

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**May 2, 2018**



**JUSTIN THOMAS**

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**AMANDA HERRINGTON:** We'd like to welcome Justin Thomas to the interview room here at the Wells Fargo Championship. Justin, last time you were here you were winning your first major championship. What's the emotions, feelings, thoughts like coming back to Quail Hollow?

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It's always nice and fun to come back to a place where you have some success and have won before, especially here being my first major, it is really cool. Today was my first time on the back nine and Jimmy and I were kind of going through some of the shots that we had hit and some of the clubs that we had hit. Yeah, it's definitely a lot of fun and brings back a lot of great memories.

**Q. That was spectacular the way your practice round started today. Could you take us through sort of how that all happened?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Oh, on -- I guess on 1, I assume you're talking about, yeah.

**Q. The proposal.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, he sent me a direct message on Instagram and I just happened to be going through them one day and I read it. I said that sounds like a pretty cool thing and it would be fun to be a part of.

A big thing that I thought would have been great is the fact if I could have gotten the Tour involved and they would have had it all documented because if it's just randomly in the middle of a day and there's cameras everywhere, it's going to be pretty obvious or awkward. Here we could have at least played it off that the cameras were for some reason there for me and she didn't know any better. So it all worked out great and I'm really happy that I didn't screw it up for him.

**Q. In following you today, one of the things that I know your father had a great influence in your life on the golf course, you're very aware of the fans, very aware of the young people that want to have the opportunity for an autograph. Can you just talk about how important that is for you to be a role model.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It's extremely important. I mean, obviously I'm coming here to play or I play golf to try to become the best player that I can and win as many tournaments as I can, but a day like today where it's a little less serious, it's having the opportunity to engage with people outside the ropes when you usually wouldn't. Or at least I don't in a tournament. We're focused on what we're doing.

But yeah, my big thing is I want to sign for every kid that I can. I mean, it's no hard feelings or anything against adults, but I think that's a lot cooler for a kid and I know that kids don't have any bad intentions with them. So I'm always happy to do anything for kids and there happened to be a pretty good amount today. I don't know what they're doing missing school, but there are a lot of them here.

**Q. I know you guys, a lot of you guys are good friends, you're trying to beat each other when you're playing. I'm just curious where you stand with Rickie at this point. He made a really nice run there at the Masters, came up one shot short. Do you guys ever talk about him trying to get over the line to win a major or is it just something that's kept in the background? I just wonder your own thoughts on him pulling that off here at some point.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, he will, it's just a matter of time. He's too great of a player and gets himself there too often to not. It's just, it's hard. I mean, it's not like he's in a slump by any means. Yeah, he would be the first to tell you that he feels that he should and wishes he had won multiple majors by now. But that's no reason for him to hang his head. He's had a lot of great showings and he's learned a lot. But we never talk about it. All of us don't really talk about very much. We're around golf enough, and when we're not playing it we want nothing to do with it for the most part. Very seldom are we talking about it. And especially something like that, kind of let it go.

**Q. That said, in your own case now, how did you find the Masters in terms of knowing you've already got one?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I mean, just another tournament. I'm just trying to go out and give myself a chance to win and get myself in contention. You know, I did -- somewhat did it. I didn't have a great Saturday and didn't get off to a great start on Sunday to be around the top-5 or so. But yeah, it's just another golf tournament, no matter what I've done in the past or not.

**Q. You've made the game look relatively easy of late. What do you find the most difficult part of this game?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** That's a good question. It's a deep question, too. I've got to think about that one.

It's just the things that this game can do to you. I think how fine of a line it is is something that's not talked about enough I think by outsiders that are looking in. We can go, you know, a month, two months, whatever, a couple weeks, however long it may be with not very good results, but playing good golf and just not getting anything out of it or getting bad bounces or getting in bad waves, not getting the right tee times and just putts lipping out instead of lipping in. You know, that's just -- it's unbelievable. You take three or four shots each week that somehow happen like that that goes from a great finish to no one really caring or

knowing you're there. That's something that can get hard about this game is when you do get in those slumps, even though they may not be slumps, people don't know any better, or some people don't know any better. It's just a very, very fine line out here of winning a golf tournament or being in contention and being in contention and potentially missing a cut.

**Q. Is there any such thing as creating your own breaks?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** No, or else we all would create really good ones. At least I would.

**Q. Outside of the grasses this week, is there anything different about the way the golf course is playing now as far as setup, pin placements, anything along those lines versus last year at the PGA?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, the greens are quite a bit different. The greens are very firm and a decent bit slower than the PGA. The balls are going to be bouncing very high on our approach shots into the green. It's different. They take a couple hops and then they check on the shorter irons, but that first hop is a big one. So you need to kind of have some height coming into the greens and some spin on certain shots. But other than that, I mean, the grasses are completely different, so like you said, you can't even begin to compare that, but the greens are quite a bit different.

**Q. Along those same lines, is there an advantage to having just won here nine months ago or because it's playing so different, do you still feel like you have an advantage?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Not necessarily. I think no matter how much success you have at a golf course or a place, you don't necessarily have an advantage. I mean, just because Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson have played Augusta National so well, I wouldn't look at them as having an advantage over me. They just -- they maybe are smarter about playing the place than I am, but it's Quail Hollow, it's all in front of you. There's no hidden tricks to it. I just scored better than everybody at the PGA. There's a handful of courses you play that course knowledge definitely does help a lot, but I wouldn't say that this is one of them. This is a place that you kind of see what's all in front of you and you're just trying to go out there and pick your spots and minimize the mistakes.

**Q. What's one important lesson you learned last season that you hope to bring into this year to hopefully build the momentum moving forward?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** As a whole or --

**Q. As a whole.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I've said it a million times: Patience. I harp on that quite a bit just to try to stay in the moment as much as I can, not make any emotional decisions on the golf course or any mistakes that I shouldn't be making. I just want to try to make it as easy on

myself as I can, because not only is it a long week but it's a long season. The more energy I can save, the better, you know, come playoff time.

**Q. At the PGA last year, it was such a bunched leaderboard on the back nine. There were a bunch of pivotal moments for you. Is there one that really sticks out in your mind that you think about a lot like that's where I won this tournament?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Not on the back nine on Sunday. I had a pretty -- I mean, even for me a pretty unbelievable up-and-down on my 17th hole on Thursday that still, if I don't get that up and down, everything would have been different, it really would have. I would have gone to 4 over with one to go on one of the hardest holes on the golf course, and if I make par or bogey there, I'm definitely around the cut line and I have to play a great round to make the cut, so might have put some different pressure on myself. But in terms of Sunday, that chip-in on 13 was pretty sweet.

**Q. Can you just paint a picture of the shot on Thursday that you had to hit?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I think I was 3 over. I was either 3 or 4 over playing 17 -- No. 8, my 17th hole starting on 10. Had a wedge in. It was kind of that back pin and the rough was just brutal, so you can't go over now with the rough but you definitely couldn't go over then with how fast the greens were and how brutal the rough was.

Of course I flew the green, landed on the downslope and went on the downslope probably seven or eight yards over the green and it was just bogey or double. Just can't hit it there.

I just had a terrible lie and I just laid it open and just took pretty much a full swing and just tried to get it somehow on the right tier. It just stayed on about 12 feet and I made that. And I ended up birdieing No. 9 to finish 2 or 3 over. Jimmy and I still talk about that up-and-down all the time.

**Q. I know you talk a lot about just trying to win a golf tournament every time you turn up, but is there something when you walked away from here last year in August winning that has given you a more powerful inner confidence as you've proceeded? You're a confident guy anyway, but there has to be something inside that last year did for you that's made you more patient, calmer.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, my mental game last year at this tournament was maybe the best it's ever been. I just -- I stayed patient, I picked my spots. But the inner confidence part of me, just the fact that I won a major and I beat a lot of really good players on a really good golf course, I think every time I see highlights of this tournament or the PGA when it was here and I see some of the shots that I hit or putts that I made and just the confidence that I could see in myself, that's kind of when I get excited and get pumped up a little bit with myself knowing that I handled it so well.

**Q. Tell us how you play the Green Mile, and is there anything you do in your practice**

**round to prepare for those three holes once competition starts?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It pretty much is try to survive, that's all. It's a brutal stretch of holes. I mean, you play them even par for the week, you're lapping the field. It's very wind dependent on how 16, 17 will play, and then obviously if 17's going to be, whatever, be downwind, then 18 will be into the wind. So it is difficult.

But at the same time, you know, there has been some great shots and some great birdies made. I know Rory's had some success playing those holes the years that he's won, and myself on 17. But I'll take pars right now.

**Q. Is there one moment from that PGA Championship win that came rushing back to you when you went out and played the golf course this week?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, definitely 17. First off, I got in that tee box today and I have no idea how I hit 7-iron from that tee box. That was like, like what do we have, we have 230 today or 220, and it was 197? I -- I just, man, my adrenaline and everything was pumping so hard that shot. I had a hard time believing that we played that tee box in the PGA. That's the only hole. I took a picture of that hole today and sent to my parents because it's the best shot I ever hit in my life, so it's some pretty special memories on an extremely difficult hole.

**Q. Do you wish the setup was like it was last year in the PGA versus what you're facing this week?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Absolutely. I wish it was exactly like it was at the PGA. I like the bermudagrass just from a comfort level, or the bermuda greens I definitely like more. But it is what it is and I still have to try and go play some good golf out there.

**AMANDA HERRINGTON:** Justin, thank you for your time today and good luck this week.

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Thanks, Amanda.