

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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J.J. SPAUN

MODERATOR: Afternoon, everyone. We are joined here with World No. 7, J.J. Spaun.

J.J., welcome to a place that's familiar as a San Diego State alum. What's it like to be back and making your 10th start here at the Farmers Insurance Open?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, it's always fun coming back here. You know, a place that's near and dear to my heart going to San Diego State and being an alumni. So this is my 10th season, my 10th start, I've never missed this tournament. It's one of those spots in the schedule that I always make sure that I come to so I'm really excited to get back and compete at a championship venue.

Q. J.J., congratulations on your year last year. How has it changed you? What's the biggest change that you've noticed?

J.J. SPAUN: I mean, I get recognized a lot more than I have the last nine years, but it's pretty cool. It's kind of just a constant reminder of the success I've had and all the hard work that has paid off.

And yeah, I think just having a lot of influence is kind of crazy. Like people have reached out, whether it's golf related or personal related things, it's cool that people are looking at me as kind of an advocate of whatever that is.

So have a little bit more of a platform now, which is a really cool feeling.

Q. And I wanted to ask you, last year you said something talking about the previous year when you almost lost your card and you thought that that might be it and you had a good career and you were sort of coming to terms with it. What would you have done if you didn't get your card? Did you have anything in mind? I mean, school teacher, golf coach? What would you have done?

J.J. SPAUN: I think I would probably try to grind it out at least on the Korn Ferry or conditional status, whatever I had. But if that didn't work out or pan out, I would, yeah, do some sort of coaching, I would think.

I kind of had a cool relationship with my high school coach and I think coaching like high school golf would be kind of fun. Keep it local and not doing too much traveling as far as college golf, so that's always been something in the back of my mind.

But I've got five years now guaranteed, so yeah, things are a lot different.



Q. J.J., you've talked often about how that PLAYERS experience just kind of made you realize that you could do it and each week you go up knowing you could. Now you're knowing what that feels like for a year now. I'm curious, when you look back to the years before that, what did you actually feel going to like tee it up on a Thursday? What was your feeling going into a week?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, in the past I just was trying to make cuts. You know, trying to not play myself out of the weekend Thursday and Friday. Now I think I turned that corner. In 2025 halfway through where I had to play really well to keep my fully exempt card, so just making cuts wasn't going to do it. So I had to just say I'm going for broke, I have nothing to lose. Although I had something to lose, I had to use that mindset to kind of keep the aggression there and play to the ability that I knew I could play at.

And when I did that in 2024 and played well to keep my card, I just kept rolling with that same mindset, and just not being afraid. It's done really well for me.

Q. I mean, this might be a dumb question, but like tangibly what does that -- what difference does that confidence make when you're going to hit a shot?

J.J. SPAUN: I think, yeah, there's a lot of fear in golf. You can -- it's easy to think about misses, it's easy to think about the what ifs, and to not hit it there, to not hit it there. But I just, I didn't care anymore because I was content with what I did. I said if this is how I go out, this is how I go out, but I'm going to go down swinging.

And I was able to keep that mindset all throughout last year and it did really well for myself.

Q. J.J., you always shared an alma mater with Xander but now you share a major championship, were Ryder Cup teammates. How has that influenced your relationship with him, if at all?

J.J. SPAUN: It has a lot. We've been pretty close throughout our careers, but he was at a completely different trajectory. We didn't overlap during the San Diego State days, so it was really cool to get to know him a lot on the Korn Ferry Tour when we played out there. And then he just took off. He was off and running when we both got our cards.

But I always felt like we had a great connection, great chemistry. We had a chip on our shoulders growing up, you know, had to kind of prove to everyone that we were kind of good enough to compete.

His success really like inspired me. He's a great player and he's a great friend and it's just so cool to see him succeed, and then kind of him give that feeling back to me when I was successful last year.

And it transpired even through the Ryder Cup, we had a really good match Saturday being



partners. Just experiences that we'll have for the rest of our life.

Q. J.J., we've known for a few weeks now that Brooks Koepka is coming back to the PGA TOUR from LIV. It was announced today that Patrick Reed eventually is going to come back to the PGA TOUR as early as this fall. What is your reaction to Patrick Reed coming back to the Tour, and secondly, what does that do to the competitive brand of the PGA TOUR?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I think people want to be on the PGA TOUR. It's the best Tour in the world, the most competitive Tour.

I think Patrick will be a good asset to this Tour and I think it just speaks volumes to where the Tour's headed. I think to add even more competition for us that have been here while they left, and, you know, adding Brooks and Patrick now, it's just strengthening our Tour, which I think is great.

Q. Circling back to your time at San Diego State, I feel like everybody hears the name San Diego State and associates it with a basketball school, but clearly between you, Xander, Justin Hastings, who's an up-and-coming star, to cement it as a golf school and put that on the map, what does that kind of mean to you in that group?

J.J. SPAUN: It's great to -- we've had some great alumni. I mean, Scott Piercy. I might mess this up, Lennie Clements, is that who it is? Yeah, U.S. Open winner, like he went there.

We're a sneaky good school and I think my coach has done a really good job of recruiting and trying to get the best players he can considering, you know, it's competitive these days with funding and NIL stuff, but he's done a really good job. Hopefully he kind of -- the success Xander and I have had and Justin now, maybe that can kind of, you know, push the program even further to get better players.

Q. And then just a second part to that, you've finally won a major but to win at Torrey Pines, how much is that kind of a white whale for you in the local ties here?

J.J. SPAUN: I -- did you say win here at Torrey Pines?

Q. How much would winning here --

J.J. SPAUN: Oh I'm sorry.

Q. -- in that sense?

J.J. SPAUN: Oh, yeah. I mean, this is -- heading into this year, I've been like this has always been a course that I feel like is a U.S. Open style test for just a standard PGA TOUR event. I think after winning last year at the U.S. Open at Oakmont, it's just given me more



belief that this course is big and it's tough but so is the place that I won. So it's given me a lot of confidence. It's a place that I'm really excited to tee it up and see if I can add one to the list and it would be pretty much the cherry on the cake.

Q. You mentioned Justin. What's your relationship like with him, how well do you know him? I mean, you guys shared the ceremony at the U.S. Open last year. How familiar are you with his game and what do you see for his future?

J.J. SPAUN: Honestly, I don't know a ton about Justin. I knew who he was coming through San Diego State and watching his success at the collegiate level.

It was pretty funny, like we didn't really run into each other very much even though he had a few starts on Tour and then he qualified for the U.S. Open last year. Literally the only time I actually fully talked to him and introduced myself and met him was at the ceremony on the 18th green on Sunday, which was really cool.

I just know he's a great player. Obviously he's the low am. He's killing it on the Korn Ferry already and contending. He's just going to grow and he's going to just get really good and I'm excited to see his progress.

Q. J.J., you talk about your love for the course. I'm interested in kind of your thoughts on the design and the types of shots that are required, and maybe a hole or stretch of holes that you think really illustrate that as to why you love the course?

J.J. SPAUN: I think getting off the tee is a big hurdle I guess you can say. The rough is really intense and thick and the course is long, so hitting fairways is really important. I think a good stretch out here on the South course that comes to my mind where it's like fairways are huge is probably, you know, 10 through 17. Like you're just, it's like -- I mean, I would say every hole literally, but 10, 12 straight into the wind like a 500-yard hole. And 13's like such a long par 5 but that tee shot is so hard that even if you hit the fairway, you're still laying up to like a really tight spot. Fourteen 15, it just goes on and on. So I think getting off the tee is a really important factor this week.

Q. When Xander was asked about your success last year, he said he wasn't surprised. The way he put it, hopefully I'm paraphrasing this correctly, there's good players out there but they need that little bit of confidence to turn the corner. I wonder if you could sort of reflect and explain that how just that one shot of confidence makes you go from a player who is in jeopardy of losing his card to top-10 in the world?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I think there's a trend in my career where I've kind of dealt with confidence and, you know, whether it was collegiate golf, mini tour golf, Korn Ferry, there was always moments where I feel like I turned the corner with some little thing that, you know, jump started me or spring boarded me to the next level. It's just kind of increasingly been a little different every single time.



It's tough to say, but I think being able to see results is the best way to build confidence. So when I knew my back was up against the wall last year and I kind of like beared down and kept my card, that really gave me the confidence that I can play under like really immense pressure.

There's nothing like playing and knowing you can lose your job. I did that at THE PLAYERS. I was really nervous there and didn't win, but I used that experience for the U.S. Open.

And then I was really nervous at the Ryder Cup and went back to the experience at the U.S. Open knowing like, hey, you've been in some really intense positions and have done well.

Having those past experiences are what makes you capable of succeeding.

Q. You talk about this come up that you've had from being back against a wall to being top-10 player in the world. Do you ever still look at your world ranking right now and think how in the world am I the seventh player in the world?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, usually I'm like, what? Like I don't even have to go to the like full 100 ranking to see it on the OWGR website. It's just like right there on the front page because it only shows the top-10 so it's pretty funny.

Yeah, it's something that I felt like deep down I had in me. I never really thought it would ever happen, but I'm just proud of the way I've worked really hard and had the right team around me to support me and just try to reach the most of my potential.

Q. How much have your goals changed in the last year? Like maybe what you were shooting for in 2025 compared to now, what's kind of a different outlook you have on what you want to accomplish with not only this season but the rest of your career?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, I think before this year I wasn't really in any majors, I had to still qualify or squeak in the top-50 to qualify for events that fit that criteria.

I won a major and I feel like if I keep doing the right things and doing the things that I did last year to set myself up for that, like if I'm in contention I truly believe that I can win another one.

So I think that's the biggest goal that I've had since then was just the fact that I did win a major. I believe that I can win one. I feel like you bust one down -- one door down, you can have the proof to keep going. That's the biggest thing for me.

Q. I wonder if one of world golf's greatest professionals would mind -- would possibly answer an amateur's question. You know, the teacher Harvey Penick, he had a phrase, "Take dead aim."



Did that ever occur to you, and do you take dead aim when you over a ball?

J.J. SPAUN: Yeah, usually. That's like my style of play. I think my caddie has learned that. We've been together for four years and he's just always said that I'm not afraid to like go for the shot. Whether it's a dumb shot or not, like I always feel like I can pull it off. I try not to play away from pins and sometimes I do and I still end up hitting it at the pin.

So I don't know, I think that's just in my nature to play aggressive and not be afraid to pull off the shot. Sometimes it's worked and sometimes it hasn't.

MODERATOR: Perfect. J.J., thank you for the time and good luck this week.

J.J. SPAUN: Thank you, guys.

