

RBC Canadian Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, July 20, 2016

Jason Day



MARK WILLIAMS: We'd like to welcome Jason Day, the defending champion, to the RBC Canadian Open into the media room.

You look at the last year, 12 months, it's been pretty amazing for you, Jason. How different does it feel right now compared to a year ago?

JASON DAY: Yeah, I mean, I guess the way that I look at myself is a little bit different, too. Coming into this event last year, I felt confident about my game. But knowing that this event would spring board me to six wins, a major championship, getting to No. 1 in the world, I'd be very surprised by that.

It's amazing how important this event was to me to really get my career going and get it off in the right direction that I've always thought it was going to go.

You know, it's been a pretty crazy last eight months or so, and yeah, it's exciting. Sometimes I don't have enough time just to sit down and realize what I've accomplished and it's great and everything, but I know that I can't get too far ahead of myself, because there are a lot of great golfers behind me that are willing to put in the effort and take that No. 1 spot away from me, and then obviously beat me at tournaments like the RBC Canadian Open.

But first and foremost, I'm very excited to be back here as defending champion, trying to win it again and having the opportunity to play in front of the great Canadian fans, and obviously excited to play Glen Abbey again.

Q. Is it the best 12 months of your life -- on course, yeah?

JASON DAY: Yeah.

Q. But you've had other big things in your life. Is it finally making -- what most people close to you knew was coming?

JASON DAY: I always thought I could play golf like this. On a level like this, was obviously tough to do. But I know how much work I had to put into it. I know what I had to do to get to this position, and it's a bit of a grind, it really is. It's tough and it's boring. The process sucks sometimes.

But the little things, when it's boring and you don't want

to be there, that's the times where you've got to -- where you learn and you grow into a player. Because it's easy going out there and have a good practice session and flush it. But when you don't want to be there and you don't want to go to the gym and you do it, those are the times, those little mini-goals put you in the right position to do things like win the RBC Canadian Open and go on from there and win a major championship.

But yeah, it's been a crazy last 12 months. I mean, I've always talked to Colin about it, and he thinks knows, he that's exactly what I should be doing, and once again, I can't get too complacent with where I'm at. I know that I'm currently ranked the best player in the world, but you know, I need to work hard. I need to work harder than I ever have before to keep that spot. I need to work harder than I ever have before to win tournaments, because it's only getting tougher.

Q. Just on that, obviously you won quite a few events post this, so now you're going to be getting into the stage where you're defending all these events. What's that like personally? Do you sit there and does it give you any extra motivation; I don't want any of you guys to take this away from me?

JASON DAY: Yes and no. It's great that I'm obviously defending all these; I'm defending four tournaments in the next five, six weeks or so.

I just want to win them again. I'd like to win everything from here on in. That's the goal when you're coming into events. You've got to somehow want it more than the next guy. I feel very motivated right now with how DJ is playing. He's playing tremendous golf currently, and he's on the heels. He could play well here in the next few weeks and take over my spot, so I don't want that to happen.

And I know that winning takes care of everything. If I can just somehow just keep winning, that will take care of everything I know coming here, I've had good finishes and I have good memories and experiences here; that I've got that to fall back on when I'm not playing that well.

But yeah, it's coming into the crunch time for me pressure-wise, because being kind of the favorite going

into each tournament and expectation levels are high and then all that amounts to pressure that you put on yourself and stress that you put on yourself, and you've got to somehow kind of manage yourself, manage your ego; and then somehow execute the shot, execute the game plan, and go out there and try and win.

The biggest thing is being able to prepare properly for the events that are ahead, give yourself the best opportunity to win, and then try and do your best. That's all you can ask for is just to give it 100 percent, and if you can't win, if you don't win that week, then pick yourself up, try and give it 100 percent the next week.

Q. I'm just wondering, you mentioned generally last year winning this tournament, but can you point -- is it reasonable to point to the three-hole finish last year to win it as the demarcation point for you eventually going on to win?

JASON DAY: I think so. Because those were the holes, because everyone was like -- it was tight. David Hearn, Bubba Watson were behind me. It was pretty tight, and I just knew that I needed to birdie 16, 17 and 18, because if I don't birdie, those guys would have lapped me.

To birdie 16; but to hit the drive on 17 the way I did, hit it way down there and give myself an easy wedge shot into that hole location, birdied that, because I didn't hit the greatest pitch, but I holed a nice putt there to keep myself going.

And then obviously 18, kind of a blessing in disguise really. I'm kind of happy that I hit it in the bunker, because it forced me to lay up and being able to hit a wedge shot in there is a lot easier than hitting a shot from the middle of the fairway and not wanting to pull up short, and I hit it far enough down the left to give myself a good full run at the green. Hit it to about 25 feet, 20, 25 feet, and the putt was really close; I always said, eerily close to the putt at The Open Championship the week before. I knew I was going to get it there because the greens were lightning and they weren't running at 9 1/2 on the Stimp. I just had to get it down the hill and when that happened -- I was talking to a buddy out there today. When you have putts like that, as a kid, you try and work on what pose you're going to do and what you're going to do, fist-pumps and stuff, but it was just raw emotion that came out of me, and I can't remember what I did until I watched the film.

But yeah, I could say that those three holes definitely gave me the confidence needed going into the future tournaments, especially the PGA.

Q. You said I think on Sunday that your short game, you weren't happy with, and you wanted to sharpen that up. What is your position on that compared to a year ago when you came in here?

JASON DAY: I think I'm ranked No. 1 -- I'm joking. (Laughter) I can't be full of myself. I just had to throw that in there.

Yeah, every year, I was just trying to improve each and every year. I feel like I'm driving it still pretty good. I would like to just kind of tighten up the irons a little bit more. I was hitting more greens last year than I am this year. Just tighten up those a little bit more. And I don't think it's more so the swing; I think it's just like more of a commitment issue.

Just got to be more committed to the shot that I'm actually hitting and don't second guess myself out there. I'd like to just tighten that up a little bit and then obviously the short game a little bit. It's not as bad as it seems. My short game is pretty solid. But I would just like to; like my short game, not my putting, but my chipping and stuff, and my bunkers and rough, chipping, just to be a little bit more tighter.

I think if that would be like that, if I felt like I had a little bit more control, I think I'd be -- I'm already excited to play this week, but I'd be excited for the rest of the second half of the year.

I know that with how the schedule has gone this year, with like kind of one on, one off, two weeks on, one off, it's been very difficult to take some time off and actually work on the weaknesses. Because there's so much playing you can do, like if you look at it, you play a lot of tournaments, as you go and play those tournaments, you may be performing well and you may be sharp, game-sharp, but your technique and other little things start to creep in.

So the level of play starts to kind of decline a little bit, and then when you see that happening, you need to have a good week's worth of practice getting back on top of being sharp again and knowing how far each club goes and how far each wedge swing goes, because obviously working on distance control is huge; and getting to be able to land a spot from if you're chipping ten yards off the fairway, landing it on a quarter or a tee, you can only work on those skills when you're practicing in the off week.

But you know, it's been very, very difficult to try and plan my practice schedule around tournament schedule, because when I'm done, I take a few days off and I'm like, I'm tired, and you've got to try and somehow manage that in the off week and then all of a sudden you're leaving that Sunday.

So it's been difficult to try and plan it that way this year, and I think it's showed a little bit in my iron play and my short game, because I think I did a really good job of managing that last year. Hopefully after the next two weeks, I get three weeks off; I can really focus on trying to improve those skills through practice and get ready for the FedEx and make a real push to win that FedExCup.

Q. You talked a little bit about what that win meant for the rest of the year, including your first major championship. Dustin Johnson is in a similar position, he has broken through for the first time winning a major. What does that do to free up a player once you get the monkey off your back, so to speak, and winning at the highest level?

JASON DAY: I don't think it did much for Dustin. I think it was just, it was going to happen, and I think he knew it was going to happen. He's a talented guy. He's won every single year he's been out here. He's won twice already this year. He's just a super talented guy, and it was going to happen.

So for me, it was such a whirlwind kind of -- I won four out of the six events that I played in. I won that event, and then I took a week off and I really didn't have much time to think about it, and then I was playing the next week and then I won that week. Then it was the start of the FedEx, and I've got a bad memory, too, so I can't really remember what happened.

I wish I could -- I wish that was an excuse for me and my wife when she said stuff to me, but it's not, I can tell you that much.

But yeah, it does free up, because I mean, obviously you don't want that tag of "best player without a major," and I had that tag a little bit for awhile there. And I don't have to have that anymore, because I've got a major.

I think the next step for me is to go, okay, how many can I win now; and be able to shoot a goal for maybe the career Grand Slam, even though it is tough to get that, but that's a good goal to have.

I think shooting for that, you can never be disappointed because you know that you're giving it 100 percent. If it happens, great. If it doesn't, then you know that you've done the best possible job, because just shooting for one major is not where it's at. You've got to try and win as many as you can. Try and leave that door open and try and win as many as you can.

Yeah, I mean, it's definitely helped in the future, because I did a lot of great things that week at Whistling Straits that helped me win tournaments,

especially The Barclays and the BMW Championship later on that year.

Q. You had mentioned when you were in this room last year, that you almost a little bit self-deprecating said you really weren't that big a deal in Australia. I imagine that's changed a bit now?

JASON DAY: When did you say that?

Q. You said that you were on like page six of the sports section?

JASON DAY: Probably still true.

Q. Within the context of that, the last time No. 1 and No. 2 in the world played in this event was Tiger and Greg Norman 19 years ago.

JASON DAY: Wow. That's a pretty neat stat.

Q. I'm just wondering what relationship, if any, you have with Norman, if you can talk about that. And second of all, many, many years before that, until Furyk did it, it was in Australia, and it was the last to win back to back here, Jim Ferrier, which I believe was in the 40s or 50s or something like that.

JASON DAY: Long time ago.

Q. If you could try and tackle that quickly as your last question.

JASON DAY: Yeah, growing up, in Australia, my favorite players were obviously Adam Scott, as an Australian.

I was born in 1987; kind of Greg Norman was kind of in his peak and 90s was his peak, and back then we only had like four channels. We didn't have cable or anything like that, so we couldn't really watch the golf and be able to see what happened. So it was hard to watch what Norman has accomplished.

But to be able to grow up, go through his Greg Norman Junior Foundation, play in the tournaments that is in his foundation, and win one of his big events down there, really like the RBC Canadian Open, I won the Greg Norman Junior Foundation Sub-Junior Champion, I was 13. And that was like the big event at the end of the year where everyone, you go there and you play, all the top golfers from around the state would go and play there and I won that. And that really gave me a good confidence boost going forward, because I think I shot 87 the first round, which was terrible. I was so nervous.

Yeah, to be able to go through that, and then finally meet him at the PGA, Australian PGA, play a practice round with him; and then keep in touch with him over the years, and pick his brain, as well; having him as a Presidents Cup captain, getting to know him more

personally and asking him more personal stuff on the golf side of things, what he's felt, what he's done; being able to take those pieces of advice and hopefully move on. I think I've done a pretty decent job with the advice that he's given me.

But yeah, I mean, he's done big things for us back home in Australia. As a junior growing up, without those foundation events, I wouldn't be here today because of how big of an impact they were for me.

With regards to Jim and what he's done, being back-to-back in the 50s, yeah, that's a goal. I would love to win here this year and I would love to win the year after. I mean, I would love to have a stack of Canadian Open championships. That is a goal is to be able to come back and defend and try and do the best job I can, and if I can do that, that would be a real honor.

MARK WILLIAMS: Jason, we appreciate your time coming in and good luck with your defense of the RBC Canadian Open this week.