

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW
November 21, 2020



ZACH JOHNSON (-14)

Q. Third round 65. Zach, we've talked about your familiarity with this golf course, but given the conditions this week, how important has that been?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I think it's important. I mean, having course knowledge is never not an asset. But that being said, if you look at the history of the event, it's not like locals have just dominated here, either.

There's something to be said about just the fact that, you know, you might have some confidence, but I mean, I've been overconfident here. You might have familiarity, but bottom line is you've still got to go and execute shots. In these conditions, when it's windy like this, you've really got to control your ball.

Hitting shots, I mean, it's not overly difficult, but it ain't easy. Putting with the wind I think is the most trying part. I would assume my peers would say the same. Especially those that are exposed, those greens that are really exposed.

Q. You've been in this position a lot of times in your career. You birdied three of the last five holes. How do you carry that momentum into the final round?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, just that. I'm in control of my golf ball. Off the tee was really good with the exception of maybe one tee shot, and I'm giving myself opportunities, a lot of looks. Kind of paused there in the middle of my round, but hit some good shots. Misjudged some yardages, misjudged the wind, which you're going to do. Stayed patient, had some nice good two-putts when it could have got away from me. I think patience is going to be key and obviously just sticking to my keys.

Q. Zach, you started off the day with like 42 feet, you ended like 34 feet, that adds up to like 146 feet. It was a great day with the putter, right?

ZACH JOHNSON: It really was. For the most part the whole week has been pretty solid with the flat stick. You know, it's nice getting off to a good start, that certainly helps. It gets obviously the confidence, maybe even the freedom and momentum that can come off of that. Felt like I birdied a lot of holes today that you're not supposed to birdie. I mean, it was not the normal route to a 65 with the exception of maybe the 15th hole.

I remained patient. I gave myself a lot of opportunities. Even the holes I didn't birdie, I had opportunities, nothing overly great. Could have got away from me there. I had an unplayable lie on the seventh, which was very unfortunate (inaudible) but that's golf.

Q. I was with you at the John Deere when you won up there, I know how special that was. What about here? How cool would this be because this is where you live?

ZACH JOHNSON: This would be amazing. I mean, obviously this is home. I love playing in front of family and friends here. Clearly it's different this year, 2020's never been very convenient or it's just been crazy. There's not a whole lot of fanfare out there.

But it is home, it is my RSM family. It is Davis Love, who's one of my buddies and obviously models in life, let alone golf. So when you couple all that together and combine it all, it would be ultra-special. But I mean it's not going to be given to me just because I check things off the list. I've got to go out and earn it and I love that.

Q. The fact you've had a Hall of Fame career, won a couple majors, do you draw off those experiences or the fact that that it's been a while? What's the feeling going in?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I feel like I know what I'm doing. I've been in this position before. I mean, I've excelled in this position. I've also, you know, more or less remained stagnant or collapsed in this position. So I'm going to dwell on some of those things that I've picked up over the years.

What I do know is that I'm very confident with my start line and where I'm hitting the golf ball. From there it's just a matter of making putts. Me and Smitty got a good thing going.

My driver -- which is a new PXG driver, I've got to plug it -- has been spectacular. Frankly, it's been spectacular for the last few months, that's really what's given me a lot of confidence. And obviously the flat stick, when you see putts go in, and that was a gift on 18, but when you see putts go in, it just gives you a bit more freedom to be aggressive.

Q. Why do you think it is that the locals haven't had success here or at least won here?

ZACH JOHNSON: There's been some cases where they've played all right. I don't know. I mean, outside of just the basic facts, the numbers, I mean, there's 132 to 152 men in the field so the odds are against you. Yeah, based on the amount of talent that lives here, based on the resumes that live here and having that course knowledge, it is a little bit surprising. I find it a little bit odd.

But it's hard. I can't speak on behalf of my peers that live here. I'm certainly accustomed to it or gotten over, however you look at it, of playing in front of family and friends. If anything, I embrace it, I want it. John Deere would be an example of that, too, for me because I got a couple home events, these two in particular.

I don't know. Maybe it's pressure, maybe it's just, you know, overconfidence, maybe it's just expectations. I hate expectations when it comes to scorecards, it drives me crazy. I fall into it. When my game's good and I feel like I should shoot 60-nothing and I don't, it drives me

crazy.

So I try to eliminate those kind of expectations and really cling to the expectations of the controls and that's what I've done so far.

Q. As far as conditions go, would you want more of the same tomorrow?

ZACH JOHNSON: I do not dislike wind.

Q. Why is that?

ZACH JOHNSON: I think it kind of favors me. I don't know if it favors me, but I think when you're in control of your golf ball and there's wind, you certainly -- I don't know if you have an advantage, but there's confidence knowing that sometimes, you know what, par's good enough.

Creating opportunities can be difficult. I mean, with that being said, regardless of what the situation is, I'm going to have to go out and be aggressive because from what I can tell, I'm still quite a few shots behind and these guys are not going to give up or lay up or -- they're going to show up with their A-game and that's the beauty of that. I want to go out there and try to earn it because last time I was in the last group was probably two or three years ago, but if I get in the last group, I'm excited to be in there. Hopefully, I have an opportunity.

Q. What's been going well the last few months?

ZACH JOHNSON: I would say, for lack of a better explanation, pretty much everything. I mean, I've been really confident with my driver. I'm really confident certainly with my irons. Statistically, you see it. I think I was -- I led Jackson in greens in regulation, I was second in Vegas or maybe the opposite, something like that, so obviously I'm hitting a decent amount of fairways. I'm creating opportunities, I'm giving my putter opportunities. And out here there's a lot of great putters, but man, you know, lipping putts in versus lipping putts out is very fun. Starting to see some putts go in occasionally, which is nice.

I would say the best thing as to what's going on in my game outside of just waiting for it, being patient, waiting for it to happen, is the fact that I understand. Like I understand why shots are going where they are, whether it's fundamental, whether it's setup. Like for the most part I know -- I know when I -- if I hit one really good in the center of the screws off the tee, I know why it got there. Then if I mis-hit, I feel like I know why I mis-hit. It's not like I'm going to sit there and diagnose it, but it's almost like a subconscious self-correction.

Q. Was there a time when you didn't know?

ZACH JOHNSON: Sure, sure, there's been moments. I think we all fall into this. That's when golf becomes very difficult. It's one of those things like where you can create kind of one miss, you know, that golf's fun.

I would even go further than that and say when you can create the ability of stepping on the first tee and it's just about execution rather than forcing shots, that's a lot of fun, too.

Q. When's the last time you got a tune-up from Mike Bender and what did you guys focus on?

ZACH JOHNSON: Me and Bender, he actually stayed with me last week at the Open. At Augusta, Masters in November. It was a weird week.

So we had a really good week that week. I mean, I didn't play that bad. My scorecard was not indicative of my game. (Inaudible), but whatever, that's my excuse. It was good, we had a good week. But every session we've had as of late has been really good, just fine tuning or kind of, you know, shining it up a little bit has been the key. It's not maintenance, but we're trying to get better. Yeah, it's been good. Whatever minor or major success I've had, he has a lot to do with that.

Q. Zach, without having a record in front of me, I'm going to assume during the course of your career you've probably lost 54-hole leads in two shots, three shots.

ZACH JOHNSON: I can think of one off the top of my head.

Q. Hang on.

ZACH JOHNSON: Three off the top of my head. Sorry.

Q. I'm just saying from those experiences of losing, how much does that help you when you're in position on the other side in terms of knowing to be aggressive and not to do anything stupid or whatever?

ZACH JOHNSON: Right. I've won events when I've had a lead and then I've lost events when I've had the lead, but I feel like I'm at my best when I am more comfortable just because of I think most of my wins have probably come from slightly behind. Whether it's a shot or four, you'd have to go back and tell me, but I'm going to rely on (inaudible). I know I can win a golf tournament being four, five shots behind. Sometimes you need help, sometimes you've got to go out and do it. Does that answer your question?

Q. It does. I have to go back and look at your record now.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm sorry.

Q. (Inaudible) about the locals' success here, but do you have a theory about why two boys from the Midwest are -- Kansas and Iowa, are top of the leaderboard?

ZACH JOHNSON: That's a good point. He's won here, hasn't he?

Q. Yes.

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, there you go, that helps. There's confidence right there.

I mean, I don't know. Maybe we both enjoy or embrace wind, you know. I mean, Thursday -- Wednesday -- Thursday was not -- Thursday was brutal. I mean, I remember talking to my caddie and it was one of those days, just the temperature was down obviously and then the wind was easily as hard as today, if not harder. That's a day when I probably (inaudible), but guys just give up, you know. They're at a loss. And I get it, it's hard, but I love that. I love knowing that if I can mentally fight through this, there's probably a small advantage there, and obviously my experience helps, too.

Now I say all that, there's a lot of guys that want to win, too, not just me.

Q. What did the weekend at Wyndham mean for you? The weekend at Wyndham?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, shoot, well, my 18th hole on Friday (inaudible) my 18th hole on Friday, which was No. 9, I hit it in the rough off the tee and had a flyer, but I hit a really good shot and it went to like 12 feet (inaudible) the hole. And that ninth hole, I don't know, have you been there? The ninth green's (inaudible) and I knew I was -- I was on the cut line, or excuse me, I was one better than the cut line at least. Did not like it and it went six, seven feet past the hole and I made that coming back, which I thought probably didn't matter anyway, but kind of knew it might and I made the cut on the number.

That putt right there was massive. Then I went out and shot whatever I shot on Saturday.

Q. 61-65.

ZACH JOHNSON: That sounds about right, yeah.

So it was big. I mean, it was big. I'm not saying my game was indicative of a 61, but it was certainly indicative of shooting good numbers. This just kind of (inaudible) since that point.

Actually, if I'm going to get really specific, it was the week before that I think I shot 4 or 5 under the first round and I missed the cut. I shot a really bad score on Friday and I'm one or two shots off the lead going into Friday. I was four or five shots up on the champion (inaudible). Clearly that means nothing. That Friday was good for me. 2020 looking back, hindsight, was really good just to kind of magnify and show what I needed to do, what I needed to emphasize rather than I was kind of doing some (inaudible).

Q. Do you remember the last time you gave up?

ZACH JOHNSON: No. I've always been a grinder. I've always been a guy that enjoys -- I love Fridays, but I mean, I don't mind Fridays when I've got to fight to make the cut the last

four or five holes. I would love to see a stat on that. I've missed cuts the last four, don't get me wrong, but I would love to see that stat. I can think of a lot more where I've made it for spite grinding it out. And then I love, you know, moving day on Saturday and obviously trying to come through on Sunday. I just, I've always been the guy that's had his back against the wall. That was my mentality and I'm going to stick with it.