

ROUND 2 INTERVIEW
January 25, 2019



JUSTIN ROSE (-15)

Q. You seemed to be enjoying yourself. How was it today out there?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, it was a great day out there. Obviously you never quite know what to expect on the South course. I didn't drive it well early in my round actually, but I kept sort of (inaudible) in the fairway bunkers and got clean lies and was able to make some quality shots, making some birdies after missing some fairways early and that kind of got me into the round. From that point on, I really played well. The one poor shot was on No. 7 where I tugged (inaudible) to the green there, but other than that, it was pretty pure.

Q. You're quite a strategic player. How much do you feel like this course plays into that?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I think second shot-wise this is a really key golf course. It's well bunkered, you've got those little sort of tongues where they can stick the pins. You have to be smart with your iron play. The greens (inaudible) strategizing the second shot, trying to leave the ball -- there are certain times you can use the slope and other times you want to be putting up the hill. We were thinking about (inaudible.)

Q. How many times in your career (inaudible) how much confidence does that give you and stability because you look very comfortable with your game right now?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, it's never easy out there. There's distractions as well as noise out there today. The crowds are big, everyone's having a great time. It's perfect drinking weather, isn't it, 70 degrees, sun's out. There was a lot of distractions. It's never easy, you're never totally comfortable out there, but those are the moments where you have to fall back on experience and just keep focusing on the shot.

There were definitely some mental errors out there a couple times. You had to back off because you heard the click of a camera or something go off. Maybe that's where experience does help.

Q. You said it's 70 degrees, perfect weather. How do you anticipate the course changing over the course of the weekend and how much will that change your game plan?

JUSTIN ROSE: I mean, the greens may firm up a touch, but I don't see it changing sort of drastically overnight unless we get a really cool breeze blowing over this place the next two days.

The firmer, the better really. It makes it even more strategic, which is a style of golf that I like to play. I felt like today was a good round. I didn't make many putts. Nice to make one at 16. A lot of it was done the hard way today just through good solid ball-striking. Hit some good putts that didn't fall. I'm still hoping that on the weekend the greens will smooth out, maybe a few less (inaudible) on them and make a few putts.

Q. Justin, congratulations, another great day, seven more birdies, you had seven yesterday and an eagle. Your thoughts on how you played this second round?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, obviously it's a tough test, that South course, and I think 66 is apparently the joint low score for the two days. Anytime you equal that, you know you've gone out there and you've put a good round together.

For me, I guess the key early was I missed a couple fairways in fairway bunkers early and caught decent lies, but hit a couple really quality shots out of fairway bunkers and got the round going. A couple early birdies in the first five holes and then birdied the par 5 6th and suddenly I was 3 under and things were rolling again, so good momentum.

Q. I was going to ask you about those bunker shots because they got you on a three birdie run there on the front nine and then also a great par save at 12, you had to hack it out of the rough there, great wedge to within three feet.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, exactly, those are nice little momentum savers. When things are going your way, those are the breaks that you need, the right shot at the right time. It was good. I could have tried to sort of hack a 3-wood out of that lie and try to get up there on the green or around the green, but the chances of pulling that shot off were pretty slim. So some of it was strategic, just putting myself in a position where I knew I was going to have a decent third shot at it and it was nice when it pays off like that.

Q. And the 28-footer at 16, that was nice.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, that was nice because really I didn't make a putt all day. The other longest putt was about six, seven feet on No. 4 maybe was the next longest putt I made. I hit some decent putts, but they weren't really falling from mid range, so nice to see one disappear there.

Q. Thoughts on the weekend now? You're the leader at 15 under, but a long way to go.

JUSTIN ROSE: Totally. I guess it's 3 ahead, but from what I saw, Hideki played great today, 12 under. He's a class player. I mean, listen, halfway point. If I had a three-shot lead going into Sunday, then it would be worth kind of thinking about game plan and strategy, but as of now I'll just keep doing what I'm doing.

Q. Justin Rose, just tied the 36-hole tournament record. How important was it to get those early birdies on the front nine and get that momentum going?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, that was key today. I hit a couple of poor tee shots out of the neck a little bit and caught some fairway bunkers early in my round, but hit some quality shots out of there. Got the round up and running I guess on 4, 5 and 6, things were cruising.

Yeah, it was a good day. I think Billy Horschel got off to a really fast start today. Jordan was a few under through the front nine. The whole group was looking for birdies on a tough South course, which is kind of nice.

Q. You mentioned the tough South golf course. You told us yesterday that you were looking forward to getting over there and getting some momentum. Now that you've tackled it and played as well as you did today, how much momentum and confidence does that give you?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, a lot. The job was done today. That was really nice to go out there and play a positive round. I can build on that for the weekend. I won't get ahead of myself right now, we're at the halfway stage. Going into tomorrow I should know what to expect. I don't know if the weather's going to change or what have you, but right now (inaudible) the position of the first two days, and if you play well, the course is there to be had. What I like about it is if you drive it well, hit (inaudible).

Q. We talked yesterday about that driver and how well (inaudible.) You've only missed four greens with the irons. How key have those clubs been for you getting to this position?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I think that's key to obviously (inaudible). I'm swinging it well, striking it well. Obviously strategy, game plan, not chasing the wrong pins. It's easy to miss greens with good shots sometimes if you take on the wrong flagstick, so we're being patient at times and putting it in the middle of the green when you have to and looking for the birdies when you've got good numbers.

Q. Justin, do you notice anything different about your game versus last week or is this more a situation of the course just fits you that much better?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think this golf course is more in my wheelhouse, these conditions more than last week, but you know, last week was fun, enjoyed it.

I think mentally I learned a lot last week. I was clearly just rusty. I hadn't been on the golf course since Indonesia until literally Thursday morning. I'm not a guy that plays a lot of golf when I'm at home. I hit some balls and I chip and I putt, but I'm not on the golf course really that much. Hadn't been on the course for a month before Thursday morning of the Desert Classic, so clearly just some mental rust there. It was good, I got a good read on my game, what I had to work on coming into this week.

Q. You mentioned last week that it's hard starting again here, you put that in to maybe get rid of some of that rust. Clearly it may be working?

JUSTIN ROSE: So far, so good, yeah, exactly. Yeah, I just -- I've had not that much success here, maybe as much as I should have had, but the last couple years I changed it up and played I think before. This has always been my first event and the last couple seasons this hasn't been my first event. (Inaudible) I think a top-10, by the time I finished 4th last year, so it's been a good change-up.

Q. The last few years you've consistently been in contention practically every week. What did you learn about the burdens of that and how to handle that and how to keep that going instead of just kind of saying, okay, I played three good weeks, this time I'll fall back?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think scheduling is important. I don't play too much. You still play enough because you still want to get momentum and you want to get on a run. It's very difficult if your schedule's one week on, one week off, but I feel like plenty years into it I know the courses I like, I know where I've played well, I know where I'm comfortable.

But yeah, my game's just gotten better all around. I think I worked on my weaknesses the last couple years and the putting's been better, which I think is ultimately producing more top-10s and more wins. The ball-striking's always been pretty much decent enough for me to contend week in and week out. Yeah, and obviously just maturing and confidence, it all goes hand in hand really. I can't pinpoint one thing.

Q. You kind of mentioned after the season where you win the FedExCup and you did do the things you did last year, what do you focus on in the offseason?

JUSTIN ROSE: Nothing yet because the offseason hasn't been long enough. There's been no time to implement anything. I just have an overall feeling of what I want to work on and it will be a work in progress as the year goes on.

I think there wasn't enough time to really make a wholesale change more than different clubs. I'm feeling that as I go, but I know scoring clubs, wedges, chipping, obviously making more and more putts from mid range, 20-footers, I think that will make a difference for me. But the margins are so small in terms of what you're trying to improve on.

Q. Talk about scheduling better, before that how were you scheduling and what did you look back on and say I need to change it?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think I play three in a row now. Three's a nice number. First week you never quite know if you're going to come out, the second week you should be sharp, third week you're still fresh and have a great chance to compete. For me, by the time I get to week four and five, I'm hoping to play well. I could very well play well, but it's not so much of

a guarantee. Three weeks seems to be my limit.

Q. Do you plan to sort of keep this conservative but I guess aggressive play into the weekend? Make them come at you on a very hard course?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, you know, if you can go out and make four, five birdies a day, you're going to maybe drop the odd shot around here, it doesn't take much to do that, so if you can stay positive and make your birdies, then it becomes harder to catch someone. I think you've got to pick your moments out there. I think obviously Tiger's done so well around here. This is such -- he's so strategic really. He hits flamboyant and great golf shots, but he's also very conservative at times. I think yeah, just pick my moments really and if I'm feeling good and I've got good numbers, go at it. If not, par's never a bad score here.

Q. I think you mentioned this yesterday, but at a U.S. Open type venue, you seem to play your best golf. Why is that do you think?

JUSTIN ROSE: It's more of a premium on ball-striking, I think, which sort of does fit my profile, and statistically, driving, iron play over the years, those have been strong elements of my game. So anytime there's more of sort of a favor to the ball-striking, it gives me more of a benefit, I suppose, rather than, for example, last week you could argue it was more of a putting competition.

Q. Justin, how do you expect the South course to play over the weekend?

JUSTIN ROSE: I mean, generally it's pretty low humidity here, so I imagine it's going to firm up. I don't see any rain in the forecast, but I don't think it's going to get super bouncy and firm and fiery on us.

At the same time, yeah, maybe if the ball starts releasing five or six yards, that can make those tight pins play much tougher.