

The GOLFChicago Interview

Jordan Spieth walked into the media center on a cloudy day in early June and seemed surprised by all the attention he had earned in a very short while. Only 24 months ago, he had started his pro tour career and made the cut in two of the five events he entered. Last year, he notched three top-ten finishes heading into the John Deere Classic in Silvis, Illinois. On July 14th, thirteen days before his 20th birthday, Spieth bested defending champion Zach Johnson and David Hearn on the fifth hole of a sudden-death playoff at that tournament to earn both the \$828,000 winner's check and full status as a PGA Tour member.

Since his epic victory that included a sand bunker shot hole-out to make the playoff, Spieth has become a household name. After earning 2013 PGA Tour Rookie of the Year honors and being named a member to the 2013 Presidents Cup team, the former Texas Longhorn has captivated golf fans everywhere with his poise under pressure as much as his amazing skills. In January, he finished second at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions. In February, he finished fourth at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. In March, he finished tied for tenth place in the Texas Valero Open. Playing in his first Masters in April, Spieth tied for second after sharing the 54-hole lead with eventual winner Bubba Watson. Earlier this month, he finished in a tie for 17th at the U.S. Open by firing rounds of 69-70-72-73 on the sandy fairways and tilted greens of the Pinehurst #2 Course.

While Spieth expressed disappointment by his performance for the week, his smooth swing and gritty determination caught the eye of Adam Scott, 2013 Masters champion and current #1 player in the world. "I think he's awesome," Scott said in an interview with *Golfweek* magazine following his pairing with Spieth. "He's got it all happening right now to go to the top."

And, indeed, the two-time U.S. Junior Amateur champion is currently positioned as the #10-ranked player in the world on his first go 'round at many of the courses that serve as annual hosts to Tour events. Having made the cut in 16 of 18 events played in the 2014 season and earning \$3.9 million by mid-June, Spieth was in 5th place to earn a spot on the Ryder Cup team following the U.S. Open. He also started his own charity in 2014—the Jordan Spieth Charitable Trust—which is dedicated to lending time, awareness, and financial assistance to special needs youth, military families, and junior golf.

As Spieth is set to defend his John Deere Classic Title on July 7 – 13, GOLFChicago caught up with the hottest player in the game at a media event at the TPC Deere Run clubhouse.

**Jordan
Spieth**
With intense focus and authentic enthusiasm, Jordan Spieth is on the cusp of greatness.

by Neal Kotlarek



GOLFChicago: You’ve performed brilliantly on Tour event courses you are playing for the first time. What’s your secret to pulling off that feat?

JS: In junior golf, I went to golf courses I’d never seen before and played them very well. I played college golf for only a year-and-a-half and only went back to one place twice. So it’s nothing new coming out on Tour and playing courses I hadn’t seen before. I just go through the same stuff I went through the years before and have learned to adjust my game.

GC: Today is your first visit back to TPC at John Deere golf course since your victory last July. I imagine the visit stirs some great memories.

JS: Coming off a four-week stretch, I came back in here and it didn’t take long for everything to kind of come back to me. Just pulling into the driveway and walking through the locker room ... the last time I was in the locker room I was scrambling around trying to make the plane trip over to Scotland because I made it to the British Open.

That morning was funny. I teed off well in front of the leaders. I was six back to start the day. I needed to shoot 10 under. It’s not that easy of a golf course, [yet] guys were tearing it up. I had a really rough range session, and I never really have any kind of pain. But if I remember right, it was my left wrist was really killing me, and I was taking some I took a couple Advil. I couldn’t even keep it on the driving range, and this is a big driving range, and I couldn’t keep it on it. I just went out there and I bogeyed the first hole and just thought, all right, well, let’s kind of scramble around today.

Obviously, with the closing and the nice bounce off the pin on the bunker shot to get into the playoff, and five holes

later, the two-footer to win was obviously something that will always be in my head and something I’ll never forget. **G.C. You holed out from the sand bunker on No. 18 to get into the playoff. Can you take us through that shot?**

JS: I got up to the bunker and looked at it and said, “if there’s ever a bunker shot that you need to make, this is about the easiest one that I think I could have.” I mean, it was just sitting so perfectly. Somebody had already been there. It was raked, raked perfectly. It was just kind of teed up, and I just had just a little downslope to the hole, which you want. I just popped it out, and I struck it a little closer to the ball than I wanted, just a little bit. It really bugs me when



people tell me it was going in the water, because it wasn’t going in the water. I struck it a little [too] close to the ball, and I remember looking up afterwards. Later, I saw a photo of when the ball came off. I remember looking up and saying, just hit the pin, find the hole, and it just did [that]. It was such a shock. I didn’t expect that it would find the pin and go in. **G.C. The John Deere gallery seemed to rally behind you even though you ended up facing off against local**

hero Zach Johnson in the playoff. JS: To be a champion of this tournament is humbling. Steve Stricker and Zach Johnson—two favorites here that everybody loves to root for—and how couldn’t you? They’re just two of the best guys out there. I’ve become very close to them. **GC. When did it sink in what the victory here would do for your career?** JS: It must have been halfway through the plane ride to Scotland. I definitely just kind of thought what it could mean to me. I was trying to move up on that money list. And I remember being on the plane ride saying, “I’m going to this major and now I’m in the PGA.” It all happened so fast, but I would say that the moment that I realized it could

possibly change my golf life was about halfway through that plane ride when it all kind of sunk in a little bit. **G.C. Two months after the John Deere Classic, you played in the BMW Championship at Conway Farms in Chicago. What did you think of the course?**

JS: Chicago has to be one of the greatest cities in the world for golf. Conway Farms was a cool experience. I had it going pretty well (finishing in a tie for 16th place). I didn’t think there was a 59 out there, but apparently Jim Furyk did! It’s difficult, it’s

challenging but it’s fair. I really enjoyed it. There’s a whole mix of shots you have to hit off the tee. **G.C. And what do you think of the Chicago golf fans?** JS: You go to any large city and there will be golf fans. But they really love their golf in Chicago. You have the giant city, but at the same time you still have the Midwestern feel of how nice everybody is, how appreciative they are, and how respectful they are on the course.

Truth and Beauty in Northern Michigan

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be charged. One family, one initiation fee. There is something comforting about knowing that when you’re long gone, your legacy can carry on in perpetuity in the form of such a serene place. And though True North perfectly suits a buddies golf getaway or corporate event (corporate memberships are also available and the clubhouse is equipped to handle any size meeting), its proximity to the quaint, lakeside town of Harbor Springs and the myriad leisure activities that come with it (kayaking, hiking, fly fishing, sailing, canoeing), makes it a destination for even that non-golfer in the family. Historic Mackinac Island and bustling Traverse City alone will keep them busy while you finish up 36 on the course. Ultimately, Payne would like for True North to serve as a sort of dashboard for the aforementioned activities, whereby you contact a concierge service who could then coordinate day trips. But with cottages on site equipped with anything you will ever need—most notably a rustically decorated screened-in porch

bordering a practice green and chipotle pepper jerky—your stay can be complete without ever leaving the property. In a world where nothing is constant or guaranteed, where tradition is trumped by impermanence, everything about True North just feels like it’s here to stay: from the massive Michigan pines to understated, rustic hole markers, to the attentive, golf-loving staff. No doubt, it’s primed to become a stalwart on the Northern Michigan golf scene and the owners—who are also founding members—are committed to bringing in only those people who, like Dickinson, appreciate true, enduring beauty. True North offers a chance for everyone to play the course once, so make your way to the top of Michigan and see for yourself where truth and beauty collide in pastoral bliss. For tee times and membership inquiries contact: Matt Payne | True North Golf Club | Harbor Springs, MI 49740 | 231-526-3300 | www.truenorthgolf.com.

