

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
March 31, 2021



JOEL DAHMEN

JACK RYAN: We would like to introduce for the first time in a pretournament press conference, PGA TOUR winner Joel Dahmen. Joel's coming off a win at last week's Corales Puntacana Resort & Club Championship, his first on the PGA TOUR.

Joel, what did the last 48 to 72 hours been like for you, getting after the celebration?

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, it's kind of been a whirlwind, to be honest. I still haven't got back to all the texts on my phone, but a lot of fun phone calls. Called my dad right away as soon as I could on Sunday night, chatted with my coach. Just fun to share it with Lona and Geno and some good friends. We had a good dinner last night.

It's just, you know, you walk around here and everybody says "congrats" to you and how happy they are. It's pretty fun. I think this winning thing is kind of addictive, so hopefully we can keep doing it.

JACK RYAN: You made a big jump in the FedExCup standings, you're up to number 59 on the season. How did your goals for the season change? I'm sure going into the week, every week you want to check off that first win, but what does this do for you now going forward the rest of the season?

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, if you look at the previous, you know, start to this calendar year, it was not great. I played okay in the fall, had a top-10 and some decent finishes there, but going into last week was the first time I had slipped out of the 125 on the FedExCup in years, it had been three or four years. I played really well, so it wasn't going great.

There was -- you know, doubts are always going to creep in about it, but I've always been -- I've made a lot of cuts, I've always played pretty well out here, very consistent player. For me to go through that kind of downturn there for six or seven weeks was not very much fun, but it was kind of one of those things that you're like, well, all right, I'm going to break out of this eventually, but is it going to be a made cut, is it going to be a top 40, a top 10? And then all of a sudden to kind of come out of that slump with a win is great and it's validation that I was as close as I thought I was. I knew my game was there, I just kind of had to do it, so that helps a lot.

As far as goals, I'm pretty bad at setting those, but TOUR Championship is always No. 1 for me. You get there, you know, you're locked into all the big events the next year, the majors and the WGCs. So TOUR Championship is always No. 1. It seemed a long ways away prior to last week, now it seems a little more attainable. You know, I want to compete in majors. I had a top-10 last year in the PGA and I feel like my game can translate to some solid play

on tough golf courses, so I can do that.

Yeah, I think just kind of this week is -- it's been a blast and just kind of free rolling, it feels like, but just kind of get back to consistent golf and keep getting better. I mean, I've gotten better my last, I guess -- every year since I've turned pro, I've gotten better in every metric, so if I can just continue to do that, who knows where I can end up.

JACK RYAN: In looking ahead to this week at the Valero Texas Open, you probably haven't had the success you would like to on this golf course. What is it about this golf course that you find challenging, or maybe you don't find it challenging, you just haven't had your best stuff this week. So what do you need to do this week to improve on your finish this year?

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, on paper this course sets up pretty well for me. I think as far as the metrics of it and all the data, it says I should be able to play well here. I'm not a long hitter, so obviously that's a big advantage to hit the ball far. But you have to place it around these greens, and the wind typically blows so you have to control your golf ball as well. I don't know how hard it's supposed to blow this week, but obviously it blew really hard last week and today in the pro-am it blew. It's blowing just as hard, it's blowing 25-plus out there. Maybe that will kind of help me playing windy conditions last week.

When you get down to it, you can do whatever you want, hit fairways and greens, make a couple putts and you're right there. Have to play smart. I think I've been too aggressive into too many pins here in the past where if you miss them, you're not getting up and down. So I can try to maybe place myself -- maybe not be so aggressive into the greens this week. I'm chipping the ball so well, so one of the great things about maybe not playing so well for a couple months is you improve a lot on your chipping and your putting because you don't hit as many greens.

We'll see. I'm just going to try to lean on Geno this week and because it's going to be easy for me to be maybe overly aggressive and try to go for stuff, so I'll just kind of lean on him this week and hopefully the ball bounces my way.

JACK RYAN: With that, we'll open it up to questions.

Q. Joel, I'll start with the hard ones. As Jack just talked about, I think your last round here was an 80. I'm sure that's not fun to think about.

JOEL DAHMEN: I didn't know that, thanks.

Q. Sorry about that, sorry to remind you of that. Just my question was, does that kind of thing stick with you? Obviously not since you don't even remember it.

JOEL DAHMEN: No, I know I haven't played great here, per se. No, bad rounds are going to happen. I don't -- maybe to a fault almost, I don't remember much of my bad stuff. That's

good, obviously. Yeah, I think this golf course, it should set up okay for me. It is a hair on the long side, but I'm a pretty good longer iron player and I drive the ball straight. You have to drive the ball in play out here. The fairways are somewhat wide, but if you miss the fairways you're in trouble. So if I can keep the ball in play and rely on my iron game, I think I'll be just fine this week.

Q. Interestingly, at the WGC last week, Billy Horschel had just taken vacation basically said "I came in with zero expectations and played my best golf." You came in last week playing not well for a long stretch. Why is it -- what is it about this crazy game that when you ramp up your expectations a little bit maybe sometimes, or the opposite, if you just go in with a really relaxed mentality, that it's sometimes easier to play your best?

JOEL DAHMEN: I wish I had that answer for you, I wish we all did. Expectations are a problem and as soon as you -- you know, like you have to temper expectations. If you think about like the average shot for a PGA TOUR pro from 100 yards, the average shot goes to 20 feet. Well, we're mad all the time when it goes to 20 feet. That's just not reality out here. In your good weeks, yeah, you're going to hit it closer, you're going to make more putts, but we only make half our putts from eight feet.

So if you think about those things, the expectations do need to always be lowered, I believe, or just have realistic expectations, I think.

For me, I thought about playing Honda because I was kind of behind the eight-ball a little bit for the first time I felt in a long time, but I had a bachelor party planned. We went to Vegas for two nights last weekend and reset the system, had plenty of fun. We played golf, we played at TPC Summerlin and we played at Shadow Creek. We had a blast. I actually played really well on Saturday at Shadow Creek and I was kind of chirping at the guys, this is the day it's going to turn around for me, kind of jokingly through a couple cocktails maybe, but I really did believe it was going to turn around.

Getting away from the game for a couple days, like really getting away from it. I didn't follow any of the Honda. Normally I watch golf on Sundays. I watched Matt Jones, I know huge win for him after a long time. But I just was totally checked out from the whole thing, so when I showed up in Puntacana on Monday, it was kind of a fresh start for me. Very relaxed feel down there obviously, kind of the island life, and the Dominican was a blast. My wife was there and you just kind of see the blue ocean waves, you eat some good food and you hang out. It was a good full reset for me.

Q. The Vegas Convention and Visitors Bureau will appreciate that Vegas was the key. Last one, you talked about your wife. I love the quote, she said, "Go out and kick butt." I mean, when you get that chance to finally get home and it all kind of settles in and the two of you are just sitting around, what was that moment like? What was the two of you kind of talking together about that?

JOEL DAHMEN: Yeah, we kind of reflected on just how long the road had been. There was -- I think you see -- most people see Viktor Hovland and Morikawa and Wolff and these young guys come right out of college and they win right away and they're top-20 in the world and winning majors. That's not reality. The reality is you're going to go through mini tours for a little bit. I was fortunate enough to play the PGA TOUR Canada, actually was up there for five years. The first couple years I was just kind of a kid dinking around, and then for the Korn Ferry Tour for two years, played out there. You learn to travel, you learn to do all these things so when you are out here, it's not as big a shock and that helps a lot, too.

But yeah, we went -- I've been through a lot personally obviously with the loss of my mom, my brother, having cancer myself, but that just makes the moment way more sweeter. I think we enjoy a lot -- I should say everyone enjoys a win, but I think we appreciate all that goes into it and how hard it is to actually win. I've knocked on the door a couple times, but to actually finish one off is special, and there's a lot of people who have helped me along the way and we're going to enjoy this one for a while.

JACK RYAN: Joel, those are all the questions we have. We appreciate your time and best of luck this week.

JOEL DAHMEN: Awesome. Thank you, guys.