

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
June 28, 2018



J.J. SPAUN (-7)

MARK WILLIAMS: Like to welcome J.J. Spaun into the interview room at the Quicken Loans National.

J.J., you're currently tied for the lead after the first round with a 7-under 63. You mentioned out there that putting was the key for you today. Just give us some thoughts on the round and just elaborate a little bit on that.

J.J. SPAUN: Sure. Yeah, played really solid today apparently. Just kind of kept the ball in front of me, didn't make a lot of mistakes really. I mean, I think I missed four greens but they were in good places, just on the fringe or just barely off the green, so didn't really have to grind too hard out there.

I was making a lot of good putts from mid range that I normally haven't been making. I felt a lot more comfortable over my putter as of late and it's kind of nice to hit a lot of greens, hit a lot of fairways and see some more putts go in and that's kind of what has been keeping me from going really low. So I feel like that's kind of what happened today and ready to kind of keep the momentum going into tomorrow.

Q. What's the closest you came to making a bogey today?

J.J. SPAUN: 17. I hit it in the back bunker. It was like right on line but it was half a club too much and it landed pin high and just scooted in the back bunker and I had about, I would say, 10 feet coming back for par. That was definitely probably the most stressful moment of the day, which, you know, unbelievable out here on this course. You feel like you have a lot of stressful moments, but that's kind of how the day was, just kept the ball in front of me and didn't make too many mistakes.

Q. Sounds like the only stress you had today probably?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, definitely. I was a little nervous on that two-footer down the hill on 18. I was like, I don't want to end on a three-putt, but it went right in the center.

Q. J.J., have you in your professional career had a 63 on Thursday, or a really special Thursday round?

J.J. SPAUN: Actually, yeah. I don't know, I don't know if it was a 63, but I shot 7 at Nelson about a month ago or so at the AT&T Byron Nelson. Then I shot 7 in Vegas, so I've been having some pretty good low Thursday rounds.

Q. How important do you feel it is that you could have a 63 this early in the week and have a little space early in the week when the course is there for the taking?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, it's nice to know that a number out there is, like obviously the conditions were pretty favorable, the wind wasn't that bad. I mean, when we first started warming up, I thought it was going to be kind of a blustery day, but the wind kind of settled down a little bit and it stayed in the same direction all day so you weren't getting a bunch of tricky wind locations.

It's a nice confidence. It's nice for the confidence to get off to a good start and to kind of have some freedom to go out there tomorrow and try to back it up. A lot of people, you don't really expect to back it up with another 7 under, but I think anything under par on this course is a great round.

Q. Your injury earlier in the year, was it arm?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah. Well, I was getting this pain in the back of my right hand and it happened during Phoenix and I had to withdraw during the first round after nine holes. Just kind of something in my backswing that was just bothering me, it was like a shooting pain. Withdrew, went to see -- I live out there, so I went to see just like a primary care doctor and ordered an MRI, didn't see anything. He was an orthopedist, wasn't primary care. Didn't see anything. He was like, "Oh, I'll give you a week."

I skipped Pebble, played Riviera, didn't have any problems at Riviera. Then I had some problems at Honda, I went there right after and couldn't really play to my full potential. I mean, it's just hard playing with an injury. So I was like I need to get this figured out because it's coming back.

So I went to a doctor in L.A., he's a hand specialist for the Dodgers, and basically told me my ulnar nerve in my right elbow is compressed and it's either from overuse or sleeping on it incorrectly. It's almost sort of like cubital tunnel syndrome, it's just kind of your arm, your hand goes numb.

Anyway, I was getting this pain in the back of my hand because of that. Just because the pain was there, he was saying, doesn't mean that's where the problem is. So he diagnosed it to be my elbow and I didn't play for about five or six weeks, didn't play a tournament. And I still do occasionally, but I had to sleep in an arm brace at night. Keeps my arm dead straight so you can't bend it or sleep on it, so that was terrible for about a month. But it's nice to kind of put that behind me and not really have to worry about it, and this tape is more for peace of mind. I feel like having something there for maybe placebo effect kind of helps.

Q. What's your history with changing putters? Is that something you do pretty frequently or have you had a go-to for a long time?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, lately I've been kind of fiddling around because I haven't been putting

that great. Used a new putter at Nelson, putted great. Then the next week, putted terrible. Then I switched putters at, what was the last tournament, at the Travelers, used like a mallet. I putted great for like the first two rounds and then Saturday, Sunday was terrible.

So I went back to my original putter. It's basically a Tiger Woods knockoff; it's like the same look, same stampings but my name. It would be cool to have his name, but nah, I don't think he'd be happy with that. That's kind of been the putter that I've been using since my rookie year out here, so two years. It's kind of the one that I've always had the best finishes with, an Old Faithful kind of deal. But I actually put a smaller grip on it this week and it feels really good. It's like a really thin grip to get my fingers around it a little bit better and get some more feel. That's about it.

Q. Can we say that J.J. went back to a Scotty this week?

J.J. SPAUN: Well, they're all Scottys, but this is the old faithful Newport 2.

Q. I have to ask you, after shooting 63, did any of Tiger's crowd hang around to watch you?

J.J. SPAUN: No, hell no. They don't even know who I am. They played so fast, actually like they were a solid hole ahead of us. Did he play good? How did he play?

Q. Middling, 70.

J.J. SPAUN: Is that 1 under? Even. Yeah, we didn't -- I was actually kind of nervous but I was more excited. I was like, oh, I'm going to get to see his second shots from looking back from the tee, but they played so fast, I didn't even see him at all. I just saw his pink shirt way in the distance.

MARK WILLIAMS: One last thing. You said out there that when you were on the range warming up, you were thinking maybe even par would be the score that you shoot for. How did the conditions change, how were they different from what you thought you were going to expect?

J.J. SPAUN: Well, I mean, it was blowing a solid 10 to 15 when I was warming up and I was like, well, this course is already hard as it is. I mean, 15 miles an hour will make it even harder.

Then I played the first hole dead into the teeth of the wind and I hit it in the right rough and I was like, "Oh, my God." Chunked it -- yeah, that was probably my most stressful par. Then I like chunked it out left, had a good angle, chipped it to about four feet, made par. I was like, "Wow, it's going to be kind of a grind."

When we made that turn out there on that horseshoe after No. 5, I think that's when a lot of the holes were kind of downwind but not too downwind. Seemed like the wind kind of laid

down. So I think if you get 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 downwind, you know, even though it wasn't a ton of wind. But I think that helps a lot, obviously rather than into the wind. So then, you know, 12 -- the rest of the way in's kind of pick your places, make pars and make a couple birdies.

Q. For a guy who keeps it in play, have you ever been tempted over the last four or five years to chase distance?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I did, and I was trying -- I feel like I'm a little longer this year statistically. I don't know if that's because of equipment or whatever. I mean, I did switch a driver, but I don't know, I've never been that long of a guy. I've always been pretty long and pretty straight. I think out here straight is long, you know? I think if you started swinging out of your shoes or you start, you know, trying to mess with what you got going, if it works, then don't break it.

Yeah, it's definitely tempting to be out here and you have all the gadgets, you have TrackMan, you have the balls, you have the drivers. I mean, I'm actually about three miles an hour slower with the ball I use compared to the different version of ball that I could use, but it's not -- I don't like it with my irons and that's like my strength, my ball-striking. So I would rather sacrifice five, 10 yards off the tee and have the command with the irons for the second shot and the wedges than to be a little bit longer.

MARK WILLIAMS: Thank you, J.J. Have a good day tomorrow.