

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 25, 2022

JUSTIN THOMAS



AMANDA HERRINGTON: We would like to welcome Justin Thomas to the interview room here at the 2022 Farmers Insurance Open.

Justin, you're making your third appearance in the tournament, most recently you played the U.S. Open last year but haven't been back at the Farmers since 2015. Thoughts on being back this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm glad to be back. I jokingly told my dad, playing the U.S. Open here, I really like this golf course, I don't know why I don't play more. It's just one of those things in the scheduling, hadn't worked out. And playing two golf courses is obviously a little bit more difficult, but I mean great part about this place, my first-ever PGA TOUR top-10 was here, so I definitely have a lot of great memories. Hopefully we keep getting weather like this. It's pretty tough to beat this place.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: You're making your fourth start of the season, two top-5s so far. Your form going into the week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it feels good. And that's the thing about this place, you can't necessarily fake it around, you have to drive the ball well, you have to hole out well, make a lot of those putts, four-, five-, six-footers, and on these poa annua greens get really, really bumpy and it can be tough to kind of get the ball in the hole sometimes.

Just one of those things, you kind of have to take whatever you have at that moment out on the golf course and just try to make the best out of whatever conditions you're playing in.

Q. JT, with this being the first week that the Netflix cameras are on site, knowing that you agreed to participate in the show, why -- what went into your thought process into agreeing to participate and how do you see their presence factoring into your process throughout the year?

JUSTIN THOMAS: In terms of the presence, I did it because I don't want them to have any impact. Anything -- as soon as it becomes a burden or as soon as it becomes a hindrance in my preparation or anything that is involved in me trying to get as prepared as I can to win a golf tournament, then I'll be done with it. That's just how I -- I want it to be an opportunity for -- I mean, on the golf course stuff is very -- is very obvious, everybody sees the footage of us in practice rounds on Golf Channel or then us in a tournament, so I don't think that stuff's going to be anything groundbreaking.

Just the fun different things that people wouldn't necessarily see. They might see a picture

or video on Instagram of me hitting balls at home or me working out, but maybe not through an entire club fitting or through a session with my dad and I., just me drinking beer with my buddies watching football. There's a lot of different aspects that I think will be great for not only myself but guys that give people a little better understanding of who we are and grow our brand a little bit.

Q. And on a totally unrelated note, you mentioned the poa annua greens and the difficult five- to six-footers. Do you change the strategy on the putts? Do you hit them a little harder, play more break? How do you deal with that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: If anything, I might even hit them a little softer just to use the entire hole more. When greens are pure, you can kind of make the ball do what you want. You can take less break out. You can still do it here, but because the ball bounces so much, it's not always going to go exactly where you want it to go.

I feel like my strategy that I used at the U.S. Open, and I putted beautifully, was just try to -- on those longer putts, always take the higher lines, try to make sure it's kind of staying around the hole. You can miss a two-footer out here like that. It's hard to explain to -- anybody that's played poa annua knows what I'm talking about, but it's really just kind of taking, kind of like I said earlier, the condition of the greens for what they are and just being committed to whatever you do decide.

Q. Just to follow up on what Dan was saying there, I think a lot of golf fans are obviously pretty excited about the documentary series. There's also some skepticism that PGA TOUR players tend to be pretty image conscious. I'm just curious, from your perspective, do you feel like yourself and your peers will open themselves up enough in a way to be revealing in new ways for golf fans?

JUSTIN THOMAS: That's a good question. Everybody's going to be different, you know what I mean? I don't plan on being any different person than I am. There could be guys that maybe try to act different or do something different just to appeal, or I don't know. You definitely have your guys that are more interesting than others, and me during an off-week isn't really a whole lot of fun, it's pretty basic. But then again, at times I do some stuff, but there's guys, they go out on their boat all the time, they do whatever.

I don't know. I think it's just a great opportunity for the Harry Higgs of the world, the Joel Dahmens that are great, absolutely ridiculous human beings that are so -- have such great hearts but they're so funny to be around that they deserve a spotlight for the kind of people that they are. I think their sense of humor is going to come out.

Q. And then totally different, you probably saw Rahm's video over the weekend about the conditions. I'm just curious, where do you fall on the PGA TOUR wanting to have a super entertaining product with a lot of roars and excitement and birdies while also testing players like yourself, the best players on the planet?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's frustrating to me because like people were going crazy about Kapalua and they're saying the golf course setup's so easy. Look, I don't know how many times I have to say you give soft greens and no wind, we are going to shoot nothing. Doesn't matter if the course is 8,000 yards, we're going to find a way to shoot 20-under par. We have such good control over how far the ball goes and the kind of spin we can put on it. You give us soft greens where if you do miss a green it's easier to get up and down and there's no wind, it's just, it's easy. Those courses are very scorable. The scores were always low there in the past.

You have to take what you have for what it's worth. Each week, you get a week like this and if we get a little wind one day and the greens get even firmer and faster, the scores are going to be higher. If we get some rain and they soften up and there's no wind, it's going to be lower, that's just the way that it is. It's not like the Tour's setting up the course every day saying, "We want 18 under to win this week, let's put the pins easy." We know every single week pretty much where the four pins are going to be, they're the same every year, it's just a matter what the conditions of the golf course are like.

Q. Do you have a preference? If you're going to be a part of a soft course, an easy course, or maybe trying to grind it out like this being a U.S. Open course, do you have a preference to what you would rather be a part of?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I like to think that I would prefer the harder golf course, but I've had a lot of success on the easier golf courses. I don't know. I mean, you're more -- I would say less amount of guys have a chance to win on a harder golf course, harder, firmer golf course. It exposes bad shots, golf ball control, spin control, stuff like that, whereas when it's softer, it's just the way that it is.

You know, if it was my life depended on it and I had to win a golf tournament, I'd probably choose TPC Kuala Lumpur, but other than that, it is what it is and you have to make the best out of wherever you are.

Q. Going from Kapalua where you talk about the scores being crazy low to now being in this event, a U.S. Open course, the rough looks pretty long. What's the week of preparation like? Or at least for you, just what do you go through mentally coming off of such low scores to knowing there might be -- if the wind is up, you're going to have to grind out here this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, you're going to have to grind no matter what. Both courses have their fair share of difficult holes and long holes. You hit a lot of 4-, 5-, 6-irons and that doesn't happen too often on Tour for us. You just have to prepare for each week for what it is.

At home last week I knew I was going to hit a lot of drivers like I do on the South Course and hit a fair amount of mid to long irons and a lot of short putts because, like I said, if you hole out well here, it's going to be a huge advantage. That's just kind of -- at Kapalua I hit a lot of wedges. All of us have different forms of preparation, but that's at least mine.

Q. Jon Rahm was asked this earlier today and had some interesting thoughts. Patrick Reed is the defending champ here. He won pretty easily by five strokes, but all the talk was really about an embedded ball situation in the third round. Just to understand his game better from a player's perspective, does that noise kind of -- that he finds himself in routinely overshadow his game?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Probably depends who you ask. I think his success and amount of wins and everything he's done speaks for itself. The stuff that's happened otherwise is what it is and it's in the past. You know, you can't take away the fact that he's a Masters champion and the fact that he's won however many times he's won. I don't know if there's anybody I'd want on Tour other than him with the wedge and putter in their hand. He gets up and down from everywhere. I understand what you're saying, but I really just think it kind of depends on who you ask more than anything.

Q. Just I was curious, when you first thought about approaching Bones, did you think it would be tough to talk him out of retirement?

JUSTIN THOMAS: To be honest, no, I didn't. I know he had a great time when he caddied for me a couple years ago, and I shouldn't say I didn't think it would be real easy, but I didn't feel like I was going to have to get on my hands and knees and beg. It would just be more of like a, "Hey, dude, I want you to," and I know he wants to, but at the end of the day every decision needs to be a little selfish and if it made sense for him, then it would make sense for us and I'm glad that it did.

Q. And how has it gone since he came to your bag?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's been great. It's like a new relationship, you're always wanting to do something to get it better, to -- we're talking quite often. Not as much anymore versus the first handful of events, what did I do this week that I could do better next week, what did I do that you didn't like. Now we're just getting comfortable enough where we're just kind of go. He knows my tendencies, I know his. And he was with his old boss for a really long time and I was with Jimmy for a really long time and you get used to how the pro and the caddie act, just their mannerisms and stuff. We still have a long ways to go, but we're getting more and more comfortable.

Q. Going off of what Steve said, Bones told me I think your first event together that you were the only person that he would come back for. Did you know that he was talking about you in that way?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I did. I didn't want to say that, though. So, yes, I did know that it was going to be easy, Steve, because he told me that. (Laughs.)

Q. I thought it was very nice of him to say. One other thing, you've only played this event twice and obviously the U.S. Open, coming to Torrey, why has this made it onto

the calendar more often?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Just for -- I mean, just all for schedule. In the past I've fortunately been in Kapalua and then I've played Sony and then I've just usually taken two weeks off I think it is. Then I feel like it's gone Phoenix and then -- and maybe this, I don't know what it was, but it was something where I could go two weeks off after Sony and then play Phoenix. Just to me it seemed like it was a lot to Kapalua, Sony, week off, Torrey. I didn't want to hate golf like five weeks into the year, the calendar year.

It just worked out well this week not playing Sony and if I play here I would take four weeks off or whatever after Kapalua. Like I said, after playing the U.S. Open I remembered how much I like this golf course, so I'm glad it worked out.

Q. Knowing it is the same golf course but conditions versus June, super different, do you just kind of throw the yardage book out and treat it as a new course or do you take some confidence or some information from the U.S. Open?

JUSTIN THOMAS: A little here and there, or a little bit of both. I just think it's getting close to having a little fire to it. The fairways are really good, it's close to kind of getting the brown, you know what I mean, with the great weather they've had.

Yeah, in terms of the greens, the greens are totally different in terms of the speeds. The firmness, you've got a little bit there, but not the same. The rough wasn't crazy at the U.S. Open, it was very, very spotty like it is now. You have some places that are long and you have some that are like a first cut, so you've got a lot of luck involved in something like that. Course knowledge is course knowledge, lines off of tees and slopes here and there, that stuff's always going to help.

Q. It feels like there's like five different tournaments that could be considered the start of the golf year, for whatever reason this seems to be one of them. Do you look at it as the season, do you look at it as 2022? What starts your year? Or do you not even think of it as years?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I don't think of it. I would say the closest thing I probably could would be Kapalua, but you've got to earn your way there, so I can't necessarily look at that. Each year saying that is the start of the year, I've got to get there, first.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Any last questions for Justin? Thank you so much for your time. Good luck this week.