

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**J.J. SPAUN**



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**THE MODERATOR:** We are joined here by J.J. Spaun. Welcome back to the Genesis Invitational, making your 10th start, and it is 10 years later since you made your first start here. What's it like to be back at a place you call home?

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, it's great. It was a bummer we missed last year given everything that went on, so it's very unfortunate the devastation and stuff, so I'm glad to be here again.

This is home. I used to come watch this tournament as a kid. It brings back a lot of nostalgic memories.

Just really excited to be at such an iconic course and venue and put on by an iconic player in Tiger and looking forward to a good week.

**Q. As you look back to the first start from 2016 with the Charlie Sifford Memorial Exemption, what do you remember? Any memories from that year?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, quite a few, but mostly having all the friends and family I could possibly have to support my first TOUR start, and it was just a lot of fun and gave me a taste of what I was eventually trying to work towards since I was out on the Korn Ferry at that time and it was fun to have the opportunity.

**Q. We're so early in the year, but do you find it hard to wipe the slate clean and start over when you've come off such an amazing year?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah. I think I didn't feel like I had too much time off from Hero to here, but it's just a completely different cadence. The courses, the time of year, weather. Kind of trying to find a rhythm; that's kind of the only difference from the middle of the year is getting a rhythm and peaking around mid-season. I like to do it earlier.

Yeah, it's been kind of a slow start, but just trying to keep working hard and find my rhythm and get back on the horse here soon.

**Q. Does the USGA, are they one of the organizations that asks for a club that was meaningful in your victory? Did you give them one?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, they asked for -- well, first, my putter.

**Q. How do you part with that?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, I said unfortunately I can't. That thing is not ready to be retired, especially after that putt.

The second probably most valuable club, I think, was my driver, and I actually had switched to a more new head, meaning, like, it was probably getting close to its limit. It ended up being kind of



unusable anyway, so I donated that, and I think they were pretty happy.

**Q. You kind of touched on it a little bit, but if you could expand on some of your fond memories over the years here at Riviera.**

**J.J. SPAUN:** I just remember it always raining. Like I'll never forget just hopping across puddles down in Capri trying to get to the clubhouse and watching Fred Couples and J.J. Henry warming up in the rain, as I'm watching outside that net down 2.

I just remember it always being wet. It's surprisingly 20-ish years later, it's kind of the same thing.

But I've had a lot of ties to this place. I played the national championship here my senior year. We played pretty well as a team.

It's been a tournament that we would always come to as a family, and it's always fun to have those memories and look back at where I came from.

**Q. Hole 12, what makes that hole so challenging for you guys out here?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** I think the length has kind of made it difficult. The green is very narrow as far as where the slopes are. It's a tough fairway to hit, and then you've also got to hit it pretty far to have kind of a club that you can control into that green.

You don't want to miss left because it's out of bounds, and you don't want to miss right off the tee because there's trees. It's really, like -- I think if you just get off the tee pretty well on that hole, it kind of opens up the hole to a birdie or par at worst.

**Q. As we go through so many changes on TOUR, if you go back to you turning pro, what, did it take you, three, four years to get out here, the Korn Ferry and whatnot?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah

**Q. The way it is now, someone like you, would you have gone through the same path, or would it have been harder or any different? What do you think?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** I mean, I would have to say it's harder now. But we're ultimately trying to make this the most competitive tour in the world, and I don't know what to say as far as what they're planning to do with developmental tours and the Korn Ferry being maybe a bigger stage, not so much as like a developmental tour for the PGA TOUR

But it's definitely more competitive now. Kids are just so strong and good compared to how it was 15 years ago, and that's just generation. Generation to generation, everyone is just getting bigger and better, stronger; there's more technology, there's more learning to make golfers better.

I don't know if the pathway necessarily is harder, but it's just, I think, harder in general to make it to the TOUR because golf is such a competitive sport now.

**Q. Can you talk about what it means coming back a year after the fires, maybe a rebirth or restart here, and giving a lift to residents and also some of the small businesses who are certainly going to be looking to welcome fans and visitors into this neighborhood and this area?**



**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, I think it was so unfortunate, what happened last year, and we're just happy to be back and that the community was really welcoming us with open arms.

We come to make an impact on local communities. At the end of the day, that's what this tournament does, and that's what we hope to do: Provide some warmth, some entertainment, kind of make this area a lot more what we're used to seeing and try to erase the bad memories and move forward.

Hopefully we'll have a good week to entertain everyone that's here.

**Q. No. 4, how did you play it?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** 3-wood to the right edge of the green, fed it down there to about six feet and made par.

**Q. What's so hard about that?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Because it's Wednesday. It didn't matter really today.

**Q. What have you done in previous years? How would you play that hole?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, it's usually some sort of 230 club. The problem with it being soft, you can't really use the Redan I think as it's intended to be by design. But with how soft the greens are, you can pretty much just fly it at the green and it should just plug and roll out maybe to the mid-center, back center of the green and make your 20, 30-footer if you have it. But I think three 3s or four 3s there is going to be a pretty good score this week

**Q. Everyone raves about the best par-3s in golf are always the short ones. I think that's a consensus, but there's got to be a few good long par-3s out there. Do you have any?**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Long par-3s?

**Q. I'd have to go back and see what you did on 3 at Oakmont last year.**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, I don't think I bogeyed that hole.

**Q. That must be it.**

**J.J. SPAUN:** Yeah, it's a 290-yard par-3. My college coach said, if this was a par-4, you'd make 3 every time. You know what I mean? It's kind of a mindset. If this was a drivable 290-yard hole but really a par-4 and you didn't walk away with a birdie, you'd be kicking yourself.

I don't know, maybe it's a mindset, maybe it's not

∂ No, because I feel like I wouldn't be the only one to do it. I'm going to play it as a par-2. I'm just kidding. Par-3 is fine; I'll take par-3.

