

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 22, 2019

JASON DAY



MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome Jason Day to the interview room for the 2019 Farmers Insurance Open.

Jason, you're the defending champion, also won in 2015. What is it about this golf course here at Torrey Pines that lets you perform so well?

JASON DAY: I don't know. I mean, I think it definitely -- I think you have to make most of your score on the North course and just try and be as patient as you possibly can on the South. Typically with my wins here I've gone really low on the North, so I think it's very important to be able to shoot a low score on the North and then obviously go on to the South and don't force the issue as much, because with the changes that we've had on the North course, it's still a lot tougher than what it previously was. The South is a brutal golf course. It's very long and hard, where at the start of the year where the ball doesn't fly as far, even though we're going to get some nice weather this week, so that should hopefully shorten it up a little bit, especially with the dry weather. I know we've had a lot of rain here, things are going to be a very lush out here, so it's imperative to hit the fairway.

MARK WILLIAMS: This is your second start of 2019 and your fourth of this season, a couple of starts with satisfactory finishes in Asia and at the Sentry Tournament of Champions. So how do you assess your game right now coming into this event?

JASON DAY: Yeah, so I finished 13th at Tournament of Champions and I played pretty decent golf at the end of the year. I had some time off and I've been in Palm Springs just practicing really. I feel like I've put in a lot of good prep and I'm ready to play well.

It's difficult to kind of pinpoint. Obviously you kind of -- the first week out you kind of are seeing how things are progressing, especially from the off-season, and from there you kind of gain insight on what needs to be worked on. So I went back to Palm Springs, worked on some putting. My putting wasn't as good as it should have been. Changed some irons, went to the new 760s and I feel like I've gained a little bit more control through those, so hopefully that obviously yields good play.

I'm looking forward to defending this week. I don't think I've ever had the chance to follow through with a defense title and it would be nice to get another one.

MARK WILLIAMS: We'll take some questions for Jason.

Q. Are you looking forward to playing with Scottie and Rory a couple rounds?

JASON DAY: Yes, it's going to be interesting. I'm excited. I played with Rory at Tournament of Champions and, you know, it's always nice to be able to play with some good ball-strikers because hopefully that kind of goes into my game. With my chipping and putting, typically I'm pretty good around the greens. My game I would say from tee to green is not as sharp as those guys, but I feel when I'm on, I can keep up with them. I'm looking forward to catching up with Scotty. It's been a while since I've seen him.

Q. Whenever you play with Scotty, have you ever got competitive with him? Is there any added incentive to maybe beat him for the day?

JASON DAY: What are you laughing at? What were the memories?

Q. Do you really want me to talk about it?

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. Well, you played with him at Memorial that time and you said he should have beat you by 6 and you still smashed him, you were pretty happy about it.

JASON DAY: Yeah, well I've got a short-term memory, I can't even remember it. To play with Scotty, he's such a nice bloke, it's very difficult -- when you play with nice guys, it's kind of hard to have that competitive edge, but you've got to understand that yes, you're playing against these guys, but you're really trying to beat the golf course itself. Scotty's a really good mate of mine and so is Rory, so it's going to be I think a lot kind of first two rounds, but also we're trying to win the tournament, so I think everyone understands that.

Q. Mate, you talked about sort of getting the rust off at Kapalua. How important is it to have a place like this where you have great success early to help that progress through into a season?

JASON DAY: Well, I think it's more along the lines of the golf course is difficult and when you have a difficult golf course, typically -- what's going on back there?

Yeah, when you have a tough golf course, it typically kind of opens your eyes to really what is kind of a weakness in your game. So being able to come here, the two times that I won, you know, I played pretty solid pretty much from tee to green and putted really nicely. And the times that I haven't played well here, typically I just haven't driven it as well, and from there I couldn't get on the green or get around the green, I just didn't have anything going.

Obviously I've had some success here and I'm excited about that and the memories that come along with that, but I'm also excited to see where my game stands up not only against the best players in the world but where I need to improve with my game going forward into the season.

Q. What grade do you give yourself from last season? You had two wins.

JASON DAY: I mean, it's hard to grade. You know, it depends on the person, just depends on the person. For me personally, it's hard to grade it because -- probably a B, yeah. It was good but it wasn't great. Winning twice was obviously very nice and I'm not, you know, saying that two wins is a B year. I'm just saying that the way that I finished the major championships, I didn't really compete in the major championships. The way I finished the FedExCup championships, I didn't finish well there, I finished 17th or 18th. Even though I had won twice, I didn't really compete where I really wanted to and that was in the big stuff. Hopefully just kind of work at it and just let things unfold and be patient with myself, prepare a little bit differently going to the major championships, and then hopefully from there I'll be able to have better success in those and obviously the FedExCup.

Q. Stats don't always tell the whole picture, but I think iron play, the stats would suggest it was a struggle last season. Where do you feel like you stand with that now?

JASON DAY: I'm sorry?

Q. Where do you feel your iron play stands now?

JASON DAY: My iron play? That's one area that I've been working probably my hardest is my iron play. You know, that's one thing that I just got to keep working and hopefully the hard work, just slowly I gain confidence and it slowly brings results. Last year I struggled with the left shot, especially with the miss. It would constantly go left and I struggled with that a lot. I think with the 760s, we moved the CG a little bit further to the toe with some tungsten weight in the toe. Granted, doing that hopefully will straighten that left shot out a little bit.

I've just got to keep working on it. It's imperative for me to be able to hit more groans. I think if I can drive it straighter, but hit 70 percent of greens and rank No. 1 in putting, then I'll probably have another year like in 2015, so that's the goal.

Q. Jason, watching Tiger last year progress in his game as you did and then get to the TOUR Championship and do what he did, what's the admiration for -- and also how surprised were you at him being able to come back from basically zero at the start?

JASON DAY: I don't know if it was a surprise really, to be honest. I played a practice round with him last year and I said this guy's going to win. I didn't know when he was going to win, but he was going to win. It just looked different because I played practice rounds with him the year prior to that and I'm like, this guy's still not ready. I mean, he's walking around, limping around, he looks in pain, his swing didn't look very good, and that's not like Tiger to obviously battle through those issues and try and compete.

But like, I mean, last year he looked pretty healthy. Playing with Bryson and Tiger, we were

around here and the iron swing looked unbelievable. And then obviously as the progression went on through the year to compete in The Open Championship, the PGA, obviously gained a lot of momentum and a lot of, I guess, confidence going forward. And then when it came to Tour Champs, he killed it. Being able to drive the way he did, because that's not a very easy driving golf course, it's very difficult. And I think he just hit that like just little fade down the middle and with his iron play he just hit it so good with his irons that he gave himself so many opportunities. And when the putter clicked, Tiger walking down 18, that's what a lot of people I think took for granted for many years and didn't understand the effect that Tiger had on the golfing world.

So it's cool to see him back. It's just interesting to see how he'll go this year because obviously last year you're just trying to build and build and build, and then obviously to see what he thinks going forward and what his mentality is going forward. Is he going to come back out and start saying that he's competing and playing and I'm going to win every week, because that's kind of the old Tiger that I knew, he would come into an event and say that he's here to win. Obviously over the last few years we got a little bit different Tiger just because he was coming back from an injury. Now he's a year in and it will be interesting to see where his mentality is in regards to winning tournaments.

Q. Back to your iron game and stats, how much of what your assessment ultimately came to was based on just what you're seeing versus do you just want to know kind of some of the numbers, or do you actively seek out the numbers and really break them down?

JASON DAY: 2015 I think I averaged about 70 percent greens in regulation, I was No. 1 in putting. I think if I can just do that, then I should have a decent year.

Geoff, to be honest, I'm actively always looking at my stats. Typically my coach is more so actively looking at it. When it comes to Col and what we do, we do everything in the off weeks. He'll come to me and say, What's your goals this year, and I'll tell him. What's your goals greens in regulation, short game, putting? We go over things on the tougher side but still achievable and I know that I can achieve it as long as I put in the work. I'm always actively looking at stats and making sure that I'm -- because if I don't look at them, I don't know if I'm improving, and if I don't improve, then obviously there's probably little to no chance that I'm probably going to have a lot of success out here.

So I always ultimately look to try and strive to get better each and every year. Granted some years are going to be worse than other years, but you're always trying to just constantly get better even though when the down years are bad and you've got no confidence, you've just got to keep working on that and hopefully work your way out of it. Iron play is obviously key for me this year. If I can focus on that and hit more greens, with my putting I think I'll be able to have a lot of success.

Q. Jason, welcome back to San Diego. For the first time in nearly three decades Phil

Mickelson won't be at this event. As a competitor, what will you miss about Phil not being here?

JASON DAY: I'm sure that's going to have a little bit of impact on the crowd, but I don't know if that will because of Tiger. Obviously I think Phil, this is -- he played the last 28 or so? Yeah, that's pretty impressive. I played with Phil I think a few years ago in the first two rounds. I mean, Phil's just a local boy. What he means to the local fans here and what he is as a player, especially in our game, it's huge for any tournament to have Phil. It's unfortunate to not have him, but I can understand because he's got a very large west coast schedule coming up.

So the way he's playing, it's probably a good thing that he's not playing, you know what I mean? He played really well last week, so that's one less guy that you have to worry about.

Q. Good morning, Jason. You've said in the past that you thrive off of stress?

JASON DAY: Yes.

Q. Do you feel any pressure, expectations to be the fourth person to go back to back here? If so, does that add any stress to you in your game and how do you handle that?

JASON DAY: Not necessarily. I don't think -- I think if I was No. 1 in the world it would add a lot more stress coming back to defend. I don't know where I'm at, No. 12 maybe. There's other stories going around. Tiger's back playing, so there's other things that are kind of deflecting a lot of the attention away from myself about defending. That takes probably a lot of pressure off my shoulders to know the fact that I can kind of walk around and do my work and get my work in and get out of here and not have to really stress about it too much.

But I am obviously always nervous going to tournaments and that's a good thing. The stress here is a lot more heightened just because of defending, and of course the golf course. But I'm looking forward to a good week. I've never been able to defend one, so hopefully, fingers crossed, I get off to a good start.

Q. You've mentioned working on your iron play and how that might not feel the most confident right now. Where do you feel the most confident?

JASON DAY: Typically, it's my putting. I always complain about my putting is not very good, but then I actually putt half decent. Yeah, overall I think I feel my most confident that I feel in my game is probably my preparation. It's not typically a part of my game which you're talking about. I think my preparation going into this week has been very, very solid, so that gives me confidence going forward that I'm doing the right things coming into this week.

You know, I think overall my game on average is all pretty much solid. I put in a lot of work last week with my irons and my drivers, so I feel pretty confident there. But tournament golf

is totally different than playing a practice round. We'll see when I get to the heat of the battle probably everything will come back to hits normal self and I'll start chipping and putting a lot better.

Q. Jason, you have this rush and became a global star with all the other elite, and then you had all the setbacks, the physical, the illness issues, et cetera. What's the wear-and-tear factor on the PGA TOUR for all these stars and is it hard to play through it? Is it hard once you have a big setback to realize I might not get back to where I was prior?

JASON DAY: Are you talking about injuries or are you talking about the mental setbacks? Are you talking about everything?

Yeah, so it depends on the guy. If you practice more and you put in a lot more work, then there's more wear and tear on your body. Say, for instance, if a guy just goes out and plays golf and that's how he practices. There's different ways of practicing, for sure.

If you're like me who tends to like to spend a lot of time on the range and a lot of time on the putting green and short game area, there's a lot more reps than most people. So the more reps that I put in, the more wear and tear that's going to go on my body.

But I understand that. With regards to the mental setbacks where you gain some success and then you start to lose confidence, I mean, I think you've got to -- you've got to not attach yourself to the negative of just the plateau of where you're at. You've got to understand that you're always just kind of just going through -- I mean, that's a whole career. You're never going to start from here and finish up here on a straight line, it's always going to be like this. I mean, you've got to constantly keep working and working and working to work through the bad times.

The biggest thing that I found that has really helped over the years is having a good team around me to really refocus myself on exactly where I need to put my focus on. If I can just kind of work through those downturns and the character builder times, which I say is when you're not playing good, you don't have any confidence, you don't have any motivation to practice, but you go out and do it anyways because you know it's going to make you better. They're the character build moments where sooner or later you're going to get out of it. You've just got to be patient and let things happen.

I know everyone's talking about Jordan Spieth with regards to how he's playing. Like I said, everyone's kind of thinking what he did in 2015, he should be doing that every single year. He's just going through a little bit of a downturn right now and he's probably just on a plateau and he's going to work his way out of it. He's too good of a player and too mentally strong to not work his way out of it and I think it's going to happen for him pretty soon here. People are talking about what's going on with Jordan, but a lot of pressure's off him. He's just got to focus on what makes him play like Jordan and go from there, and that's the same with me. Everyone has their little battles that they're fighting each and every week and each and

every year, so we just try to keep our heads down and hopefully things work out.

Q. Thanks for your time. You mentioned something about Tiger used to come to the tournaments with a goal planning to win. What's your goal here?

JASON DAY: To win, yeah. I've had some good success here, so that's a plan. Going on the question that I had before, I haven't really had a lot of success lately. The last time I won was Wells Fargo last year and from there I didn't really -- I played some good golf, but I haven't really been much in contention at all. The plan is I feel like I've just got to be patient enough and I feel like things are starting to progress nicely for me and hopefully it happens this week.

Q. Just a quick follow up, you mentioned that these courses are very, very tough.

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. How do you rank them on the Tour, these two courses?

JASON DAY: Well, the North course is slightly easier, but obviously with regards to the changes in the greens, firmness of the actual golf course itself, since they're new greens they're going to be firm and if you can't hit a fairway -- and I hear the rough out there is pretty dense, so if you can't hit the fairways, it's going to be very difficult to stop the ball on the green, which then you're going to have a lot more time chipping and putting around the green.

Obviously the North course is a lot easier than most courses that we kind of typically play on Tour, but the South course makes up for it. Obviously U.S. Open golf course, very long, very hard, Smaller-ish greens I would say, but just a brutal golf course. Being right here just above the ocean when nothing can stop the wind, when the wind is up, it can get you.

Q. You guys have the new rule of tamping down the spike marks. You're playing on poa.

JASON DAY: It's great.

Q. I was going to ask you, so what's the balance between it being great and then worrying about guys going to take forever to --

JASON DAY: I don't necessarily -- yeah, I don't necessarily think that -- well, personally for me, every now and then before the rule was changed, you would have maybe two or three times a year where you're like, oh, there's a spike mark there in front of your ball, so you just kind of worry about the spike mark. Last I played on bermuda greens and there was like 30 guys or so, so it was kind of hard to tell.

I don't necessarily think you're going to be tapping it the whole way and trying to make a line.

I think there's going to be a few taps. Other than that, I think they're going to putt. I don't necessarily think it's going to be a time consuming thing.

Q. You don't think you lose your advantage in some sense because you've obviously putted well here in the pass on poa?

JASON DAY: No, I don't think I lose my advantage, no, because you've still got to get the ball in the hole unfortunately.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right, Jason, thanks for your time. Good luck this week.

JASON DAY: Thank you.