opportunity at winning the event, which I did, but I just didn't obviously capitalize on Sunday.

Q. To follow, what's different for you coming into this tournament, having won a Major, versus last year when you obviously hadn't won a Major?

JASON DAY: I don't think there's much at all. Like I still, I feel like I've got just as much pressure as I did when I was playing at Whistling at the PGA Championship. I'm No. 1 in the world. I'm probably one of the favorites to win this week. Still that's a lot of pressure, but it's good pressure to have. I'd much rather have that pressure than be at the end of the field and no one expecting you to win. That's the kind of pressure that you've got to enjoy and love, and I think I don't feel any different than what I did before. I still feel the same way that I did.

I still have my doubts, and my confidence goes up and down, but I feel like I'm more focused and driven to win tournaments like this now than I ever have before. I know that if I win this, if I win tournaments like this, it's just more so for the glory of winning it and the sheer, I don't know, just the pride in what you do to get to that moment of winning a tournament, walking down 18. And it would be pretty nice to walk up here and know that you have the lead and finish it off here.

Q. Jason, you mentioned earlier, I think at the outset, about this being a stressful tournament, that you thrive under stress. All the Majors are stressful in different ways. Which of the Majors do you think your aptitude is best towards that you might be built to win, so to speak?

JASON DAY: Probably the U.S. Open, I think. Just from, I think, my short game. When I was a kid, I'd hit it everywhere, right, and when I hit it everywhere, I had a short game to save me. I needed to -- if I didn't have a short game, I would shoot over par, and I'd play bad. If I had my short game, I'd shoot under par somehow, even though I was hitting in the trees and hitting it everywhere.

That's kind of what you need here. Even though you're a good ball striker, sooner or later, you're going to hit greens. Sooner or later, you're going to miss fairways. It's a matter of being able to control your emotion during that hard time, being able to get up and down and move on to the next hole.

I think it sets up best for this because I hit it high. Usually, the course is running very firm. Usually the greens are firm and fast. I feel like I hit it high, and I feel like I've got good touch around the greens. I think this one sets up best for me.

I finished second twice, and I can't remember how many top tens I've had in the U.S. Open, but I feel like -- it's been four. Benji's going like this (indicating) at me. So I feel like that sets up well for me.

Q. Jason, at the PLAYERS tournament, you used the irons a lot and went away from the 3 wood. Was that by design, maybe set up for this tournament, or was it just that day? And will the driver be a big part of your game this week?

JASON DAY: No, I totally sucked at the PLAYERS Championship. I was terrible off the tee, so I decided to use a 2 iron instead of 3 wood because I really -- I mean, I probably need to hit a 3 wood out here, maybe a couple times. More so, I'm going to hit irons off the tees, I think.

And driver, I can keep -- I think I can only hit it maybe four times maybe during the round, four or five times. I

mean, I can hit it anywhere I want, but, I mean, obviously, that wouldn't be the greatest game plan in the world.

But I'm trying to limit that as much as possible because I think, once again, I want to hit fairways. If I can hit fairways, I give myself -- doesn't matter how far it is. If I hit the 2 iron into the green, I'm going to hit 2 iron into the green because it get me up around the green somewhere. I think if I can get myself up around the greens, hopefully my short game will be nice and sharp that I can get up and down.

I just don't want to have to hit my driver or make a mistake off the fairway and then having to lay up, you know, 60 yards trying to get out of a bunker and just get it out and having a 9 iron or pitching wedge and trying to make par that way.

Sooner or later, it just doesn't work out. No matter who you are as a wedge player, trying to get up and down with a wedge in your hand into these greens, probably the most difficult thing to do. With how firm and fast the greens are going to be, where the pin locations will be, it will be tough to get any sort of wedge close. So I've just got to try to give myself the opportunities, and hopefully that's more irons off the tee this week.

Q. Hi, Jason. What do you think separates yourself from all the other great players here? I hope that's not a loaded question.

JASON DAY: Oh, my goodness.

Q. Overcoming adversity, your ability --

JASON DAY: That's a tough one. I don't know. I want it right now. I want it more than anything in the world. I'm not saying that all the other players don't want it just as much as me, but all I'm doing right now is focusing on trying to win golf tournaments, and I understand that the only way to do that is get the process right.

Yeah, I think the one thing -- I don't think there's anything that separates me. I just want to win as much as every other guy out there. But I'm so single focused on trying to accomplish that, that I make sure that I get everything right before the tournament.

And once again, some guys prepare differently and some guys want it more than, you know, than others, and priorities change over time. But right now, my priority, as long as my family is happy and healthy, my priority right now is to win as much as I can, and that's just on me.

Sooner or later, over time, my priority will change and, unfortunately, it just happens that way. But right now, I'm driven to win tournaments just because ten tournaments that I've won is not enough. I need to win

more.

THE MODERATOR: We look forward to watching you tackle Oakmont this week. We wish you well throughout the championship.

JASON DAY: Thank you very much.