

Pre-Tournament Interview: DUSTIN JOHNSON
August 2, 2017



MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome Dustin Johnson into the interview room here at the World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Invitational.

Dustin, you're coming back to defend this title and this year you've won two World Golf championships already amongst the three victories that you've had. Make it three for the season with a defense of this title would be a nice thing to do.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, absolutely. I like this golf course. Obviously I did very well last year. Coming back to a place where I've got a lot of good memories and then I felt like the game's finally starting to turn around, I'm starting to hit the ball a little bit better. I felt like I've got a little more confidence in my game so I'm really looking forward to this week.

MARK WILLIAMS: You played in Canada last week, it was a pretty solid performance, and Jhonattan Vegas won there, he was the fourth repeat winner or defending champion this year, so you would be the fifth if you achieve that this week. How meaningful would that be?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it would mean a lot. It's a great field this week, all the best players in the world are here. So you win this golf tournament you know you're playing some good golf. Right now I feel like the game is very, very close to being how it was leading into the Masters and so it gives me a lot of confidence. I feel like last week was a really good week for the most part. Saw a lot of good signs, so like I said, I'm excited about this week.

Q. To get your game to where it was through wherever you were, what was it, Match Play, whatever your third one was. To get your game to that point in March, was that easier than trying to get your game back there now? Did you get that, that was kind of awkwardly worded.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I think I understand what you're asking. Well, leading into that I had been playing really good golf for the past year or more. It was just I think everything that I was doing was just building to get my game more and more solid. To me, that was probably easier than it's been the last couple months working to get back to there.

But it's getting there, I feel like. Last week every day I was hitting my irons really well, which is something I've been struggling with a little bit. Something finally clicked and started hitting those really well. The driver swings feel good. I didn't drive it the best but I just spent a little time on the range just now, I've got a couple new drivers and I went and played a few holes out on the course and hit some nice drives with them, so I feel like I'm swinging really good. Last week I rolled the putter good, just didn't make any putts, so that's just a whole other issue in itself.

I feel like I'm putting good, just need to see some go in the hole.

Q. Regarding your game, how does it fit this course?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I think it fits it very well. I like this golf course. Obviously I won here last year, I feel like, especially if I'm driving the ball well, I'm going to play pretty well around here.

Q. I have a follow-up if that's okay. Talked to a lot of players who say that the fairways are very narrow. What's your mental state when you're looking at a course that's a lot more narrow than other courses?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, I don't know. This golf course is tree-lined, it's narrow, but I like it because it's tree-lined so it kind of shapes the shots for you.

For me, it's the same every golf course you play. But yeah, here definitely is a premium of hitting the fairways because you've got to control the ball coming into these greens.

Q. When you look back at a year ago, was your biggest takeaway more mental, just more of a belief in yourself kind of thing? I don't know what sticks out when you think back?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't understand what you're asking.

Q. Do you believe in yourself more after winning here maybe?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I mean, obviously I was playing good coming in here, I had just won the U.S. Open, so the game was in good form. Obviously, yeah, the past few months it's just been taking a little bit of while to get the confidence back up, to know my swing's going to produce the shots that I want it to. Finally starting to see that, so definitely have a lot more confidence than I had and it's a move back in the right direction.

Q. Dustin, what do you think of the 18th hole here as a finishing hole, and how do you strategically play it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, 18's a difficult hole. It's a difficult tee shot. Last year the golf course was very firm, so it made it much more difficult to hit the fairway because the slope in it. But this year it's a little bit softer, it's in really good condition. I played three holes. Definitely softer than it was last year.

But 18, just all depends on the wind and you've got to hit the fairway there. And preferably the right side of the fairway.

Q. Dustin, at The Open during the first round while Henrik was playing, his house where he was staying was burglarized. Was that a wake-up call? Could you have

ever imagined a scenario where you, because people know your whereabouts, that you could be targeted like that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, I've never really thought about it, but obviously after it happened to him, you realize, yeah, it could easily happen to you. But luckily for us, we always have someone at the house generally when we're staying there, so someone's there all the time. Yeah, it would be pretty easy to figure out that we're at the golf course, so the house is empty.

Q. A quick follow. Paulina in her day would draw a lot of paparazzi and attention, Wayne draws a lot of attention, so it's not like you've been exposed to that kind of where people can potentially follow you and whatnot. Have you ever had anything like that in the golfing realm?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, no, not really off the course, not like follow me home or something.

Q. Does this feel like two different seasons for you, before and after the Masters?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No. I mean, I think this is only my 15th event. No, it doesn't. It just feels like it's been a long season. You know, I feel like this is a big part of the year here. Got this week obviously a very big tournament, PGA Championship next week and then the Playoffs start. So for me it's a really good time to get my game back in order and start to play some good golf.

Q. As much time as you spend playing with Jordan, either as a partner in the same group, whatever, what do you think, what strikes you about his game and do you get a sense the public looks at him as just a guy who makes all the putts, and is that the way you look at it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Jordan, obviously he putts very well, makes a lot of big putts, long putts when he needs to. Obviously he's one of the best putters from 15 to 25 feet. I mean, I think his short game is definitely very, very good. He's a very good bunker player, good wedge player, so when you putt well and, you know, you wedge it good, then generally you shoot pretty good scores.

Q. What part of your game do you think is misunderstood? Do you think people look at you as just a guy who smashes it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, yeah, probably for the most part, but I feel like I have a very good short game and my wedge play's definitely improved. That's an area that I've been working hard on is to get the wedges really good. For the most part there, they've definitely improved a lot.

Q. Did you find yourself neglecting any part of your game when you got back to

practicing?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, probably the putting probably mostly because I was trying to get back to hitting it how I wanted to. Definitely spent more time on the range than I did doing short game and putting.

Q. Because of your back?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah.

MARK WILLIAMS: Anything further for Dustin? Thank you, sir, appreciate it. Good luck in the defense of your title, Dustin.