

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: DUSTIN JOHNSON
November 30, 2016



JOHN BUSH: We've got Dustin Johnson here making his fifth start at the Hero World Challenge. Dustin, just a phenomenal season for you. Just comment on now being back in Albany.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, yeah, always excited to come back here, great event. It's a lot of fun to play and kind of gets my -- it's kind of my practice heading into next year. Had a couple months off other than China. I don't even know if I played golf there, but I was there. But you know it's nice to get back into playing again, practicing and starting to get ready for next year.

JOHN BUSH: Just got off the golf course. Comment on the course conditions.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Out there? The course is in great shape. The greens are really nice. They've got a good pace to them and the course is in really good condition. It was pretty windy out there today, but I felt the course played very well.

Q. I don't know which year it was, Dustin, but seemed like you took a big, big chunk of time off and frankly played the first couple of tournaments still practicing, still kind of getting the rust off. Was that last year, was it this year?

Bad question, never mind. What do you plan to do this year in terms of being ready for the start of, say, Kapalua?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, this is about the time where I'll start, starting from now all the way through, so I've had kind of pretty much since China I've taken off. But now I'll start practicing and getting ready for next year. I still expect to play very well this week. I've been practicing the last four days or so.

Q. How much have you played from China to the last four days?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: None.

Q. Dustin, last year you looked at your wedge game, you addressed that, you made leaps and bounds there, made some great results. Is there anything this offseason, any part of your game you'll target just to dial up a little?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I'll still continue to work on the wedge game, try to improve there. There's still a lot of room for improvement, but I think wedge game and then probably a little more mid irons, like 6-, 7-, 8-iron I could have been a little bit better this past year with. Other than that, no, just kind of continue doing the same things I'm doing, short game, putting, wedges and then mid irons, but everything else I feel is pretty solid.

Q. Were you expecting to be here this week given your plans in the Philippines?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Obviously, because I never withdrew. No, we just never withdrew just because we knew there was a chance it wouldn't happen, but no, I wasn't expecting to be here.

Q. I have a two-part question. Would do you say your distance is the main contributor to your multiple wins this year, and what do you think about your swing makes you hit the ball so far?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I don't think the distance has anything to do with it, just a lot of work that I put in on the wedge game, that was a big factor this year. And then why I hit it so far, ask my coach because I just swing it and hit it.

Q. If you step back from competing against Tiger, so to speak, as a golf fan, do you have an anticipation from what you'll see now that he's healthy and back competing again?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, obviously I know Tiger's a guy you know he's been working very hard at it, so I mean I expect him to play pretty well. It's tough when you haven't played for that long in a tournament, it's hard to simulate tournament conditions. Not conditions, but just tournament mindset when you're at home practicing. But I know he's practiced a lot, so he's going to be ready. Whether he'll win or not, that's a whole different feat. I predict he'll do pretty well.

Q. Just as a follow, you guys of the younger generation mostly have not had a chance to really compete against him when he's played at a high level. Do you relish the chance to do that if and when he gets back and stays healthy?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Sure, but I mean I've been out here for a while now so I got to play with him when he was really good. He still is really good, but when he was at his peak, he was very impressive. Wouldn't surprise me if he got back to, I don't know about quite that caliber, but who knows.

Q. Dustin, to follow up, you were talking about the 6, 7 and 8s in some of the analysis. Are you using any data analysis, data analytics, or where is any of this coming from all of a sudden?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I don't look at it, but my coaches do. They'll just tell me where I need to -- where I could improve. But the ShotLink kind of does everything for you. I think it pretty much dissects your whole game so it's pretty easy to look at it.

Q. So you haven't gone into any other areas?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Not me personally, no, but people that I work with do.

Q. A lot of good young players from all over the globe today. To finally get that Player of the Year trophy home, what did it mean to you, what kind of satisfaction did that bring?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean yeah, winning Player of the Year was a great, great honor. I played really well this year. I mean obviously it was my best year I've had on Tour. Obviously it was very special to win that and very proud of it. But yeah, just kind of topped the year off with even more satisfaction.

Q. Dustin, for somebody who was watching Tiger back in the early 2000s in India, he was invulnerable when it came to his golf but there was some sort of aloofness when it came to -- we saw it on TV probably and read about with regard to other golfers, fellow golfers. Now we see him talking about camaraderie. Has he transformed into some kind of avuncular figure?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I couldn't understand the last part of the question.

Q. Has he kind of transformed into a more genial --

JOHN BUSH: Nicer, friendlier.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I think so. He's definitely been at the Ryder Cup a couple months ago, it was great. And being a vice captain, it was a lot of fun. I don't know. He hasn't been playing for a while now, so I think just being able to spend time with him not really while he's playing golf, just to get to know him a little bit better has been really nice.

Q. Dustin, what did you walk away from the Ryder Cup knowing about Tiger that you hadn't known about him before, seeing him in that different role?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't know. I mean, I knew him pretty well, so I don't know if I really learned anything different. It was just good to see him out there and how excited he was and how much he was putting into the team. Got a lot of texts before the Ryder Cup of his ideas, so it was just funny and fun to have him be a part of it and I think it was great.

Q. So what was more intimidating for you, the first time you met Wayne or the first time you met Tiger?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Probably Tiger, for sure.

Q. You had to think about it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I was just thinking when I met them. It was so long ago, I don't remember. I would say Tiger because the first time I really met him I think was when I

played with him one day. I obviously said hey or what's up to him passing in the locker room or something, but I played with him, I can't even remember where.

Q. A practice round or a round?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, like I played a tournament round. Yeah, that was definitely more intimidating. Wayne's way too nice.

Q. Do you look at this week as the end of a great year or just the start of the next season for you?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: That's a good question. Probably the start of the year for me. It's kind of obviously I look at Maui as the start, but it's the end of a good year and the start of a new one.

JOHN BUSH: Dustin Johnson, thanks for your time.