

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 28, 2018

DUSTIN JOHNSON



MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome Dustin Johnson, defending champion of the World Golf Championships-Mexico Championship. Thanks for coming back and joining us, Dustin. Just if you could talk about what it's like coming back here to defend a World Golf Championships event. You played nine holes. Do you see any changes in the golf course at all?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's always great to come back to a place where you've won. Last year being the first year, I thought it was great, really like the golf course. It's really similar this year. Maybe it's a little bit softer because I guess they got a lot of rain last week. Other than that, the golf course hasn't changed. A new tee maybe on No. 13 or something, I think. The golf course is in really good shape and I'm really looking forward to getting the tournament started tomorrow.

MARK WILLIAMS: Last year this was your first event to play in as the World No. 1-ranked player. You've held that title for a year coming back here again. What's this year been like for you as the No. 1-ranked player?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It's been good. Had to put in a lot of hard work. I feel like the golf game is starting to come around being really good again. Last year coming here obviously I was playing some of the best golf of my career leading into this event and continuing on for the Match Play, too. I feel like the game's in really good form coming in here this week and I'm excited about this tournament.

Q. DJ, you mentioned this was the first tournament you played as No. 1 in the world. What do you think you have improved on in your game or as a person over the last 12 months?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: That's a good question. Coming in here last year I felt like everything was really, really, really good in the golf game. It's tough to improve from there, but I've been working hard to get things back to where it was last year. I feel like it's close, it's not quite there. Yeah, I mean, I felt like everything's pretty close. Yeah, it's hard to improve on from how well I was playing last year.

Q. Is there room?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: There's room for improvement, yes.

Q. DJ, everybody says that when you win, you don't have to change anything in your game, but I think you have some thoughts about improving this year. Are you

planning to change something?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I'm not planning on changing anything, just trying to make things a little bit better, a little -- just get things dialed in a little bit more.

Q. Do you change your bag at all for this week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, same bag.

Q. Thinking about the stuff that was in it, actually.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I changed since the start of the year a little bit. I went back to just three wedges and then I put my 2-iron back in the bag.

Q. Why did you go with three wedges?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I had four at the start of the year.

Q. I mean, why did you --

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I felt like I was getting just a little bit lazy with shots into the green because I had a 64 in my bag and I felt like I could hit it anywhere and get up and down. Just what I thought. I don't know if I was actually doing that, but maybe I was just hitting it bad enough that I was hitting it everywhere. But yeah, so I just went back to what I normally play with.

Q. Secondly, whatever numbers your brother put into the book last year, are they still applicable this year or do you have to start over?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Obviously we start over, but it seems like everything is pretty similar, yeah.

Q. DJ, first, welcome home because this is home for you since last year. What about changing, you're No. 1 in the world but you actually win here last year, you became one of the favorite players of the Mexican people. Do you feel any different pressure of the game because of that, or just being one in the world is too much?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I don't feel any extra pressure. It's not the first time I've come back to defend a title. I mean, it's always good when you can come back and be the defending champion, that means you did well the year before. It's a golf course I like, I'm very comfortable on. I feel like I've got a really good game plan for this place, so I just go out and stick to my game plan and play golf.

Q. No. 1's obvious in terms of reaching it off the tee, and sometimes you can go even farther than that, but are there any other holes out there that with altitude that you

give it a crack, or makes sense to anyway?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Not -- I mean, like I could get to 2, but I tried last year and it didn't work so well, so I think I'm just going to lay it up with a 5-iron and sand wedge. It's a little higher percentage to have a good look at birdie. But with the greens being a little bit softer, just kind of depends on how I'm feeling.

Q. Secondly, if you look back at last year, what would be your favorite shot of the week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, the one I hit on 18 was pretty good.

Q. Isn't that kind of funny that everyone comes to altitude and this is about how far you're hitting it? It was a gap wedge, wasn't it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Sand wedge.

Q. Sand wedge. What did you like about that shot? It was good, I realize that.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, the ball, it was below my feet, it was not sitting great, and I didn't really have anywhere to miss it coming out of where I was hitting it. It was either hit a good shot or I was probably going into a playoff. That's what I liked about it, because it won me the golf tournament.

Q. DJ, not to be negative here, but are you aware that you could lose your ranking at No. 1 in the world here this week, and if so, is that motivation at all?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, yeah, I want to stay No. 1, but I want to win every golf tournament I play in also. You know, if someone plays well and beats me and gets to No. 1, they deserve it so that's okay with me. I'll just have to go win the next tournament and get back to No. 1.

Q. Dustin, welcome back as defending champion. My question would be since 2018 is a Ryder Cup year, it's going to be held in Paris, how important is it for you to be recognized as one of the top guns of the U.S. team in terms of your relationship with the other potential members of the Ryder Cup team?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: What's the question?

Q. How important is it for you to be recognized as perhaps the top gun of the U.S. team --

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I mean --

Q. -- in terms of your relationship to the other guys that are --

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I know pretty much -- I'm friends with pretty much everyone that's on the team or that's going to be on the team or potentially make the team. We all know each other and grown up playing together. So for me it's -- I mean, we all know how good each and every one of us are.

Q. Did you take any Spanish in high school?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I did. I did not learn very much as I realize now. Yeah, I was in two years of Spanish, but yeah, I didn't retain any of it.

Q. What kind of grades?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Bs probably. Maybe worse.

Q. How do you think about Mexico?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I enjoy it. People are very nice and friendly. The fans, you get a lot of support out here and they come out and cheer me on, so I enjoy it.

Q. What kind of course did you grow up on learning to play?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: What kind of course?

Q. Public, resort, private?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Public, yes.

Q. Did you give a try to Mexican food?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I like Mexican food, absolutely.

MARK WILLIAMS: All right, Dustin, thanks for your time. Good luck this week in defense of your title.