

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW
February 24, 2019



JUSTIN THOMAS (-9)

Q. With Justin, set the course record last year third round, you tie it today. What is it about this place that gets you going?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Whatever wasn't getting me going the first -- I guess the second round and yesterday. You know, first group off so I had fresh greens, which is a huge difference. I really struggled on poa the last couple days. But it just was one of those days you get rolling, it's not like you can really attribute it to anything. I was driving it well. Kind of started in at the end of yesterday, I just kind of said screw it, we're hitting driver everywhere and I drove it well, so it made the course a lot easier.

Q. Yeah, when you begin the day 16 shots back, you might as well go for it.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Exactly.

Q. You have something here to show us, you have a lot of highlights. You start on 10, this is your second shot.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, this is a good one. I think we were trying to play it about 65 yards. It looked like it had a chance to go in. I had a couple scared today, I really wish I would have made one of them.

Q. So you birdie that one, you birdie 11, now you step up to the 12th.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I hit a great drive, and after just a horrendous little wedge chip shot. Apparently I hit it in just the spot I needed to, though, and that was kind of the beginning of some of the long putts I made.

Q. All right. Four in a row, now on 13. How much of a bonus is it when you make something of this length?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a big bonus. It's kind of the same as the last one, it's a very difficult hole. Again, the greens were pure this morning as the ball's rolling true, but more importantly, my speed was a lot better today and that's why I feel I was making putts.

Q. We were on the air live, we're thinking maybe you're going to go Sony Open and go 59 on us. You had that bogey, then you step up to 18, almost do what you did a year ago in the final round.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it looked like it had -- or it sounded like from Webb and Pauly it

had a pretty good chance, but from that angle in the rough I would have been very pleased inside 10, 12 feet, so again, a bonus.

Q. You said you had a couple that came close, I see the smile on your face. How about this par-3 third?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I want to see this because I will never know how this ball went to where it did. Oh, my gosh. It was a low draw downwind and the greens are a little bit inconsistent in terms of some bounce; some don't. I really thought I hit that one perfectly where it was going to kind of bounce up onto that slope and roll back. But again, it's kind of like Pauly said walking off the green, he said you deserve making that putt. Yeah, it was nice to have that go in.

Q. Saw a lot of guys in that position and none of them made it. That was a very, very good putt there at 3. Now your third at 6 from just off the green.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, this was a makeable chip, although it was rolling, man, it hit dead in the center of the pin. I thought it was going to go in. It's hard to really complain, it was probably going a good 10 feet past. Yeah, once that happened I was thinking 59 early in my back nine and I thought I had a decent chance, especially after that birdie, but obviously can't be too upset with 9 under.

Q. So the first couple days took you out of the running this year, but you're going to be playing next week at the Honda Classic. How much momentum can you gather on a day like today heading into next week at Palm Beach Gardens?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Hopefully a lot. I just was not in a very good place mentally the last couple days. I don't know, I couldn't get focused. I just was very irritable. Jimmy would probably be the first one to tell you I just was having a hard time kind of staying in it. Something about playing with Webb and Pauly, I've played well with them. I shot 62 with them last year here, too. I've had some good vibes, so hopefully I'll get paired with them next week.

Q. We've had some cool moments over the three years. The kids have really come out here to support you guys. Look at how cool it is to see those guys' faces, see their heroes give them golf balls and just interact with them. It's not hard to be a hero for you guys with the youngsters, is it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's not. You know, we were kind of joking about this week that we wish we had enough balls to give every kid a ball that they wanted, but if we did that, I think Titleist would need to start another plant because there's a lot of kids out here and they're huge, huge golf fans.

I know a couple kids came out and watched every single round of mine, and for someone like me, that doesn't happen very often. We gave them a couple things. It is really cool for

not only myself but all of us here in Mexico City to play in front of them and hopefully grow the game and get them into it.

Q. So close on that final put, it looked like it was going to go, didn't it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I hit a really good putt, obviously just misread it a little bit. I kind of had it going left at the start and then straight probably the last six to eight feet and it never went left there at the beginning. Yeah, I would have loved to break the record from last year, but can never be upset with a round like today.

Q. I think we can tell that on 6, too, the chip almost went down, hit the center of the flagstick. You looked skyward, but you grinded out a great -- a little fist pump at 7. Tell me about that bunker play and you saving par to keep it going.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it was big. I mean, although I didn't have a chance to win the golf tournament, I still, if I birdied two of those last three I probably could have finished top-5. Hopefully I'll hang in there for a top-10 today.

Yeah, I mean, it's just such a weird course because if you play poorly like I did the second and third round, especially with the greens getting how they can, it's hard to score. If you play well, you drive it well, it's not a very hard golf course. So it's fun to play for that reason and I'm just glad that I at least got something out of this week.

Q. You got a lot out of this week, much like last year. Heading to next week at the Honda Classic, just tell me what this round means to you going forward the rest of this season, not necessarily next week, but the rest of the year for you.

JUSTIN THOMAS: To be perfectly honest, it means absolutely nothing. It's a good week, but I mean, I'm just trying to -- it was a good finish to move up in FedEx, it was a good finish for world ranking points, good finish for earnings, but stuff like that, it's not like I'm playing tomorrow. The Honda Classic starts on Thursday and the rest of the year is the rest of the year. But I've said for a while I've been really, really close, I feel like, to reel in quite a few wins not in a row, but just reeling some off. I've really, really been close this year, just haven't been able to close the deal like I have the past couple years. All I can do is just keep playing the best that I can and it will happen.

Q. Any bad taste in your mouth from your Sunday round last week, this will be a pretty nice way to get rid of it, right?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I would sure pay a lot of money to switch the two. I would gladly take a 50th place this week to win last week. Yeah, it definitely helps. I think it's just more momentum that I'm able to build on the year or things that I'm able to kind of build in my game, because kind of like I've said, I've been playing well and I've been close to winning quite a few tournaments but just haven't been able to quite do it. Starting the day 16 shots back isn't exactly what I had in mind when I teed up on Thursday.

Q. Did you find something today, or was it just everything was --

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not really. To be honest, this might sound bad, but I just didn't really care. I was hitting driver everywhere. I drove it well yesterday, so it's not like I was driving it bad and hitting driver. I felt like I was driving it well enough to where I could create a significant advantage for myself.

I mean, we had fresh greens this morning, which is a huge, huge difference on poa annua. I had a very difficult time putting the second and third round. It was nice to -- because I didn't feel too bad over the putter, just couldn't putt it unfortunately, but was glad to at least see some fall today and I'm very excited to get back on bermuda greens.

Q. You said you were very aware about the course record. At what point today did it kind of dawn on you that you could go one better?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I was trying to shoot 59. After I birdied 1, 2 and 3, I knew I needed to get four of my last six and the next two were wedges. I didn't hit a very good wedge there on 4. No. 5 I just played the hole great and hit a good putt, just barely leaked low.

Then even after birdieing 6, I knew if I birdied my last three and shoot 59. Obviously hitting in the bunker puts -- it's also hard with a 235-yard par 3 with a tree in the way really. I was just trying to go as low as I could to finish as high as I could. I knew I obviously had zero chance to win the golf tournament, but if I possibly got two or three more I could sneak in the top-5 potentially.

Q. Justin, what does this do for you going into your title defense next week? And second question, you've been hit and miss at that course. Can you describe the feelings at that golf course?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think it's very similar to a place like this or a place like THE PLAYERS where it doesn't -- I don't think it necessarily suits anybody's game, you just have to be playing well. I think that's why I went missed cut, third, missed cut, win. So I'm really hoping that trend doesn't continue for this year.

I've been playing well, so it's a golf course I know holes that you can kind of pick your spots and holes where you just kind of need to swallow your pride a little bit and try to make par. And you always or at least you usually seem to get at least one or two really windy days where par's a really good score around there. You just kind have to take it for what it gives you.

In terms of momentum, it is what it is. The tournament starts on Thursday, it's not like it starts tomorrow. I'm just really excited to get home, sleep in my bed and get some rest. Again, I'm just ecstatic about being on bermuda greens.

Q. Can you put yourself in Rory's shoes? He's played well enough to get into the final group on Sunday several times in the last 13 months, but looks like he's going to come away still without winning. Do you look at it like it's good to get there, or at some point do you think it becomes a mental -- if it were you speaking for yourself, would it become a mental thing after a while?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, I know that I wouldn't have learned what I learned in Phoenix and L.A. if I wasn't there. Yeah, those two still extremely bother me and I really do feel like I should have won both golf tournaments. But if I wasn't in that position and I wasn't in that final group and didn't have a chance to win, then I wouldn't have learned the things that I need to do better next time.

Rory's such a great player that, you know, like a lot of guys, he can go win six, seven, eight times in a year if he just kind of gets hot. Everybody -- all the top players have their sprees, you know. Tiger obviously had it for whatever, 10 years, that's a bit extreme. But I had a hot year, Jordan had a hot year, DJ's had a hot couple years, Rosey's been hot, BK, and Rory's had his times, too.

Jimmy and I were talking about that today. I respect Rory maybe more than anybody out here, just how genuine and how great of a guy he is, so I'm always pulling for him if I don't have a chance. I know he's going to be fine. It's not like I was exactly pleased, or trying to think of the right word, when I got paired against him at the Ryder Cup. I knew it was going to be an extremely tough match, so I think the world of his game, so I think he's going to be just fine.

Q. I know you said this course doesn't really favor anyone, but what you've done the last two years and with DJ's success, is there something to be said for if you are driving it well as powerful as you two guys are?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, if you're driving it well, it definitely favors a longer hit. A hole like 2 we're able to drive it on the green or drive it around the green, and on 4, take it over the corner. No. 6 we can get to, and 10, hitting drivers down there. But that's the thing, if you're not driving it well, it's difficult.

But DJ and Rory are two of the best drivers of the ball I've ever seen. I think it's three years in a row now they've been around the lead and played well, and myself included but I wouldn't put myself on the same tier as them in terms of driving the ball. I can get it going a little more crooked than they can sometimes, but we've been working on it.

I just think that this place, it definitely favors someone who's driving it well, but as good as DJ's wedge game is, it's a pretty easy game for him sometimes.