

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**February 27, 2018**



**TOMMY FLEETWOOD**

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**MICHAEL GIBBONS:** Delighted to welcome Tommy back to Mexico, bienvenido. Let's start this off by going back a year and talk about your finish here and how good that was for you in terms of your career and what's transpired since, I suppose.

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah, I've spoke about it a couple times in the past and I think this event was -- I know I had won a couple weeks before in Abu Dhabi and that was like a big breakthrough for me again. But this event in particular just in a world field on a world stage, actually performing like I did on a Sunday and having a chance in the end to win is a massive confidence booster for me. Kind of this got me into the Masters, but also it just pushed me on even further really and just gave me that belief that when I do play well, I can compete towards the end of a big tournament with the world's best players. So yeah, it was a great experience. I think earlier on in the week last year we had a really good feeling about it, and then sometimes you get those weeks.

**MICHAEL GIBBONS:** Just briefly, obviously you've had a great start to this season, you've continued from last year, you must be delighted to be coming back here, you must be looking forward to this week.

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** It's always nice when you turn up from -- so last week I played really well, felt like I played lovely and it equaled my best event kind of in a PGA TOUR event, and it's always nice when you come the following week, I've got good memories from it, but also just showing a bit of form as well. Yeah, the year's been great so far. It was important -- after having such a good year, it's always important to keep going, just like Justin Thomas has done this year, he just keeps progressing and that's what you hope to do and what you've kind of got to do. So so far so good, but you can never take your foot off the gas, you have to keep going.

**Q. When you talk about winning Abu Dhabi and then the importance of this being on a world stage, Abu Dhabi strikes me as a pretty big stage, you won that one. What does this one do that that one didn't?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Well, it was just, you know, it was more this was surrounded by the world media from all the different tours, had the Golf Channel here, et cetera. So all that kind of thing.

**Q. Us?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah, you, too. But that kind of thing is just a bit more worldwide scope than Abu Dhabi, which is a massive event with the world's best players, I still beat

Dustin Johnson coming down the stretch. But this was a WGC, it's just got that extra feel to it, that extra name, and you just have more of the top players in the world, 65 players of the best players in the world, so it's just another sort of level.

**Q. Along those lines, what do you think this event will do for someone like Chris Paisley? He's had a lovely start to his year.**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah, well, he's been playing great so I really hope he does do well. He's one of my best mates. But you can't -- there is no substitute for experience until you play on a Sunday in a WGC or a major or European Tour event or PGA TOUR event. Until you play on a Sunday and you know how you feel and you know how you performed, you can't fully tell yourself that you can do it or that you've done it. Nothing comes close to the experience of doing it. And all these -- everything's -- you have levels, you have Tour events, regular Tour events, you have WGCs, majors, et cetera, so you're always going up a step and that's kind of the thing that these tournaments do.

**Q. Going back, you were so consistent over the last 12 months kind of starting here. At this point last year, is the difference in your game or is it a difference just mainly confidence that you got from this and Abu Dhabi?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Both. I mean, my game is getting better all the time. I'm consistently working hard and I feel like I'm always doing the right things. My confidence is up. You've still got to play well. It doesn't matter how confident you are, you've still got to put the ball in the right places and put the ball in the hole. But I think the confidence out of it is that when you play well, you have that belief in yourself that you can do the whole week and you can be there at the end and you can win. That's the big thing. I'm just very, very comfortable with where I'm at and sort of my practice off the course, everything. Your performance is a result of your practice so everything I'm doing I just feel very confident that I'm doing the right things.

**Q. In having come to the PGA TOUR just the last couple weeks, has anything surprised you?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** I think it was a nice surprise. I was surprised how much support I had. Last week was brilliant, I absolutely loved it. But apart from that, you know that some of the courses are tougher, they're a different test of what we get. We don't really play courses like last week, the Honda. I enjoy playing on the PGA TOUR, I like going to work there, I like the courses, I like playing in front of the fans, and it is a little bit of a different scene than in Europe that you've done all your life really, but I'm happy with my performance.

**Q. What's the feeling about playing here knowing that a year before you ended second in the tournament?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah, it's nice. Anytime you come back somewhere that you've

got good memories from and good experiences, it's always nice and it's the extra little boost of confidence. I think as great as it is, the two tournaments I won last year, I think I've never made the cut in France in five starts and I missed the cut in Abu Dhabi five out of six or something. So it doesn't always follow that you're going to perform on the courses that you do well, or courses that you haven't played well before, you're not going to do. But it is nice, it's nice to -- when I played this morning, it's nice to see holes and remember the good shots that you've hit and have that nice feeling of, oh, yeah, I holed a nice putt on this green, or I remember this when I was coming down the stretch and I felt good on this tee. I've got a good eye for the course, I feel, so hopefully it will stand me in good stead.

**Q. How will you pass the time next week ahead of Bay Hill, and what's the rest of your schedule through the Masters?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** I'll be in Orlando staying with my friends there, and then I'll play a bit of golf, I'll be practicing.

**Q. Where?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Isleworth. And I'm going to Sea Island for a couple of days. My putting coach, Phil, he's there and he's opening up a studio there, so I'm going to go there with him and do a couple of days. Just usual working stuff really. Yeah, I'm not going to go home, I'm going to enjoy it. It will be nice to have a little break. Sort of the last, L.A. and Honda, they're not courses that really give you any break at all, they're not the most freewheeling courses so it can be quite exhausting, and this week obviously is a big week. So it will be nice to just have a week where even though you're practicing, it's just not quite as strenuous.

**Q. Do you have your schedule ahead of the Masters?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yes, I'm doing Orlando next week and then I'm playing Bay Hill, Match Play, and then a week off before the Masters.

**Q. There being some huge crowds in the last tournaments with Tiger Woods' return, what do you expect from the gallery this weekend?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** They were great last year. Again, it was a really cool atmosphere. It's great when you come and the crowds are so into it and they are so enthusiastic. That is one of the things about the PGA TOUR, they are so enthusiastic about everything. Last year the crowds were great if you're feeding off their energy on a Saturday and Sunday, but yeah, last year was a great atmosphere. It's the second year, so hopefully it's got that a little bit bigger and more people can come out to watch, and hopefully there will be a few in my favor.

**Q. Will you head over to the Masters early?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah. I'll be there like the weekend before, but I'm not going to go too early, no.

**Q. DJ obviously won, but looking at the leaderboard, we see you and we see a lot of European players there. Is there anything about this course that suits a European player's game?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** It is a very European layout. It's sort of -- last year it just reminded us of playing in Italy or some of the courses that we play. And it wasn't just me that played well last year, there was a lot of Europeans up there, like you say. It just does, it just is a bit of a European layout, a bit of an old-school golf course and ones we're kind of used to playing a little bit. It's still different, it's still a long way above sea level and the greens are a bit slopy than what we're used to. So there are still differences that we don't get but just the general feel of when you're walking down the fairways and seeing the tee shots, it's tree lined, that is quite a European feel to it.

**Q. When trying to figure out elevation on this golf course, is it for you and your caddie engagingly fun or somewhat annoying?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Well, Finnis' elevation is different to mine so we've got like somewhere in between. It's just tough to -- you get a meters book and the ball goes further anyway. Luckily, we have last year to go on, we've got last year's books and you can see how far the ball was going. We'll do some TrackMan work tomorrow. The afternoon when it heats up, the ball's going absolutely miles and just something you always have to be aware of. I think it's not unpredictable because you have a pretty good idea, but also just being smart about it, knowing that you can miss it short or long is good to know when you're in between clubs and the ball is going distances that you're not used to. But generally you've just got to put the work in the first couple of days and just trust it when you're out there.

**Q. Justin, I thought, singled you out a little bit in terms of playing at elevation. First of all, a clean strike to get more spin keeps the ball in the air, but also kind of high flighters anyway. Did you find that last year?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah, the more the ball goes in the air, the further it's going to travel. So I played a practice round with Rory last year. Rory -- I think I was necking me driver a bit in the practice round. Rory's hitting these high bums and it's going 80 yards past me or something stupid and I'm like, this is ridiculous. So if you do get the ball in the air, it's going to go miles. I think wedges then it makes less of a difference than it does with a 7-iron or 8-iron. All these things you've just got to factor in. But it is what we do for a living and this is what we get paid for, so you have to do your homework and work it out and do your practice. But flight does come into it, of course it does, yeah.

**Q. Did you figure out right away why Rory was 80 yards by you?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** He swings it faster and he hits it a lot higher. His driver was

quicker and I was necking it. There was a lot of reasons, too many to catch up.

**Q. Nothing that lost you any sleep at night?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** No, I wasn't too worried. I was knocking it inside him, I think. No, I couldn't compete with him off the tee, that's for sure.

**Q. You mentioned doing some TrackMan work tomorrow. Is that something that is unusual for a tournament day? Is the TrackMan work usually reserved more for like off weeks?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Not necessarily. I think it's a great piece of kit to have, and so many people have them these days. It's always -- it's a great reference for practice if you want it. I've generally I've always liked looking at the golf ball. When I'm practicing, we know our distances normally in normal conditions, so I normally like to look at the ball because if you're looking at numbers on the TrackMan, you're not looking at what it's doing. But at the same time, it's great to look at so many things with your swing and it's important to have a coach that understands it. But yeah, tomorrow, it's just a difficult place to get it right and you just need that reference and that backing up really from that.

**Q. Do you ever feel out of breath at the higher elevation here?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** Yeah, I feel so unfit, it's true. I feel like I've done something wrong in the morning when I'm traipsing up that hill on 9 or 18, and then everybody says they're out of breath so you feel better.

**Q. You mentioned Rory hitting it by you, but was there one shot during the actual tournament that surprised you, either flew stupid long or didn't do what you thought it was going to do?**

**TOMMY FLEETWOOD:** We did a decent job last year really of getting most right and nothing too wrong. The course was a bit softer today, so nothing surprised me at the time. Maybe some tee shots go a bit further than you think, but you like those ones. But no, the course is playing a bit softer now, so you're looking at shots that you had last year and it's like, well, I was a lot further up here with the same club. But nothing -- you don't really get that many flyers out of the rough, either, so that's one thing to take away hopefully. Watch me now first hole on Thursday I'll have a flyer over the back. But no, nothing -- as long as you're prepared, nothing should surprise you too much, hopefully.

**MICHAEL GIBBONS:** All done? Tommy, good luck this week.