

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
December 1, 2020



JUSTIN THOMAS

SHARON SHIN: I would like to welcome in Justin Thomas to the virtual interview room here at the Mayakoba Golf Classic presented by UNIFIN.

Justin, you're making your second appearance at this event. Can we get some opening comments about your return to Mexico?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm glad to be back. I played my rookie year, which I guess was six years ago as crazy as it is. Yeah, I kind of caught myself yesterday, I had to remind myself I'm at a golf tournament, I'm not on vacation. It's so beautiful here. The beach, the golf course is pretty, so many holes on the water. It's a great, great relaxing venue and a nice way to end the PGA TOUR year before we start off in Kapalua.

SHARON SHIN: And talking about this season, you already have three top-10s in four starts. How would you personally rate your performance in the fall and how's your game feeling now?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I played well this fall, but I feel like I've had a really good opportunity to win three times and I haven't won any of them, so that's a little disappointing. I think I have to find a little bit better way to kind of get focused or just to really close the deal because I've had -- again, I had a 54-hole lead in L.A. and didn't get it done and had a co-lead for 36 at Augusta and had the lead through 18 at the U.S. Open and I didn't get it done at any of those. So I clearly need to work on something or get something improved to get it done when I get in those scenarios again. But I've been working hard and I feel good about my game.

In terms of this week, I took a nice little break in kind of easing back into it starting at the end of last week. So these next few days will hopefully get us going for Thursday.

SHARON SHIN: Like you mentioned, this is the last tournament of the calendar year of 2020, I'm sure you're looking forward to some off time in December. Do you have any special plans for your off time?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Don't have a crazy amount of off time. I'm playing the Father-Son with my dad, I guess the 19th and 20th I think it is of December. So that's going to be our fifth major, my fifth major of the year and his major, so that will be a lot of fun for us. I know next week will be a little bit of off time for me. It will be a week grinding with my dad, so we'll be getting ready for that and that will be the true end of the year for us.

Q. JT, she kind of asked about the PNC. Can you give me an idea of the level of

nerves that you think you'll have versus what Mike will have?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No fans will help with his nerves. I'll be nervous for him. I'll be nervous for me, too. I want us to play well. Obviously the No. 1 priority is fun and it's a really special moment for my dad and I.

You know, he's competitive, he wants to play well. He played in a lot of tournaments in the past, he obviously hasn't played in any in a while, but I think it's exciting for him because he used to have reasons, just like I do, tournaments to practice and prepare for and he hasn't had that in a while. So when I asked him and we decided we were going to play, for him it was like, okay, now I have a legitimate reason to go out and practice and hit some balls. I'm sure he'll be nervous once we tee off on that first hole, but hopefully we'll make some birdies and it will ease his nerves a little bit.

Q. And kind of an unrelated question, last week's news about the PGA TOUR and the European Tour coming up with a strategic partnership, from a player's perspective, what are the benefits for you as far as what you would be able to do if those schedules came closer together?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I think -- I mean, I obviously understand it vaguely. I don't probably understand the very extreme details of it yet, exactly when certain things are going to happen or why or whatever it might be. So I probably can't fully comment just because I don't know all the information quite yet. I know we're going to have a PAC meeting I think here coming up, so we'll be able to talk about it more then.

But it's great. I think the opportunity for us to be able to play in more European Tour events if it allows and obviously vice versa, you know. I think it's a benefit for both tours.

Q. Hey, Justin, I wanted to ask about working with John Graham on your putting since middle of the year. Can you talk about kind of how that started and what you've been working on and how you think it's been going so far at this point in the year?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, John's been great. You know, obviously Matt and I have had a lot of great tournaments and a lot of success. It just was I felt like I was having a hard time with my bad putting weeks, which I think is the case for anybody on Tour. Everybody's great is great and good is really good, but it's how good is your bad and that's something I struggled with and we couldn't quite figure out why or what it was. I really went to John -- I told Matt, hey, I'm going to go see John. I wanted to see him in an off week and hear something else and see if he could help us.

I saw him and some stuff really clicked and I liked it, and we continue to kind of do what I was doing. Then come the end of the year, I felt like it was time to just make a full switch and go all in with John.

Matt and I have been such good friends for a long time that it was -- you know, we still have

a great friendship. I didn't want it to be to the point where that would be deterred at all. We've just been working on a lot of non-mechanic stuff, to be honest. I think -- and he even said that to me, Matt did such a good job of getting me in a good place to make a good, consistent stroke. My setup has gotten so much better, my stroke has gotten so much better, my fundamentals have gotten so much better, but I think a lot of the other aspects of it, the greenery, the speed, understanding when -- making putts do a certain thing, whatever it is, is something that I had -- I hadn't really incorporated in my putting and that's what he's really helped me with.

I think the results have been great. I mean, I would say that the couple -- the tournaments that I've played this fall, obviously you can always make more putts, you can never make too many, but I've consistently been better in making more putts, which is what we're looking for. And my bad putting days have been better. What I like about him is, same as myself, he's never satisfied. We're still working on trying to get better and figure out what we can do to get ready to start the year next year.

Q. Justin, this is usually around the time when you will post your goals for the year and I'm wondering if you're still planning to do that and how you will judge this year versus other years based on things that have happened.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I debated it and I've thought about it. I just don't know because it's such a -- obviously it was a weird year and a lot of -- I shouldn't say a lot, but some of the goals that I had were kind of taken away because of the schedule change or I just -- it wasn't realistic.

So I don't know. I might, I might not, I haven't decided yet. Maybe one day it will hit me and I'll do it. I always like doing that and I think it's something -- obviously the guys on Tour don't care or there's plenty of guys that I'm friends with that really couldn't care less if I post them or not, but I think it's something that's great for junior golfers to understand. For anybody, I think everybody should make goals. I'm not checking it every week, I'm not checking it every day saying have I done it yet, but it's more of a this is kind of the base point or the baseline of what I want to try to accomplish this year, whether it's an easy accomplishment, medium accomplishment, hard or extremely hard. Then going at the end of the year, I feel I'm able to go through those and say, okay, this was a pretty good year, this was an okay year, this was a great year.

I don't know, to answer your question. I guess I'll see how I feel in the next couple weeks and maybe I'll do it.

Q. The follow-up to that is, is there anything you can do this week to accomplish a certain goal that you had set?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm not sure. I haven't looked at them in a while to know if this week is going to change anything. I wouldn't think it would. I've already made my goals for the 2021 season, so I think kind of past is the goals from last year or last season. That's what I do it

by is by seasons.

So no, but hey, I'll gladly take a trophy this week and build towards some other goal at some point.

Q. And Justin, I'm sure you had time to reflect a bit on the Masters and you mentioned having a share of the 36-hole lead. I thought -- I was out there watching you, you made a great up-and-down or a great save for par at 11, but that stretch from 12 through 18 on Saturday, what do you see as having gone wrong there?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Just being in the position I was, and as well as DJ played, I just didn't play well enough. I mean, obviously it was just one of those days, it was like I couldn't -- I was just really close, you know? It was like nothing really went -- it could have been two yards this way and it would have kicked over here or if it would have just stayed -- I think of No. 8, I obviously hit a little right of where I wanted, but I hit a really good hard drive up the right and I was literally one yard left from being left of the bunker and one yard farther from being over the bunker, but instead I'm in the face of the bunker and I make par as opposed to if I miss that bunker, have probably 4-iron or 5-wood in and probably make 4.

No. 14, I just barely tugged an 8-iron to that back left pin and instead of landing on that slope and going right down to the hole probably 10 feet at the most, it lands just left and kicks long left of the green and don't get up and down. It was things like that.

I parred 12, I birdied 13, so I did what I needed to do on those holes. But 14, 15 was a dagger and obviously it was a bad bogey on 18. You know, it is what it is. It was frustrating, but I feel like I'm getting closer to winning there and it was just one of those years. As soft as it was and gettable as it was, it's harder to have those stretches on easier holes and win the tournament. In years past when it's firmer and faster, you can get away with a couple bogeys and mistakes here and there as opposed to 20 under where you don't have a lot of margin for error.

Q. Justin, my apologies for waking up with so much negativity today, but I was thinking about your year; a really nice year, but I'm serious, I couldn't think of all the times you had chances, whether it was Colonial, Muirfield Village, Sherwood, opening round lead at the U.S. Open, I could go on and on, a good year. Do you think more about the ones that got away and what you can do to fix them or the ones that went right?

JUSTIN THOMAS: The ones that got away always. I think that's spoken like any golfer, but an athlete, I think it's always easier to look at the -- unfortunately, look at the failures or look at the things that went wrong because that's what I'm able to build on and learn from.

I mean, I think about Workday more often than I should. It drives me absolutely crazy that I didn't win that tournament. There's so many shots on those last three holes that I wish I had over, but it is what it is.

I think, I don't know, it was weird because I really feel like I've done a great job of closing golf tournaments or playing well with the lead and doing well, but for some reason this year I didn't do that. I just didn't hit the shots I needed to, I didn't perform the way I should have, but you know, I'm going to have a little bit of time to reflect and I feel like I have a decent grasp or understanding what it was.

But no, I very well understand that I was, you know, probably four or five rounds away from having another historic year, but it doesn't mean that can't happen next year.

Q. That kind of puts you back in a happy place. Is it a reminder at all of how close one can get to five, six, seven wins, which seems absurd in this time?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I fully believe and think that that's possible. I understand, like you said, in this day and age it is very difficult, but I mean, I still see no reason why someone can't win, eight, nine, 10, 11 times in a season. I know it's not likely and a lot of people, it probably can't happen, but like I said, I was a couple rounds away in a short season from winning five or six times.

But again, I was a couple shots away from not winning a couple times. It's how golf is. There's only one winner every week and you're going to go on hot streaks, you're going to go on cold streaks, but I feel like I am very close to maybe reeling a couple off or having a great year. But I also understand that this game doesn't just give you trophies because you're close, you have to earn it.

Q. Justin, thanks for waking up early and doing this. You're making in the PNC thing with your dad later this month. I was just wondering your thoughts on playing with your dad, playing a tournament with your dad and trying to get your game face on playing with dad. And also, how much have you talked to Tiger about this, because he's going to be a first-timer as well playing with Charlie.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, Tiger and I talked about it a bunch. He brought it up a while ago that Charlie wanted to play and Charlie really wanted to play with us. I've obviously gotten to know him well and he knows my dad a little bit as well.

For some reason, Charlie just always wants to beat me, it doesn't matter what it is. Although he's never beaten me in golf or a putting contest, he still talks trash just like his dad. It will be fun. We'll have that like inner tournament within a tournament, trying to shut his little mouth up, but it will be fun.

My dad, it's going to be very special for us. Probably won't be near as competitive as Charlie will be, but it will be down in there somewhere. We're just excited. It's going to be fun. It's a big reason I'm playing this week, but also the Father-Son, I really, really liked playing the Presidents Cup last year in December. I felt like December has been a month for me that's easy to get lazy, it's easy to not work as hard, it's easy to kind of kick back. You obviously

need to enjoy and take some time to relax, but I don't think I've done a great job in years past in December of using it productively of getting better and getting my body in shape, whatever it might be. I felt like playing this week would be a good opportunity for me to get a little competitive edge and then I'll have a couple days off and then getting ready for the Father-Son. So obviously we're going to have fun and enjoy it, but we want to play well. It will be an enjoyable time for my dad.

Q. So you're definitely playing with Tiger and Charlie in the same group?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm not sure. I think I more so meant in the tournament, but it also would be great if we played together.

SHARON SHIN: Justin, thank you so much for your time and good luck this week.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Thank you.