PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
October 28, 2026

ZACH JOHNSON

MODERATOR: We're now joined by Zach Johnson here at the Simmons Bank Championship.

Making your first appearance at this event here in Little Rock. Just some opening remarks on being here for the second Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs event?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I'd say I'm very excited. I know that sounds -- well, of course you are, but I really am excited. Actually got a lot of friends in this town, a lot of good vibes already. So that's my selfish point of view.

Talking to my peers, I've heard good things about the golf course. You never know what you're going to really see, never stepped foot on it. Yesterday I played 18 holes, touched 'em all and I was like, I think they underscored it. I think it's really, really good.

Granted, the condition has a lot to do with that. It's bouncy, it's fast. There's a little brown sheen in the grass, which is great for golf. That's amazing. The greens are absolutely spectacular. Hats off to the superintendent and his people, it's going to be great.

I know the community rallies around it, Simmons and Stephens, so what a great market, what a great venue, what a great community.

Q. Zach, welcome to Arkansas. Tell us, have you been to Arkansas before and impressions on Arkansas?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I've been here I don't know how many times, probably a handful or more.

I think I played in college in Jonesboro. Is that Arkansas State? I don't remember much other than it being very hilly. Kind of northeast side of the state, right? Jonesboro? North and east of here anyway. That was probably the first time.

I know I've been to, let's see, my last year on the Nike -- I call it Nike Tour, Korn Ferry Tour -- we played down in Hot Springs, so I remember playing down there. Kind of a retirement area if I'm not mistaken, Hot Springs Village?

And then I've been to Fort Smith probably twice if I'm not mistaken as well on the Korn Ferry Tour.

Then I've been back here in Little Rock. I've got one family in particular I'm really close to

that used to live in south Georgia with me. We did life together and we're still trying to do life together even though we're about five states removed. Our kids lined up, et cetera. Some of our dearest friends live in Little Rock.

Q. We'll get to nuts and bolts of things. Your rookie season on Tour, I compared the season you've had to like a Major League Baseball player, a rookie who comes on and, you know, wins MVP, just an outstanding first season. You had the name recognition already, but how would you compare this season to anything else you've had in your professional career?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, it's hard to compare. I mean, it's hard to find a parallel I guess would be the thing. My rookie year on the PGA Tour was good, but I was a young 27-something-year-old rookie. Obviously a lot more seasoned coming into my rookie year on this tour.

It's hard to like -- like to find parallels other than like I'm one of the youngest. There are actually quite a few younger than me. Kind of hard to believe, but there are. A lot of 50-year-olds out here.

But it's been welcome. I guess if there is a parallel, it's been a massive welcome. I feel like I've earned my right to be out here putting in a bunch of time and energy, and some successes on the PGA Tour got me to where I'm at now.

As I've kind of stated, I feel like I've graduated. I'm to greener pastures. It's probably the purest form of professional golf that I've ever been associated with on PGA Tour Champions because I think it's the right way to do professional golf in the markets we serve and the communities we're at. Philanthropy's a big part of it, obviously there's entertainment, but I think it's just the right platform for the game of golf. It's been welcome all around.

Q. Also, you talk about the age differences. Steven Alker has a few years on you, but there was a time this season where you and him were just going back and forth as far as winning.

MODERATOR: Stewart Cink.

Q. There's one they went two and two actually. Alker knows this course well. Do you know much about Steven and his past? Did you really get to know who he is, what kind of player he is?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I didn't know him all that well until this year. I'm still getting to know him and his wife, Tanya. I've gotten to know them and I've had off the golf course really cool talks.

He's an amazing guy, his family's great, does everything right. He works hard, seizes the opportunity and his game is extremely polished.

Yeah, I think that's also the beauty of this tour, of this place at 50-plus is regardless of where you came from, whether you have, like a lot of my peers out here, Hall of Fame resumes or if you have never really stepped foot on the PGA Tour ever, at some point you might get out here, there is an opportunity and I think that's the beauty of PGA Tour Champions.

Now, Steven, I mean, you're talking about every single week he can win. And there's -- I mean, anybody can win out here, everybody's very good and very competent. He's proven that. Just obviously data wise he's proven he can win any given week. So it's very impressive. The amount of starts he's had versus top-10, top-5s, top-3s. It's not like I pursued those numbers but I've been privy to them by just word of mouth.

Obviously I throw Stewart in there, too. Those two have had amazing careers and obviously amazing years already on PGA Tour Champions.

Q. Finally, as a segue with Steven, he likes to say this is his favorite golf course maybe because of the course record last year and just blowing away the field.

ZACH JOHNSON: Oh, really? Did he win here last year?

Q. Yes.

ZACH JOHNSON: OK. I'm not familiar.

Q. I assume now that he hasn't shared any secrets with you about the course?

ZACH JOHNSON: No. I don't -- Steven's an awesome dude, don't get me wrong, but one, I don't think I would ask, I don't think I have that in me. And two, if somebody asked me if I had one, I don't know how much I would share other than the cliches of it, you know what I mean?

We have not had a discussion about that. Yeah, it wouldn't surprise me if he's on top of the leaderboard at some point this week.

Q. Zach, thanks for taking a minute to chat with us, just want to say welcome to Little Rock and let's talk about the venue, the course itself.

ZACH JOHNSON: Sure.

Q. Have you been out to play a practice round yet? Your reaction from what you saw and what you felt?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, sir. Yeah, I was fortunate I got 18 holes in yesterday. Are there 54 guys in the field?

MODERATOR: Fifty-one are here, but 54, yeah.

ZACH JOHNSON: Fifty-plus guys in the field, so in a golf cart and not everybody's necessarily here yet, I zipped around pretty quick, which is great.

No. 1, thank you Little Rock for the weather. No. 2, the golf course is awesome. Lot of character, a lot of up, down, left, right, short, long. I think that's a good test. Par 3s are really good. That's what my caddie and I, we got to the 17th hole and like just the last par 3, like man, every one of them's got teeth and requires every facet to be on.

I think it will be a great test. From my vantage, it looks like it will separate, meaning the condition of it. Hopefully we don't get a ton of rain. Sounds like it's getting better by the day, which is great. The separation of those that play great and those that don't play well will be there and that's the sign of a good golf course, that's the sign of a good test. You want those that are playing their best to rise and are worthy of having a chance on Sunday.

So Pleasant Valley seems to have all the ingredients for that.

Q. With the possibility of rain coming in over the weekend, does that change your approach?

ZACH JOHNSON: Not at all.

Q. Try to shoot low on Friday and just stay there through the weekend?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah. If I've learned anything in this game, you've got to stay right where your feet are. Whatever comes, you'll tackle it. You've got to be prepared for it.

But meteorology is fluid and I think you've just got to stay in the controllables. I can't control that, but I can control how I prepare given the elements of Mother Nature. I mean, we're so used to it. I know haven't had much rain here, but we had rain -- where were we? Oh, Palm Coast. We had rain like two or three weeks ago, I felt like I had my rain suit on almost every shot for most of the week. It's not foreign to all of us.

Q. And what do you expect for the weekend? I mean, what do you expect your game to look like? What do you expect to come out and --

ZACH JOHNSON: I don't have expectations if I'm going to be blunt. As far as my -- the outcome goes, I expect every week I'm trying to get better, I'm trying to improve, I'm trying to avoid the mentality of maintenance and stick to the mentality of improving. I work, and the more I can eliminate what the scorecard shows, usually the better my scorecard looks. You've got the best of the best at 50 and older playing this week, so I love the challenge of that. At the same time, the way I approach it is I'm not competing against them, I'm competing against Pleasant Valley. That's my opponent. I hope she's ready, because I'm ready.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Zach.

ZACH JOHNSON: I don't know why she's a female. That was weird.