

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

**JUSTIN THOMAS**



**MICHAEL BALIKER:** I would like to welcome Justin Thomas to the interview room here at the WGC Mexico Championship. Justin, last year, first time this tournament being here, had some good success, T5, in the mix to win it there, 54-hole leader. Just talk about being back here at this golf course and trying to get a WGC on your resume.

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, it's great to be back here. The tournament was great last year. The amount of fans, the amount of people that came out, it was really cool. Anytime you have the opportunity to play in a different country and have the opportunity to grow the game in another place is always great for all of us.

Yeah, obviously Sunday didn't go exactly how I wanted last year, but DJ was in kind of one of DJ's modes where he was pretty hard to catch. He definitely won the golf tournament and it was definitely a great learning experience for me.

**MICHAEL BALIKER:** And then obviously last week winning the Honda Classic, your eighth career PGA TOUR victory, now back to No. 1 in the FedExCup standings. This time last year you had multiple wins. I don't know if you can compare where your game is at this year compared to last year.

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I'm very excited and very thrilled where my game's at. I feel like I'm playing very, very well. I feel like I have a lot more control over my game than maybe I did last year. I had more wins obviously coming into this event than last year. But in terms of a consistency factor, just everything is tightened up a lot more, which I really like. What I think is going to propel me to have more chances to win golf tournaments. Whether that's going to happen or not, you never know, that's the crazy and hard part about this game. But all I know is I just need to continue to put in the work and just see what we can do.

**MICHAEL BALIKER:** With that, we'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Justin, a lot of theories about how to account for the altitude here. What's your plan of attack, is it 10 percent, 15 percent, how do you figure it all out?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It's very tough and we're very lucky that we're able to use things such as TrackMan and things like that. I think this is going to be the best week for their branding, for sure, versus any other week. You look out on the range, about everyone's using one just because we're able to get a lot better idea of the numbers. But I thought we had a great -- Jimmy and I had a great method and great strategy last year. It just kind of depends on the shot you're hitting. If you really step on one and hit it hard and hit it up in the air, it may go a little farther versus the shorter irons or wedges that aren't in the air as long aren't

going to be affected as much. So it's very, very dependent on the shot you're hitting and the club you're hitting, but you hit those drivers up in the air, they go pretty far.

**Q. And I think you guys had not been moved all the way back on the driving range last year, had you? Is that a new thing this year for hitting woods, for hitting fairway woods and drivers, they've got you in the corner of the range?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Oh, really? No, we just kind of hit them right where we were last year, at least I think. I don't remember having to move or do anything like that. Yes, I guess that's a new one.

**Q. Justin, two tournaments, two wins this year, a playoff. A playoff wasn't exactly where you get wins last year and this year, two tries, two wins. Can you explain a little bit of the momentum last week?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, a playoff, it's obviously different but I guess you don't -- it's more of kind of a match play type thing. You don't have to -- it's different coming down the last hole and you're tied with one person. Just when you're in a playoff it's kind of an all-or-nothing type situation. You can make an 11 and you're still going to finish second, versus you make an 11 in regulation, you're going to finish whatever you're going to finish. So not that you need to be stupid aggressive, but you're able to maybe take risks or hit shots that you maybe necessarily wouldn't do in regulation.

In both situations I was fortunate. Leish didn't exactly play the second playoff hole how he would have wanted to in Korea, and then last week I played that hole great and Luke just didn't hit the best drive there in the playoff hole. So you definitely need some luck when it comes to winning. I think that that happens to a lot of people when they win, over the course of the week they're going to get some breaks, but I definitely played well enough to do so.

**Q. Have you had any time to celebrate Sunday night?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, Sunday night we had a good time. We just went to The Woods and had some family, a bunch of friends and just kind of hung out there for a little bit. Then went home and had to pack up and head here. It wasn't really anything crazy.

**Q. You've had a lot on your plate, you won, moved to No. 3, you played the member-guest yesterday, fly to here. How do you make sure there's no letdown from Sunday night to Thursday afternoon?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Well, just it's -- it's crazy to say but it's pretty forgotten already. I believe like the fact that it happened, I know that it did, and everything that happened, people know that. But I've always liked what Coach Saban says, they have the 24-hour, the 48-hour rule at Alabama. They get to enjoy their win and then it's on to the next one. That's in the past and all you can focus and work on is your process and getting ready for the next event.

**Q. Speaking of playoffs, the USGA just went away from the 18-hole playoff in favor of a two-hole playoff, so now I think it's the U.S. Open it's two, PGA I think it's three, British I think it's four. What's your preference for deciding a major in extra time?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It doesn't really make a difference to me. I think -- I don't know that many players would be too opinionated. I'm sure you could take any one of us and we would love to be put in the position of a playoff with the chance to win a major championship. It could 72 holes, if you put me in that position, I'm going to be gracious that I'm there and try to fight to win it. I don't think it's, at least to me it wasn't that big of a newsmaker. Obviously, it's a huge difference. But it could end up being great for the tournament as opposed to people that could there on Sunday versus can't come out Monday type of thing and I think it'll be great for the tournament.

**Q. Who picks up the tab at the end of the night?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I did.

**Q. Tiger didn't pay for it?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** He wasn't there.

**Q. The restaurant, don't they honor a guy who --**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Maybe if he wasn't playing maybe, but I don't know. I think that's a good tradition that the winner, winning player or caddie, whatever maybe, picks up the tab. Trust me, I would be more than happy to do that every Sunday.

**Q. With each win you are getting higher and higher in the ranking. Do you have a date to reach No. 1?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** A date?

**Q. Um-hmm, like a goal.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Whenever and if ever that day comes, I'll be perfectly fine with that date. It's not something you can -- just because you can't control what other people can do, I can only control what I can do and the work that I'm putting in. So I'm going to continue to practice and prepare and get myself as ready as possible to keep climbing the rankings every way that I can. Like I said earlier, you just never know what's going to happen in this game, so I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

**Q. Two things kind of along those lines, I know you're really swamped right after Quail Hollow, but A, was winning a major everything that you thought it would be before you won it, and B, if you ever get to No. 1, I mean Tom Lehman was there for one week, some guys are there for like three weeks, what do you expect the feeling**

## **and the joy to be of getting to No. 1?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** The major was, it was weird. I don't know, it didn't -- it didn't really sink in or didn't feel like a major until a couple weeks after, just hearing from certain people that I did or just having the opportunity to do things that I did that I wouldn't have been able to do so if it wasn't for winning that. I just think it was such a whirlwind couple days after that, it took a little bit to kind of realize. And yeah, it was just as much and more than what I thought it was going to be.

In terms of the No. 1 stuff, the No. 1 in the world, I don't know. I don't know what that feeling's going to be like. It is bizarre just because there's so many players right now, and there always is, but so many players right now that can kind of change that. I mean, to do what anybody who's hung in there for a year like DJ has is extremely impressive. But just the fact that if and when it does happen, to be able to say that you have been, I think, is a pretty cool accomplishment.

**Q. What's the coolest thing about winning a major, if you can put it into words because I can't figure it out. You get referred to as PGA champion Justin Thomas, which is nice. You know you've got the trophy, you know you've done it. But do you think about it very much? What's it like?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I don't -- I don't necessarily think about it a lot, but the fact that I'm always going to go to the champions dinner and probably every time I'm there I'm going to be able to relive and rethink the fact that I won the PGA in 2017 type thing. And everyone there, I guess you get whatever, a bond or little brotherhood type thing of all the guys that won the PGA. And I hope to be a part of other champions dinners or champions, what do you call it, the kind of things that are done, whether it's at the Masters, the champions dinner. I don't know what they do for the British Open and U.S. Open.

**Q. Part of a club?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, you're just part of a club and that's something that can never be taken -- or I don't think can ever be taken away from you.

**Q. No probation?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I don't think you can. I just think that that in itself is really cool. Like I said, I hope to be a part of more, but I know at least for now that I'll always have that one.

**Q. When you look at the WGCs, I imagine you think you can win any of them, but does this one in particular stand out at all, because I remember you were sort of fighting your swing a little bit last year and you still had a pretty high finish?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I played really well for what I had here last year, I think I putted

pretty well, which is big, these greens can be difficult to read and to putt.

Yeah, any tournament's going to appeal to a player if they're playing well type thing, if that makes sense. There's times where I've gone to courses that I love, like Tampa last year, I loved Tampa and I played it this last year and I missed the cut. If you're not playing well, it doesn't matter how well you love the golf course, it's going to be hard to play well. You know there's an exception for some places like Augusta or wherever it may be to where if you have some control, you can always get it around because you know the right places to hit it and such like that. But yeah, I like the course, it's a fun little track. The course reminds me a lot of the Web events I played down in South America. I played well in some of those, so I kind of have hopefully those good vibes and just got to hopefully get some more this week.

**Q. You mentioned the tradition of the winner going out Sunday night picking up the tab. Obviously The Woods would be sort of the natural place to go after you win the Honda Classic, but you were here last year, do you have someplace that you sort of have your eye on that you would do that for this tournament?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I'll probably be going home Sunday night, so I guess at my own house in Jupiter, Florida, would be just fine with me.

**MICHAEL BALIKER:** Justin, we appreciate the time. Best of luck this week.