

JEFF OVERTON (+6)

Q. Jeff, so your first round back in five-plus years, how did it feel out there and what was the emotion of just being back out there?

JEFF OVERTON: Yeah, it was definitely emotional. It was exciting to be back in competition. It was awesome birdieing the second hole and kind of getting off to a good start. The golf course played tough. Misjudged a few shots and really only had one bad swing. Just played tough and kind of got -- just didn't hit the fairways, missed it by a couple yards a couple times and that's enough to be penalizing out here.

Q. Did it feel like normal or did you feel a little bit different than thinking back --

JEFF OVERTON: I'd say definitely you're much more like, being the first tournament back, you're definitely like on the first hole, you're like, "Ohhhh." Definitely, especially the first couple holes, it was definitely nerve wracking. I mean, to and see your name up there on the leaderboard for a brief second even though it's the first day of the tournament, it was kind of fun to see. Yeah, it was a good experience, and unfortunately didn't shoot quite as good as we wanted to, but maybe get something good tomorrow.

Q. Can you give a quick run-through of just when the back injury first started and the timeline of when you knew you needed to step away and how things unfolded from there?

JEFF OVERTON: Yeah, I hurt my disc in Canada and took like four, six months off and then felt decent. Played in the Abaco or Winding Bay Web event at the time. Then I played in the Honda and then had an injection a few days later. Wound up having surgery, removed an epidural abscess three weeks after that, somehow had an infection.

Then it was just, you know, it was a fight, it was a struggle. But you've got to look for the future and that's what I'm here today doing. You've got to start somewhere.

And it was great the first week back would be out here where I played so many years, and if we don't make the cut tomorrow, at least we'll know where we're at and we'll have some work to do and continue to get ready for Korn finals.

Q. How long were you unable to walk during the recovery process?

JEFF OVERTON: You know, with a walker or without?

Q. Both.

JEFF OVERTON: I mean, they were telling me to get up and it was hard. I couldn't really roll out of bed to pee or any of that for a couple weeks pretty much. I was able to get in a walker and do a couple minutes a day maybe here and there.

Then they put a hospital bed in my living room and got to go home after, oh, I don't know, a couple few weeks of it. Then it was like we just had a nurse come to the house and take care of you here and there. It was an eye-opening experience going from living the dream to fighting for your life, but here I am, five and a half years later after doing a whole lot of rehab and seeing a lot of great people and you never give up.

Q. Is this a win today being here today? Like if you look five years from now, no matter the result, today's a win?

JEFF OVERTON: I hate to say shooting 77's a win, but in a way it's a win. You've got to start somewhere, for sure. I'm just excited to be here. And hopefully we can play better and make some cuts here coming up and at least get the better membership category kind of reactivated and see some stuff next year or maybe even get through Korn finals. Have to see how the game progresses the next few weeks.

Q. What was the low for you during that five years? Was it not being able to walk or was there a time where just -- I guess how do you battle doubts, too?

JEFF OVERTON: You know, it was probably just you're struggling for your life and you're just wanting to get through to where you're somewhat okay. Then after a year or two probably goes by and you're just like I may never get to do my dream again, that was hard. You're like seeing different doctors, like am I going to make a full recovery? It's kind of like, you know, make a full recovery. Will you ever compete again, I don't know. But here we are.

And it was definitely emotional, definitely teared up a couple times out there. Nothing crazy, but yeah, it's a win. Coming out and making a birdie out of the gate, it was fun to get back kind of in the -- feel the nerves again and feel the adrenaline going.

Q. Is birdie one of the times you teared up or do you remember specifically when you did?

JEFF OVERTON: Yeah, just kind of the first tee shot and then even on the last hole there after making the putt, even though it was for 77. You know, every shot counts. You chip away and shoot 4, 5 under tomorrow somehow and you might have a chance to sneak back to the cut still. It's hard to make cuts when you make double bogeys. I remember that, that was experience, but unfortunately I made two of those. You know what, made a couple birdies, made a couple nice putts and focus on the positive and don't miss a fairway by a yard tomorrow.

Q. You have your wife and two girls here; is that right?

JEFF OVERTON: Yeah.

Q. How old are your girls?

JEFF OVERTON: The one's 8 months, the other one's a little over 3.

Q. So the 3-year-old, she can see dad hit some golf shots. That obviously didn't happen last time you were on Tour, so what's that like for you?

JEFF OVERTON: Oh, totally. They came out on the ninth hole, that was really the first time she's ever seen me in this environment. Like I said, when we had her three years ago, I remember having an interview with somebody, I can't remember who, and like I literally -- I don't know if my daughter will ever really see me play out here. That in itself, having her there for that one little moment waving at you, she's such a little sweetheart. Yeah, I'm excited to be back out here, it's fun to compete again.

Q. And you noticed her when you were on the ninth hole?

JEFF OVERTON: On the 10th hole. She came out on No. 1 when we were making the turn. I don't want her making any noise and screaming in front of somebody's backswing, but she was waving, had her little bunny rabbit.

Q. When did you like start putting, chipping again in terms of your recovery? When did the golf element start coming back?

JEFF OVERTON: Probably started putting like three weeks ago, a month ago. I mean, I really haven't have worked on -- it's kind of weird, like most of the game I have a pretty good understanding of it and it really hasn't taken that long to kind of come back per se. It's just be nice to get a little more reps in and get -- really just sitting there and putting for more than 30 minutes or so is probably three, four weeks ago.

Before that, I would obviously maybe go out there for five, 10, 15 minutes here and there probably six months ago or so, do some putting drills for five or 10 minutes. The bending over was always kind of the issue, so it's kind of like stay away from what was kind of pissing it off, per se.

The full swing, like the driver and the 6-iron, kind of just stand up on it pretty tall and just move through it and it doesn't really bug -- it never bugged me really much six months ago. Now, a couple years ago, three years ago when I was trying to come back, it was bothering me quite a bit still. For whatever reason, I was able to -- after time and a lot of hard work doing a lot of Stuart McGill's big three and some of the trainers that I've worked with tell me to do, here we are.

Q. What's your pain level like when you're playing right now? Is there any?

JEFF OVERTON: I mean, there's some small amounts, but nothing that seems like it's prohibiting me from playing. Towards the end here I'm feeling it a little bit, but it will be good to get off my feet here and probably hop in an ice bath and maybe get a little -- even jump in the pool or something for a little bit, just kind of alleviate it.

Q. So two or three years ago you tried to play some, you tried to make a competitive comeback? Did you play any tournaments?

JEFF OVERTON: I didn't play any tournaments. I'd go out there and play nine holes and it was just, just didn't feel good. It's one thing to go out there for an hour and a half and play nine or maybe 18 here and there, but it was just -- it wasn't anywhere close to being competitive or, I mean, just feeling decent at all.

It was kind of like when I reached out to Stuart McGill, he was like why don't we shut down for another year and do some stuff and really try to stabilize this area. Seemed like this helped a lot.

After we kind of stabilized it, then got with Shane Rye, a good trainer. He does some stuff with the Dolphins and some stuff with the New York Yankees. He got me moving a little bit and we started seeing what we could do. Go 6-iron, drivers and then a week later, couple weeks later try to play nine holes, six holes, five holes, see how much you're -- it wears it out and just kind of slowly build up. I was just kind of surprised at how -- I worked with Craig Harmon and he's like, your golf swing looks great, get out there and start playing a few weeks ago. So I was like, all right, let's do it.

Q. And that whole process started a few months ago?

JEFF OVERTON: I'd say, you know, like a couple few years ago I had a lesson with Craig Harmon and he kind of showed me a Jimmy Ballard style with Rocco Mediate, a Golf Channel thing that of kind of standing a little taller, hitting a little closer to it and really making sure you're moving through the ball and don't let any of that hang-back ever happen.

Kind of whenever I did start picking it back up six months ago or so, it was a lot of that. And yeah, so there's a little bit more of a fade maybe per se off the driver maybe for me now than a draw, but I feel like I hit it fairly straight and can still have a fairly complete game. Just got to get a few things a little more -- I guess some of the rust off, I guess.

Q. And then the most recent in this comeback, it was just a few weeks ago you walked a whole round for the first time?

JEFF OVERTON: No. So I'd say, what, six, eight weeks ago I went and played Valhalla. I played Victoria National up there in my hometown, played that a few times. Then I went and walked 18 four days in a row at Valhalla. I was able to play on the back tees all the way back there 7,600 yards, whatever it is now. I was able to kind of keep it around par. I was like, you

know what, I'll probably pick up a few yards when you get in competition. I think maybe it's time to try to start playing and see what we can do with Korn finals kind of being the main goal.

Q. And you have that status through --

JEFF OVERTON: Through a medical exemption, yeah.

Q. And were there any conversations with fellow Tour players that kind of inspired you to get back out here? Had you been talking with anyone along the way?

JEFF OVERTON: I went and teed it up a few weeks ago just in a Monday qualifier just to get a tournament round under the belt. You can't really reproduce this anyway. Going out and playing 18 holes at your home golf course definitely isn't like the preparation for this. So I tried to find whatever the closest thing might be.

I felt like I didn't really play that good, shot 1 over, but it was good to kind of get some rust off. So I thought, you know what, I think I'm -- I should go play a Korn event. I was on my way up there and Hollis said, you know what, the first event back should be back out here. So it's Kind of cool to get to come out here and see where the game's at.

Q. And where's your home course now?

JEFF OVERTON: It's Trump Jupiter.

Q. So you see some Tour pros around there?

JEFF OVERTON: Yeah, there's a quiet a few guys who play out of there. I see Ernie up there quite a bit. Yeah, there's a handful of people that are out there.