

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
May 2, 2019

JASON DAY (-3)



Q. You come back as defending champion. Good to get off to a good start?

JASON DAY: Yeah, it was nice. Just a little bit of a blemish on 7, which was on the back side today. The wind, it was a little bit swirly out there today. I played good. In the end, I'm very pleased with how -- from tee to green, and obviously on the greens as well. I just was very patient with myself out there.

Q. You mentioned that even par on the back nine and then four birdies and the one bogey on the front nine.

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. Was there that much of a difference in the nines today?

JASON DAY: No. I mean, usually 1 through 6 you try to get like maybe one birdie there and fortunately I got -- what did I get, maybe two or three. I think I had three in the first six holes. And then if -- my plan is to get one in the first six holes and birdie 7 and 8, and I bogeyed 7 and birdied 8, which was a nice bounce-back. Yeah, I honestly didn't realize I had that many birdies on the back side, which is the front side, so I'm pleased with it.

Q. This is your fourth visit there, fourth appearance here, you've got a top-10 and a win. What is it about this golf course that you like?

JASON DAY: Well, you know what, I'm actually quite disappointed that I didn't come here and play more often because I actually really thoroughly enjoy the golf course. The golf course is in better shape than it was last year, the conditions of it. It's playing tough as you can see with how firm the greens are.

You know what, overall, I don't know, it's just a really good feel here. The fans are great here, I always love coming to Charlotte to play. I'm looking forward to playing Round 2.

Q. Jason, right out of the gate, easy birdie on 10, nice putt from about eight feet. That looked like, okay, here we go again. Is that what you were thinking?

JASON DAY: I was thinking that. I mean obviously you have a game plan. I was thinking if I could birdie 14, birdie 15, par the Green Mile, then I'm like on to a good start here obviously playing even par. Then I just realized that I made four birdies on the front side, which is our back side.

Overall, very, very pleased with how things -- obviously the bogey on 7 was not the greatest, but I tried everything that I could to just get myself up around that left side so I could get up and down. Overall, very pleased.

Q. Twenty-minute waits are hard to overcome, especially when you just made back-to-back birdies.

JASON DAY: We were playing pretty quick, so we were kind of on Patrick's group pretty much the whole day. When you get to 7 you kind of know that there's going to be a bit of a wait because it is a difficult tee shot and the second shot is just as hard and it's originally a par 5. So there's always kind of a wait there. Yeah, it kind of stopped the momentum a little bit.

Q. Now, is the golf course playing more difficult this year than it was last year?

JASON DAY: It's just firm. I mean, the condition of the golf course is fantastic, but it's really firm right now. When you have a decently long golf course and you're coming out of the rough and you're trying to land it on the green somewhere, it's just really difficult to hold greens, so you've got to have a really good short game to kind of save yourself out there.

Q. Jason, back in defense of the title, off to a good start.

JASON DAY: Yeah, it was good today. I think it was nice to get off to good start with birdie on 10. The game plan was to birdie 10, birdie 14, birdie 15, get one in the first six holes, then birdie 7, and 8 usually you try to minimize mistakes. But bogeying 7, it wasn't out of the blue because that wind, we thought that it was kind of in out of the right and I just -- I didn't quite catch it, but it just started cutting in the wind. Phil's kind of did the same thing. You've got to be careful of that wind today because it is moving around a little bit, but overall very pleased with the opening.

Q. When you look at the leaderboard and you're up there, Patrick Reed, and you could probably say this about a lot of golf courses, but is there something about this course that seems to identify the best players?

JASON DAY: Well, it's a major championship golf course, but like the conditions of the golf course are a lot better this year than they were last year. But saying that, I think it's a golf course where you kind of have to have every aspect going. You need to drive it well because it is a long golf course. If you're not hitting fairways, then you're going to miss greens because of how firm the greens are, so you need a really good short game to try and save yourself.

You can't leave yourself above the pin here, it's very difficult. The greens do have a good amount of undulation on them where they can get away from you, and if you can get through some of the harder holes with par and just try and take your opportunities, it's a golf course where you have to stay very, very patient on. You can't push out here, especially with how

firm things are.

Q. I see you wearing the ribbon right there. Any comments and thoughts on what the community is going through right now?

JASON DAY: I mean, it's obviously -- it's a shock, you know what I mean? We live in a very, very difficult world right now when people are taking other people's lives. We shouldn't be ever doing that. We don't need to glorify the person that did this at all, we just need to think about the memory of the people that have moved on. It's frustrating to actually hear that when we're playing a golf tournament and some young kids that are just starting their lives or are going to start their lives and the families that have to deal with the heartbreak, it's very disappointing, frustrating when you think about it.

Q. Jason, what is it that's distinctive about the finishing holes here that can really get some people in trouble?

JASON DAY: 16, it's changed a lot obviously as you know. It used to be kind of like a straight-ish hole down the hill with a very kind of front-to-back narrow green. Now it's a dogleg right. You get it over that part and it runs down another 30 to 40 yards.

The second shot's obviously difficult, so once you get yourself in the middle of the fairway there, you're really just trying to go par, par, par down 16, 17, 18.

No. 17 is a very difficult par 3, but 18, a lot of people want to bail out to the right. When you think about that, you should actually try and take on the water because if you take on the water and it bounces in, at least you can drop it there and hit it on and possibly make a par. If you try and bail out right, the trees aren't mature enough down that right side so they're very low, and coming out of the rough or the pine straw, it's very difficult to get any sort of curve or shape to it and you can make a big number like I did at the PGA.

So yeah, it's just coming here and knowing what you need to do, especially over the Green Mile is what you need just from experience.

Q. How would you compare it to TPC Sawgrass, 16, 17, 18? Is it harder?

JASON DAY: This is harder. I mean, 17 at Sawgrass is -- if that wind is kind of in your face and blowing a bit, then that's obviously difficult. But like, I mean, here 16 is -- I don't think it is as tough as it was. I mean, I could be totally wrong, I don't have the stats, but 17 and 18, they're just brutal. I mean, I'm hitting -- you're hitting anywhere between -- like if you're on the back tees, you're hitting 5-irons into that green, which there's not much bail-out to the right.

And then 18 there's just water all the way up. So when you have a hazard on two of the final finishing holes, there's always that commitment issue. And that's the same with, you know, at Sawgrass, but you've got a par 5 so you can kind of get a birdie there if you play well and

get yourself through like 1 under. Here you've got to really golf your ball to get any sort of number under par.

Q. When you say that, do you have to kind of tap your brakes about not being overly aggressive?

JASON DAY: Yeah, yeah. Like I said before, you have to be very patient with this golf course, especially that finish. That's why if you can get yourself off to a good start and just kind of play even par through that stretch, then you're not losing many shots to the field and you're probably most likely gaining shots.