

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: MICHAEL THOMPSON
Wednesday, July 15, 2015



Q. You actually were going to Alabama while you were a student.

MICHAEL THOMPSON: I did.

Q. What was that transition like?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: Unexpected. It actually worked out to be really, really good for me because I got a lot better at Alabama than I ever would have at Tulane. I never expected to go to Alabama.

The one funny story was my freshman year I played in Alabama's tournament at Ol' Colony and hung out with the sororities, they entertained us one night, and played golf. Course was tough and it was tournament fast. I remember driving back from the tournament in the back of the van because that's where I always sat was in the back and I remember telling the guys, I said, there's no chance in hell I would ever go to Alabama, and sure enough --

Q. And why was that your response?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: I just didn't like it. I don't know, I didn't -- I don't know. It didn't appeal to me then. I think being from Arizona I was still really new to the southern culture and everything, and I guess over the next couple years I learned to love the south and just how nice everybody was and accommodating. Then Katrina hit and I had to look for school, and sure enough Alabama needed another guy and I just happened to fit perfectly with the team. So it all for me was a blessing in disguise, Katrina. I'm here today because of it.

Q. What changed? Being the No. 1 at Tulane, you probably had a lot of options.

MICHAEL THOMPSON: I did, yeah.

Q. What made you decide on the school that you didn't think much of earlier?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: I tried to look at it with kind of an open mind because I knew what I thought of it prior. I knew I wanted to play golf and I tried to look at Alabama as what did they have to offer, what were the negatives, what were the positives and I looked at every school that way. I also looked at Oklahoma State and Florida, which were both in the top 5 in the country at the time, and I just -- the coach there is amazing. Really glad that I chose to play for him because he's such a positive person. He's very encouraging and wants to help guys get better rather than just wanting guys to perform. I think visiting the university during the day and just getting to see just the atmosphere around the football and athletics in general. You know, being there from Tulane and playing the tournament, I didn't get to see all of that. There's a huge support group for athletes there, which was huge for me.

Tulane was the complete opposite, they didn't have support for athletes hardly at all. So over the course of two years, kind of not having first pick of dorms or classes and all that kind of thing just kind of wore on me. I just happened to like -- the tide turned, so to speak.

Q. Were you a freshman when you were in that tournament that you just shared?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: I was, I was a freshman at Tulane, yeah. I was very green.

Q. What's this year been like for you?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: It's been a struggle. Again playing for my card, kind of like I was my first three years and so kind of almost having to feel like I have to relearn how to do that. As a result of that, I put a lot of pressure on myself every week, every shot, every hole to do well. I do believe that I've gotten better over the course of the year. Also, I switched coaches in the beginning of the year so I've gone through a little bit of a setup change, not necessarily a swing change but a setup change. So standing over the ball, it looks different to me than it has in years past. Just getting used to that. I feel like I'm starting to hit a lot of good shots, it's just a matter of figuring out how to get the ball in the hole kind of like Jordan's doing. It's fun watching him play because he makes the game very, very simple and that's what we're all striving to do.

Q. What's the mindset going into this week where a lot of the guys are over at the British Open, a lot of you guys playing this do have card issues, I guess?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: Right. I look at it as an opportunity because it's a weaker field. There's guys that aren't playing as much anymore. You've got a lot of guys from the Web.com who are hungry, so those guys are going to be tough to beat because they want to do well. This is exciting for them, whereas for us, for the PGA TOUR cardholders, it's a smaller event, it doesn't mean as much, that kind of thing. So for me I've got to look at it as, you know, I've got a really good chance of having a good finish and if I do that then I can vault myself up the FedEx Cup and money list as well because both of those are qualifications for keeping your card for next year. I'm excited. I had a lot of success down here in Auburn, Opelika area. I played three times at AU Club when I was on the Hooters Tour and I won two out of those three times and finished third the other time. So I've had a lot of success here and for some reason I like it down here being a Bama fan, but I'm looking forward to the week.

Q. I was going to ask you what the reception would be like, you're one of the more noteworthy Alabama golfers to ever come through Tuscaloosa and yet you're in Auburn?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: Yeah, I don't know. I'm a Bama fan through and through now, so nobody's going to sway me one way or the other. You know, I hope the Auburn people like me. I don't try to be a jerk at all, so everybody's got their allegiance, I understand that, and that's part of the fun of it.

Q. What's the sibling rivalry like?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: Sibling? What do you mean?

Q. Was there ever a sibling rivalry with your sister growing up?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: No. I grew up in Tucson, Arizona, so I grew up watching Arizona basketball and football. Teddy Bruschi was on the team when I was growing up, so I remember watching him play. I didn't have any clue about Alabama. To show you how green I was when I got to the University of Alabama, I didn't even know who Bear Bryant was. I never heard of him ever growing up on the west coast. I learned real quick, you know, about that tradition. So we didn't really have -- both my parents went to the U of A in Arizona, so I grew up an Arizona fan. It was exciting when I transferred to Alabama going to the football game because that was eye opening for me in the sense of that's what real football was. Arizona football is more in line with Texas high school football.

Q. Do you keep in touch with Justin or any of the guys?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: Oh, yeah.

Q. I was wondering what you felt about him last week chasing the lead and then Jordan came?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: He's so close to winning it's unbearable at times, he's playing such good golf. And I told him, I told him before Sunday's round, I texted him and I said, "Kick some ass today," and he fired back with a text of "RTR," Roll Tide Roll. So we keep in touch and I like to follow him and see what he's doing. And also other guys like Trey Mullinax out on the Web.com and try to keep in touch with Cory Whitsett, Bobby Wyatt and those guys because I spent a lot of time going down there practicing with the team the last few years, getting to know them. I want them out there just as bad as I want to be out here. I know they have the talent, it's just a matter of playing good at the right time.

Q. Did you (inaudible) at Alabama like in regionals or --

MICHAEL THOMPSON: Never did.

Q. But you played in Hooters. Does it give you any advantage knowing the course when it's so new for everybody else?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: I actually haven't played this golf course, I've played AU Club, which is down the road. I've never been here. Just being in the area, I've got good feelings being back here.

Q. Have you heard anything about the course?

MICHAEL THOMPSON: The only thing I heard this morning was I remember they had the NCAAs here back in 2000, Charles Howell won, guess he shot 26 under or something like that. I know the scores could be good. I think if the rain holds off, the fairways are firm right now, so that could I guess be a bit of a struggle to hit fairways. Coming out of the rough to these greens, they're so sectioned off with so much slope that it's a real advantage to have spin, but the course isn't overly long. The greens are going to be the hard part just because there's so much slope.