

**JUSTIN LEONARD**

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**Q. Justin Leonard, thank you for joining us in the media center for your PGA Tour Champions debut here at the Bridgestone SENIOR PLAYERS Championship.**

**Can you just open with your thoughts on being here on the Champions Tour?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** It's a lot of fun to be out here finally. I have been thinking about it and kind of working towards this for the last, oh, year, year and a half. And for it to finally be here, I am excited. It's fun to see a lot of guys that I played with for so many years. And the welcome has been great. Although, they are questioning my desire to start at this golf course, because it's so difficult, but I figure might as well see what I am made of right from the get-go.

But it's fun.

I have still got -- yeah, I am working the Open next week for NBC, so just adding a little bit to my plate. But this is certainly a fun part of it. And the preparation and all that, trying to get my game ready, now it's time to kind of see where it is.

**Q. You talk about the difficulty of Firestone Country Club, you played here several times in events in the past, including a runner-up finish in 2000. What comes to your mind when you think of Firestone Country Club?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Well, first of all, just very demanding. And I assumed that I was going to walk off a green and go up a tee box, but that's really not the case this week. We are not getting quite the full treatment, but pretty darn close. And I got a couple good memories here.

And really, the fun ones happen away from the golf course.

I finished second here one year to Tiger Woods, one of the 15 times that he won.

But outside of that, I remember driving the golf course -- this is before satellite radio. And I just heard something about a Pearl Jam show. And so I found Jim Mackay "Bones," who is a good friend, and he's really into the music scene, and I told him, I said, I think Pearl Jam is playing somewhere here nearby. He said, I'm on it. And so an hour later, we had tickets. And that night Davis Love and Bones and I drove 45 minutes or something to a great outdoor venue and saw Pearl Jam. So stuff like that. But a lot of good memories here.

And like I said, it's a demanding golf course, but it's a fun one to play, and it will certainly give me a good barometer of where my game is.

**Q. Thank you. With that, we'll open up to questions from the group.**

**Q. Can we talk about -- must have been Blossom Music Center, but --**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Yeah, I don't remember the name of it, but it was a cool venue.

**Q. Do you remember things like that, you remember that -- I mean, you were talking about off the course. Any other things stick out?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Well, there was a year here that Phil Mickelson went and pitched down at the -- was it an AA team or AAA?

**Q. AA.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** So I -- I might have, I might not have been eavesdropping, but I heard Phil talking about it with Bones, and he said, I'll meet you here at the parking lot at 5:00. So I stored that away. And it was that afternoon. And so I stored that away, and I told Davis and Fred Couples about it. And I said, do you guys want to go watch? And Fred said, I wouldn't miss this for the world. So I said, okay, we need to meet in the parking lot at 4:50, because I want us to all see the look on his face when he sees us. So he pulls in and we're all sitting there, and Bones is kind of like, oh, I don't know how this is going to go over. And so Phil pulls in and goes, hey, guys, what are you all doing? Says, we're coming to cheer you on, big guy. And so we went down and watched that whole -- I mean it's been written about, but we watched that whole scene. And Phil was all proud that nobody hit a home run off of him. And our kind of argument, well, you have to at least throw a ball 50 miles an hour to create enough velocity so it can get out of the park. He wasn't throwing it hard enough.

But, anyways, it was fun. We had a good time with it.

And just little things like that that happen along the way that kind of create these fun memories, when I get to come back to a place like this.

**Q. You were also runner up for the Shot in the Dark. Where were you?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** I don't even remember. It's too long ago.

**Q. I didn't know if you were still at the clubhouse or you were already --**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** No, no. I think that was one of those years where he was going to win by 12 or something like that, so it's not like I was on the range getting ready for a playoff.

**Q. He won by 11.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** 11, okay. Yeah, so I won the B flight, which is nice. No trophy for that.

**Q. Not bad on the payday probably.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Right, right.

**Q. You're going to the British Open, obviously, to work for NBC. Good memories at St. Andrews for you in playing days?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Yeah, good memories. The first time I went over there was '95, and qualified to get in. And to try and -- I played it one time. My dad -- we took a family trip over and my dad and I got to play it one time in the late '80s sometime, when I was in high school. Maybe earlier than that, mid '80s. And so went over, qualified. And then but the qualifying back then was on Sunday and Monday, and so I -- I played early on Monday and knew I was going to be in, but I still couldn't get on the golf course until Tuesday. So to try and figure out St. Andrews in a couple days is pretty daunting.

But I played every year that I was eligible to, up until this year, at St. Andrews. And one of the special things about St. Andrews is, as a former winner, is you have a past championships dinner in the clubhouse and everything, and that's a Tuesday night. I can't get there in time for the Championships Challenge, or that's what it's been called in the past, I'm not sure what it's called this year. But that's on Monday, unfortunately. So I can't get there in time for that. But to be there for the dinner and get our picture taken there on the first tee right in front of the Royal & Ancient, Tuesday will be very special.

**Q. Do you need to talk to Ernie? He's flying privately (inaudible) to play in that on Monday?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Oh, interesting. That's a good tidbit, thanks. Although, I have heard Ernie on private planes can get interesting.

**Q. Because NBC is flying you, right?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Yeah, yeah.

**Q. What do you make of -- I got to ask you, just in the context of your name in the Ryder Cup, obviously, we talked about a few weeks ago during the U.S. Open. The LIV situation could really impact the Ryder Cup. It certainly is going to impact this year's Presidents Cup.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Yeah.

**Q. I was wondering your thoughts on, how do you think that's going to play out and what do you even think about how that -- the impact itself?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Yeah, I mean, the landscape of the game and the PGA Tour is certainly changing. And it's unfortunate, because it's such a great product, it's a great organization. For all that they do for the players, for the local charities and communities that they play in, and this is simply about making money. And so it's unfortunate. I think some players are going to look back and maybe regret the decision, because they're giving up opportunities to play in events like the Presidents Cup and the Ryder Cup and those things. I do hope the organizations like the DP World Tour, the PGA Tour, PGA of America, will stand firm and stay, look, those players that have chosen to go over and play the LIV series, they knew this was a -- the most likely possibility, and I hope they stand firm in that. I can't fault some players for going. To me, it's a question of where the money's coming from. And to me, that's very important. These guys make a great living playing out here, and to go over and do that, they have to understand the sacrifice that they're making in going over and playing.

**Q. Finally, are you all moved in, in Florida yet, or --**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Pretty much. Yeah, it was a couple weeks ago, actually. My 15-year-old and I put the four dogs in the back of my SUV and drove from Aspen to Jupiter. Three days. Pretty much without incident, which was nice. Got some barbecue in Kansas City, ate somewhere in Atlanta, I don't know, and then got to the south side of Atlanta. And day 3 was a little shorter. So it was fun, though. It was a good experience. It was -- I was very excited. I think my son was a mix of that and missing friends. Kids are going to -- any time you're uprooting kids, they're going to miss friends. And the cool thing is that -- and we have told them. Aspen is a place they will want to go visit. Florida is a place that some of the Aspen friends may want to come visit. And their true friends, they will stay in touch with, and at the same time they will make new ones, especially once they get in school and stuff like that. Our oldest is off to college. So it's a lot going on in the Leonard household right now. And it's kind of nice to just be here and I'm not dealing with cardboard or delivery of a car or stuff like that. I can just try and focus on golf. Try. Notice I said try to focus just on golf. Yeah, thank you.

**Q. You played with Davis yesterday. Did a discussion of the Presidents Cup come up?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** Not really from a standpoint of players and that perspective. We did talk a bit about the LIV series. And I don't want to share Davis's comments, I'll let him share those. But he's obviously been a huge supporter of the PGA Tour. He served on the board, what, five or six times, or something. And honestly, from now -- now that he's running the RSM Classic, he should be -- I told him he should be on the board again, because he understands the players' perspective and a tournament perspective. And a lot of changes coming on the Tour. The Presidents Cup is -- look,

it's going to be a great event. And there's some great young players. And I think this just gives those players, especially on the international side, some opportunity to step up and as the young players did in Melbourne. I thought it was great how the international team played. I'm a friend and a big fan of Trevor, just as I am of Davis. I'll be there with NBC. I want, from a TV perspective and a fan of the game, a very close contest. After what we saw at the Ryder Cup, that may be a little more difficult. But you always got to be aware of the underdog in international team competitions.

**Q. How is your game going into this week?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** It feels pretty good. With the time constraints and moving and living in Colorado, like I put in as much work, I think, as I can. Certainly since getting to Florida and things like that, I have been kind of ramping it up as much as I can.

I was eligible to play at the U.S. Senior Open, but after working at the Open, and we to find the time to move, it just didn't make sense. This did, being A, the Senior Players, which I won the regular Players and then being at a venue that I know fairly well, I thought this would be a fairly comfortable debut.

Now, from a logistics and all that standpoint, it's a very challenging golf course, and I'm curious to see where my game in. And there's a big difference between playing with friends or playing with my kids and put a scorecard in the pocket and trying to beat some of these guys. So I'll say I'm managing my expectations. I expect to learn a lot of from this week. But as far as results and those things, not really thinking about those things. I'm just trying to ease my way back into competitive golf.

And I'll play four or five events between now and the end of the season and get a sense of where these things.

**Q. You mentioned on media day that your family was coming. Did that not happen?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** No, no. They're coming up tonight.

**Q. Oh, okay.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** They're done with the cardboard too. Yeah, they're ready. So it will be fun having them here.

**Q. Everybody is going to be here?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** The whole crew, yeah.

**Q. And any place in Akron you're sort of looking forward to going or anything?**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** We are staying at a friend's lake house in Hartville, I think. And so that's kind of a new area for us. And so we'll just probably hang out with our friends some.

**Q. Sounds like Congress Lake.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** It is, yeah, yeah. Beautiful spot. And so I don't know that we plan to go to any -- Diamond Grille or something like that. Diamond Grille? Is that it?

**Q. Yeah.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** But we'll discover some new places between Hartville and North Canton and stuff like that. Yeah.

**Q. Thank you for your time, Justin.**

**JUSTIN LEONARD:** You got it.