

U.S. Open Championship 2018

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Jason Day

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Welcome again to the 2018 U.S. Open Championship at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club. Very pleased to welcome this afternoon Jason Day, who is here playing in his eighth U.S. Open with five top ten finishes in those eight appearances.

Jason, can you give us some initial thoughts on Shinnecock and the course, as you've seen over the past few days?

JASON DAY: Yeah. I mean, I got in here Saturday night and played 18 holes on Sunday, 9 holes yesterday. Did a little bit of chipping and putting today, and I'll probably play nine holes again tomorrow. Just trying to get as much experience on it because, obviously, Sunday was the first time I've ever actually stepped foot on the grounds.

We had a kind of northeast to an easterly, you know, over the last couple days, and then today it's finally switching to a more predominant wind, what we get usually for this time of the year. So I've got to try to go out there and try to get a feel for it because it's going to play different to what I was playing in the first two days I actually played here.

But the course is in great shape. I think the USGA and the greens staff have done a phenomenal job leading up to this week, and I know that we've had great weather. So obviously, you can see by the fescue, how healthy it is. The greens, and I guess what they've done from, obviously, from 2004 leading into this year's U.S. Open -- I know obviously it's been 14 years or so, but there's definitely a lot of changes since then, and I think we'll have a good week this week.

THE MODERATOR: Healthy fescue. I think we'll use that as a PR term from now on.

You had your 12th Tour win earlier this season at the Wells Fargo. Tell us how you're feeling about your game coming into this week.

JASON DAY: I feel good. I mean, obviously, coming off a win at Wells Fargo was a great win, obviously. I haven't played that tournament too much, and I know that I've had good experiences there, and I finally went there and, obviously, going off what happened at the PGA last year, I didn't finish it off and had a poor 18th

hole.

But being able to get across the line and get my 12th, I'm just trying to keep ticking the boxes. This year's been a good start to the year. I know that I feel ready for another Major win, and hopefully it's this week.

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

Q. Hey, Jason. Could you talk about just enjoying the convenience of the RV community. Bubba was telling me a couple weeks ago that it's really changed his life, and particularly here, what it's like and how it helps.

JASON DAY: Yeah, so I don't know. I think a lot of people have been struggling with traffic coming into it, and I'm 30 seconds away from the parking lot, which is nice.

I've been doing it since 2010. So to be able to -- I feel -- so when I was growing up, I played junior tournaments, and I could just drive to them or my mom would drop me off at the tournaments when I was a kid, and I feel like I'm better feeling like I'm staying at home. And when I'm on the bus, it feels like home because I'm sleeping in my own bed. You got your own stuff in there. So it's just a moving house, really, to be honest.

Bubba just got one this year, and I'm very kind of more private, and he's -- he's -- yeah, he's a little bit more outgoing, and I think we're at Augusta, and he walks under my bus, and he's like, hey, man, what are you doing? I'm just sitting in the bus watching TV. He's like okay. And he's standing there. And I'm like, do you want to come inside? And he's eating a burrito, and he decides to come in and talk to me for about 30 minutes. He gets his burrito all over the ground and then just leaves.

Actually, it's nice to have people like that around, you know, to mess your bus up when you need them to.

But Louis just got one. There's a good group of us. In the late '90s and early 2000s, there was a good chunk of guys that were using the bus. I think on weeks like Majors -- I think most weeks, to be honest -- it's really key. I'm going to use my bus next week at the

Travelers. So I use it probably around 15 weeks a year. So I'm on a good chunk of the tournaments that I play.

Q. Do you think you can get back to that point you were a couple, three years ago when you won so many tournaments, and you seemed to be in complete focus in winning those tournaments. Is that still possible for you?

JASON DAY: Yes. Yeah, definitely. It's more of a mindset, I think, more so than anything else.

I think if I want to be the best player in the world, I'll be the best player in the world. And that's more the mindset that I have to take. I mean, a golf career is kind of like this (indicating), you know, and for me, how I work, that's just my mindset. If I want to put my mind to something, I know that there's pretty much nothing people can do about it. Because if I put my mind to it, it's going to happen.

But, you know, saying that, I know how hard it is to climb that mountain, how hard it is to do the things that I did do, and how much work that you had to actually put into your game to get to that point. And sometimes it can be motivating, and sometimes it can be very difficult to look at, knowing that you've got so far to go.

But it's always easy -- I feel like it's always easier chasing to get to No. 1 than it is to get there and stay there. Right now, I'm chasing a guy that's playing phenomenal golf. Dustin just won last week, and he got back to the top of the world rankings again. He's very dominant in the way he plays with regards to how far he hits it and all that stuff. I feel like, when things are going my way and I'm doing the right things, I feel like my game is just like that as well.

So I've just got to keep working. I've won twice already this year, and I think if I can keep pushing, keep grinding -- I've got the second half of the season to go. I've got three Majors left. If I can kind of get a Major in the next three and win a couple more, I think that would be a good, solid year and get things kicked in the right direction.

Q. Hey, mate, if I was to say to you that the U.S. Open is the Major you're most suited to, would you agree or disagree, and why?

JASON DAY: I would agree. I would agree just because of, you know, my finishes. But it's more so the mentality part for it. I mean, when you come into an event like this, I was just saying earlier that usually, you hear guys moaning and groaning about the setup or, you know, the course we're playing on, how tight things are or the healthy fescue or something, you know what I mean? There's usually something guys complain about. This week, there's none of that.

You can kind of write people off straight away if they're complaining. When it comes to the U.S. Open, you have to -- it tests every part of your game and the mental side as well. So whatever you get, you get. I mean, you just got to kind of suck it up and just keep going.

I like the stressful part of trying to win a tournament, and I like the stressful part about just being in amongst, playing a tough tournament in front of a lot of people and trying to win a Major.

So I think if you can just keep grinding, that's my biggest thing. I'm not a mud runner, but like to a certain degree, I enjoy tough conditions because I feel like I thrive better under those conditions than, per se, an easier course where everyone can come in and play.

Q. Among the many themes leading into this week here, you've got Phil with a chance to complete the Grand Slam, Tiger hasn't won a Major in ten years, he hasn't played in a U.S. Open since '15. I just wonder, on the scale of where you'd be impressed most, would it be Tiger winning again after all he's gone through or Phil, at his age, being runner-up six times, completing a Grand Slam, or just kind of where you look at those two accomplishments.

JASON DAY: I think the biggest story would probably be Tiger. Not taking anything away from Phil because winning the career Grand Slam is absolutely huge, and I know that he's been so close so many times now.

But for what happened to Tiger, it's been ten years, what he did in that period of when he dominated, and I think a lot of people are kind of chomping at the bit for him to come back and do something special. Seeing if he can get back to winning and beating Jack's record. I think a lot of people will probably be more excited -- well, a lot of people will look at that more so than Phil's.

But, I mean, once again, they're both equally pretty much interesting stories. I know that, like I said, Phil's had a lot of close finishes, but for Tiger to go through injuries, go through what happened in his personal life, and then come back, then go through what he did with the chipping and all that stuff. So he's gone through some bumps, and now he's come out the other side healthy, and he looks -- I was hitting balls next to him yesterday, and the shot sounded very heavy. Not saying like as in a bad thing, like they sounded really solid, in the middle of the face.

So I think he's pretty much ready. He's primed and ready for this week. So it would be pretty cool to see that. But, obviously, I don't want that to happen

because I want to win. So, I mean that's just me.

Q. Jason, there seems to be a new term, backstopping, and I'm wondering if you can explain it to people who aren't familiar with it, and how do you feel about the underlying issue?

JASON DAY: I caught the back end of this story yesterday, I guess, with Jimmy Walker and all that stuff.

Backstopping, obviously, when you and your playing partner are off the green, you chip up and don't mark your ball, and he chips up and hits the ball, which causes him to be closer to what -- closer to the hole than what it was going to be.

I typically, when I chip, I'll chip up and usually go mark it. If I don't mark it, it's usually because they're usually over the shot already, and I don't want to say, hey, I'm going to mark it and distract them, potentially distract them. I understand that.

But usually, I'll mark it if it's anywhere near the hole, regardless. I mean, if it's three feet to the right or three feet to the left and there's -- most of the guys are trying to chip it in are not going to try to hit the golf ball and get lucky with regard to that.

So, I mean, this is just probably a subject that everyone wants to talk about right now because it's kind of fresh. I mean, if they want to do something about it, I think they should probably do something about it so no one talks about it anymore, where you have to just go and mark it, you know. Once again, you bring in pace of play.

But I would like to actually see the stats on how many guys chip it up and then actually chip it again and then hit the ball. If it's a large number, then maybe we should do something about it. If it isn't a large number, then, you know, there's that kind of gray area, I guess. Go ahead.

Q. Is there a little underlying part of whether it's the golfer's job to either help or not help his --

JASON DAY: I'm not trying to help anyone. To be honest, I don't want to help anyone. That's my competition. I'm nice to them, but I don't want to help them, you know.

I mean, even when it comes to -- when people go in and when they hit in the water, you know what I mean, they go, okay, it was on this line, you can kind of tell if they're kind of fudging that a little bit or not. But usually, you just say, yeah, I think it went around there and just leave it at that. If you want to talk to a rules official, then go ahead because I just want to focus on myself.

Although we have 144 guys, 156 guys every week that play, all great guys, I want to -- they're my competition. I need to beat them, so I don't want to help them.

Q. Jason, your saying that you don't want to help the competition is the perfect segue for this question. Your ascent to No. 1 occurred largely when Tiger was battling his injuries. You developed a great rapport with him. Since he's come back to the competitive sphere and has worked his way into contention, do you find your relationship has changed at all? Is he less forthcoming with advice? Slower to return your calls or texts? Has there been any change? Because he didn't like to help --

JASON DAY: I texted him the other day. I sent him a picture. It was him at this event in 2004, and he had, looked like, MC Hammer pants on. I'm like, hey, man, look at these pants. They're terrible. He had plates on them and everything. It was like the old school stuff. And he didn't text me back.

(Laughter.)

JASON DAY: Most of the time, he texts back. He's all right. But, you know, since he's come back, you can see the -- like his killer instincts is kind of starting to go more towards what it used to be. I think he's definitely -- he's not as aggressive as he used to be with regards to that.

I came out -- you know, when I first came out, it was kind of still in his prime when he was winning a lot of tournaments. He didn't really talk to many people, kind of went straight through and did his job and went on to the next event and did that.

But I don't know. I can see that there may be a sense of like kind of this is the last kind of push that he needs for his career. But at the same time, I know that he's still hungry. I think he's hungry for that next win and trying to get that -- like not monkey off his back, because he's done it so many times, but just coming back and competing and playing well against our generation now. And I think that's what he's looking forward to.

But hasn't been much change at all. He was on the putting green this morning, and he was putting around my hole, and he was annoying me. But he's good. He's great because the banter was going back and forth and we were giving each other a little bit of schtick that I can't say on TV.

Q. Speaking of winning, you've done it twice this year. Just curious, how often does it -- do sort of

all parts of the game come together in a given week over the course of a year?

JASON DAY: How many times does it come together?

Q. Yeah, for you, or at least good enough in all facets to be able to have a chance.

JASON DAY: Probably -- and sometimes when all parts of the game come together, you don't win, which is very frustrating, because you're firing on all cylinders but some guys are just better than you that week.

But usually, you're probably looking at maybe two, three events, maybe, where things are firing, you feel great, your driving is nice. I'm going to say two probably max. The rest, you're kind of -- you're happy with it, but you know that it's not quite 100 percent there. And that's any aspect of the game, whether it's putting or chipping, bunkers, short iron, long irons, driving.

So I'd probably say a couple times a year where you're absolutely very pleased with how things are going. And the rest, you're just trying to manage.

Q. Jordan talked about Tiger's love for golf that get him to greatness as obsession. You just talked about his focus when he's playing well.

JASON DAY: Yes.

Q. How about your self-discipline?

JASON DAY: My self-discipline? You have to -- I was talking about this the other day. You have to give -- if you want to be the best, you have to give yourself -- you have to give everything you've got to that craft. You have to give your whole life to it.

Everything you do is around golf or around being the best, and that's what you do sleeping, that's what you do eating, that's what you do when you're sitting there and you're playing with your kids. It's very hard to switch it off. You're playing with your kids, but you're thinking about golf, you know. So everything you do is you're thinking about golf constantly and the will to try to get better and be the best. And I enjoy that process, and that's where I'm at right now.

My wife is very -- she sacrifices so much for me and what I'm trying to accomplish, which is amazing, and my kids do too. The good thing about, like, I was talking earlier about the RVs or having a bus, you get to bring them on the road, which is nice. Dash is getting to an age where he's probably going to go into grade 1. So they may not be able to be on the road as much.

Will that affect my game? I'm not too sure. I enjoy having them on the road with me all the time, but at the

same, you know, sentence, if they're not on the road, I can focus a little bit more, or I can rest up a little bit more.

So it's just like a really fine -- once again, if you want to be the best in the world, you have to be selfish, and that, unfortunately, is hard. It can be hard on relationships. It can be hard on friends and all the other things as well because you're selfish with your time because you're trying to be the best. Unfortunately, sometimes it can backfire and go the opposite way.

But that's why I always talk about having a good balance. I feel like I've got a good balance right now. There's no stress in my life, and all I can do is go out and play good golf.

Q. Jason, you mentioned before about the PGA last year. How long of an effect did that have on you? Was it something you were able to get over immediately? And has it had an effect into this year? And maybe did the Wells Fargo put it further out of your mind?

JASON DAY: I think it affected me until dinner that night. The good thing about most tournaments is I've got -- well, my wife says I've got a really bad memory, and I believe her because I don't really remember a lot of things, which is nice. And to be able to forget things like that -- I remember it. I don't really remember the pain of actually going through it. I remember the actual shots that I was trying to hit and I felt like, if I could pull them off, then I'd be the greatest thing ever and everyone would be talking about it. But it didn't pull off, and everyone was talking about why would you do that?

So it doesn't really affect me too much at all. I tend to forget things pretty quickly, which is, obviously in this game, is really key.

To a certain degree, I look at it differently than probably most a lot of other people too. I see failure like that, and I say, well, what can I do to get better? I think, if you look at it differently like that, if you look at failure and understand that it's no good at the time and it sucks to fail, but understand that I'm using it as a stepping stone to move forward and try and get better, then you tend to forget about things quicker.

And that's kind of what I did. Obviously, to be able to finish it off and play well this year at Wells Fargo and know that I can actually win around that golf course was that right stepping stone to move forward from there.

Q. What do you think about the USGA deciding to

go to a two-hole playoff on Sunday?

JASON DAY: I don't know. I can understand -- I can understand why they want to finish with a two-hole, obviously, with primetime and everyone's eyeing that very moment on a Sunday. I kind of like -- I did like it old format as well. If there was a playoff, you come back and play 18 holes. It's just you against the other person or whoever else was in the playoff because that's kind of -- I feel like that suits better in my hands because I can -- I'm just going to go until -- it doesn't matter if it takes another 36 holes. I'm just going to keep fighting.

I understand why they did it, but if I'm in a playoff and I've got a two-hole playoff against someone, then I'm just as happy as if I had to play 18 the next day.

Q. Jason, you were putting with Tiger, and when he came to the putting green, all of a sudden, there were 400 more people.

JASON DAY: Yeah, I know. I was just saying that. I told him to go away.

Q. It's Tuesday at a U.S. Open. Is Tuesday at a U.S. Open when Tiger's there different from a Tuesday when he's not there, and Sunday different when --

JASON DAY: Oh, of course. I think everyone realizes it's different when he turns up. He definitely moves the needle when it comes to ticket sellers, more fans, more media, more players on the putting green.

I got there, and there was only like four or five guys, exactly. And then he rolls up, and there's 30 guys on the putting green, and it was hard to do your work. But that's just the Tiger effect, and everyone wants to see him. Everyone wants to see what he looks like and how big is he or just kind of see what, I guess, the myth was behind Tiger Woods.

I know what I saw when I was growing up, and I was like that when I first, you know, saw Tiger Woods for the first time. I wanted to go on the putting green and putt a round next to him and stare at him, you know.

But it is definitely bigger. Always bigger when he's in contention as well on Sundays. And if he's in contention this Sunday, then it's going to be huge.

Q. Jason, we've got nine Australians in the field this week. You've won twice this year. The way Lucas won, he won through sectional in Portland. Just wondering where you see Australian golf on the biggest stage right now. How healthy is it?

JASON DAY: I expected Lucas earlier today. I played last year with him at the Australian Open, and he said you had a great year. I said yeah, kind of kicked it on since we last played the Australian Open. He seems

like he's playing some pretty good golf. I know he's trying to get his European Tour card right now, but there's a lot of young Aussie players coming out right now. I know there's a big mix of us, from David Bransdon, who is kind of an older guy, to Lucas, who is a younger guy as well. But we've got a good group of guys over here right now.

It's actually good to see because, obviously, with the population that we have -- there's only 23 million Aussies, and a lot of them don't really play golf, but it's good to see that per capita we have a good chunk in the U.S. Open this year.

So the only thing that we can do is represent Australia as good as we can, try and win as many tournaments so that just kind of feeds more kids into junior golf, and hopefully that kind of freshens up, I guess, the competition as they grow older.

Q. What does Shinnecock demand from a short game perspective, and how would you characterize the difficulty of the areas around the greens?

JASON DAY: What was the first part of the question?

Q. What does Shinnecock demand from a short game perspective, and how would you characterize the difficulty of the areas around the greens?

JASON DAY: You can see how well they've extended the greens. Obviously, you can see the lines. Not so much the lines, but actually where the new part of the greens are.

They're big greens, but they actually play really small. There's not a lot of playing surfaces on the putting green sometimes because, obviously, they roll off, and sometimes you only have to hit the middle of the green. You'll have a 20-foot putt in either direction to the hole.

So that's actually quite nice to know you don't have to be super aggressive. But it's funny, like a lot of -- if you're off the greens, even if you're just like a couple yards off the green, they go up a slope, and they go into a -- you know, just like a peak, and then they go down. So it's very difficult to either putt or chip them close because the playing surfaces aren't clean, per se, because this golf course is very old.

There's been a lot of intrusion with different types of grasses from many, many years ago, and the good grass -- the strongest grass usually survives. So there's kind of blotches here and there. So when you're trying to putt up these slopes, especially on the fairways, they don't roll clean. So I guess, when you're putting, they can jump, and it doesn't come out consistently. So that's a tough task, whether to go, okay, I'm going to either putt it or hit a 3 wood or chip a

5 iron or chip a 60 degree. And there's -- I guess there's different ways to get the job done, which is really interesting to see.

When we play, usually the U.S. Open or American style golf courses, it's really, you go straight and pull the 60 out, and you're just chipping. I like what they've done with the extension of the greens and the opportunities that you can take out of the bag and try and get the ball up and down.

So it's, I guess, to a certain degree, you have to be more creative, so I wouldn't be surprised if someone with a very creative short game ends up being in contention on Sunday. But on the other hand, I can see a guy that just hits it very straight and just on the green.

I love this golf course. I think they've done a great job with the renovations. I think they've done a good job with setting up the golf course as well. With the width of it, it doesn't look crazy, like -- off the tee, it looks narrow. When you get on the fairways, it's very wide, or in some parts can be wide.

So I think with regards, I think they're just going to go out and just let things unfold, and wherever the score finishes, it finishes. But with my short game, I've been trying to work on a lot of -- I typically don't like to -- I'll either putt or chip a 60. So I try and keep it pretty much two-dimensional, where I'm just getting my 60 and just trying to bump it into the hill, spin it a little bit, and let it roll down.

You're going to most likely give yourself six to ten-foot putts all day long. And like I said before, the playing surfaces aren't really clean on the putting greens, and they've been bumping a lot because of the poa annua. So you have to be very precise with your read, but also sometimes get a little bit of lucky with some of the bounces as well.

Q. Jason, I just think the most important part of the game is the pre-shot routine.

JASON DAY: Okay.

Q. You, of course, have the most unbelievable pre-shot routine, and I'm fascinated all the time about what's going on in your mind when you close your eyes and you're looking. Can you just explain a little bit about your pre-shot routine?

JASON DAY: My pre-shot routine, ever since I was a kid, I couldn't visualize a shot. Like if I talked to Tiger or a Rory or someone that hits it tremendous, or just in general hits it well, they can typically see the shot with their eyes open. I can't really do that, so I always had to close my eyes to be able to see the shot.

I always ask myself the question of whatever shot I'm trying to hit. Like if it's a draw 7 iron, I would ask myself the question, what would a draw 7 iron look like? And then the brain has to give you an answer. Usually, most of the time, it will give you an answer.

So then from there, I'll be able to close my eyes and visualize it to see it take off and go. But it's also to a certain degree, my pre-shot routine is never the same. It's never -- it could be one swing, it could be two swings with regards to how many practice swings I take. It could be longer, it could be shorter.

So I just, I want to make sure that I'm always comfortable and committed to the shot going into it before actually going in and executing the actual shot.

Q. Are you actually seeing the ball land, or are you actually seeing it take off too?

JASON DAY: I see it take off, go through the air, and then land. Then after it lands, I don't see it bounce or anything like that.

THE MODERATOR: Jason, thank you so much for joining us today. We wish you well throughout the week.

JASON DAY: Thank you.