

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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JUSTIN THOMAS



JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Justin Thomas into the interview room. He is making his fifth career start at the Wells Fargo Championship looking for his 16th win on the PGA TOUR.

I know, Justin, this would be a place that you would love to do that, you've had so much success here at Quail Hollow. If we can get some comments on being back.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I always love being back here. It's a place that has a lot of memories, a lot of great memories. Yeah, I was saying, Bones and I pulling in this morning, that Presidents Cup doesn't feel that long ago. Then with Max again on the range this morning, the last time we were on the range, Sam Burns was driving us back from media and about killed us running into a gallery rope, so I was glad to be in a little bit safer hands today.

Yeah, it's a very, very special place. I love Charlotte and I love the golf course, so excited for the week.

JOHN BUSH: Got your last PGA Championship last year, but take us back to 2017, winning here and what that tournament meant for your career.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it meant a lot obviously. You only have one first major, that's for sure. Yeah, it was a great week, a comfortable week. Just kind of plotted my way around.

It's nice, played the back nine this morning and hit a lot of different chips and putts. Just remember a lot of specifics of being in certain situations and certain spots on the golf course. Chipping in on 13 and then getting up and down on 16, the birdie on 17 and then having to two-putt from where I was on 18. Just when I'm out there definitely have a lot of good memories from that week.

JOHN BUSH: Before questions, just the state of your game coming into the week.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I had a really nice two weeks off. I didn't feel like I should have needed it as much as I did, but apparently I did and it was nice to just spend a week -- I had some stuff going on the first week and got back and really was able to get into a nice routine and get a lot of practice in and just feel very rested and energized and ready to go.

This is kind of a funky stretch here the next month and a half or so with one on, one off, but I feel like I'm making some moves in the right direction and excited to see some of it pay off.



Q. Happy birthday.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Thank you.

Q. Are you somebody who thinks about milestone birthdays, the passage of time? Does that kind of stuff ever enter your head and make you think a little deep?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, in terms of like doing things before a certain age or doing things --

Q. No, I guess I'm meaning more abstractly off the golf course, like what does it mean to you to be 30?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, all -- I shouldn't say all, but my life is golf so that's basically at this point in my life where I am, obviously newly married but don't have a family yet. It will change when that happens, but it's basically golf is all that takes up my thoughts.

Q. So in that context I guess would it mean something to you, what you had started to say before, like am I where I want to be now that I'm 30?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I'm not where I feel like I should or want to be. My goal a couple years ago, I wanted to be at 20 wins by the time I turned 30. Obviously I'm not there, but there's a lot of people and myself, or I also believe in myself that my best is yet to come and I feel like there's a lot of great things ahead of me.

So there's no reason to look at it, looking backward doesn't do me any good. I'm just trying to look forward and look at the things that I can continue to improve and keep working on the things that I feel like I'm doing well, because you never know. I mean, not that Rahm was in a slump by any means, but last year it seemed like he was kind of in a funk in terms of just being able to get it done. He was hitting great putts, they just weren't going in, just kind of had one of those little sprees and then all of a sudden, bam, he has a chance to win every time he tees it up. All the great players go on those little spurts and I'm just waiting to go on my spurt again.

Q. Do you think you're any different today than you were five years ago beyond be five years older?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Definitely, yeah, I'm different in a lot of ways. I mean, more mature, I know more. At least I like to think I'm more mature. Feel like I'm a more complete player. Yeah, quite a few things.

Q. Knowing how close you are with Tiger, just curious if you've spoken to him since his latest procedure and kind of where his head's at.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, just check in on him, make sure he's doing all right. There's only



so much you can do. It's pretty much Groundhog Day for him at this point. Just making sure he's doing all right and saying hey whenever I can kind of thing.

Q. I notice you've got some new logos on you. We like to ask about the logos these days.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, May is Melanoma Awareness Month and it's for me, Wear SPF is the sunscreen brand that I launched. With having the melanoma scare that I did four years ago, it's obviously near and dear and passion, I guess passion project if you will to me, especially at the age I was at to have melanoma and had a huge chunk taken out of my leg.

I'm very -- I think it's a really cool opportunity to spread awareness to people of all ages, especially people like myself and golfers, athletes that are out in the sun all the time that are exposed to it to make sure they're getting checked, making sure they're doing their due diligence, making sure they don't have a crazy freak accident like I almost had. If I would have waited another five or six months, my doctor told me I would have been a patient in a hospital. It's pretty eye opening when you're at that age. This month I'm going to have that logo and be able to bring some awareness hopefully to some people.

Q. You just referenced Jon Rahm and he had sort of -- it's hard to say anybody has a bad year, but it was maybe not what he would have wanted last year. Maybe you're using that a little bit yourself. I'm just curious, though, is it a fine line? Is it for you right now? Like obviously you've expressed a few times some frustration about not winning more, but it doesn't seem like -- it's like you've fallen off or anything either. You're close, or how would you characterize it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I just feel like for the majority of the months this year I just, seems like basically every round I'm playing I shoot the highest score that I possibly can. It's just, I mean, you just go on those sprees sometimes in golf. Over a long career you're going to have, if you want to call them slumps, if you want to call them cold streaks or whatever, and you're also going to have your hot streaks.

Yeah, I definitely wouldn't say Jon had a bad year last year, but knowing Jon and how competitive he is and knowing the caliber game he has and what he believes in himself, I'm sure he's like, no, I wanted to win more.

But playing with him during that, he was not very far off. It's like so many good putts that were burning edges and lipping out. That's kind of how I felt this year. Statistically maybe my putting isn't very good, but I know I'm very close, I know it's just -- sometimes you just need a little momentum. Sometimes it takes one round or one week to just see some things go your way or see some things go in versus bouncing in a bunker, staying in the fairway or lipping in instead of lipping out and all of a sudden you get some momentum. Have a good week, have another good week and bam, you win just like that when three or four tournaments ago everyone's talking about what's wrong, what are you going to change or what are you going to do.



I'm just trying to stay the course and stay patient, understand that it's a lot closer than it is further and just need to be in the right frame of mind for good things to happen.

Q. Would the Masters have been sort of the epitome of frustration?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Um-hmm.

Q. We kind of saw the video on the last green, just how much it meant. Is that sort of the --

JUSTIN THOMAS: I would say that summed it up pretty well because I wasn't at least at that stage in contention to win the tournament by any means, but what, in 20th place with 80 percent of the tournament left to play at that golf course, and how I felt like I was playing that week, I mean, I'd feel like I'd have a chance come Sunday.

Obviously Jon played in the same exact conditions I did that Saturday morning, so I can't fully use that, but I'm fairly confident if I wasn't playing in freezing cold, wind and downpour that I would have fared a little bit better, but that's just -- that's what I mean.

Everybody out here can tell you that those shots that maybe land on the edge of the green when you're not playing well, y'all have seen it, that ball that lands in the front bunker and you get up there and it's plugged. That never happens when you're 6 under through 16, but when you're 1 over through 16, it seems like that thing's always plugged.

Yeah, I've essentially had a lot of plugged lies lately and I'm just ready for those things to come out of 'em and just start getting some good vibes and everything on the course.

Q. Justin, tell me about this diet you're on and what sparked it.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I just, last year -- knock on wood, I've always been a very -- I've never really had any health issues or haven't gotten sick at all. Last year I felt like I had a very odd year. The heat really got to me. I mean, the beginning of the week in Tulsa I was so sick. I mean, I had some kind of just atrocious like sinus infection, like I had no energy, it was terrible. I have no idea how I ended up playing well that week. It was right after Byron Nelson, which was incredibly hot.

I had another couple events early in the year, like Mexico was really hot and I'm sure I had something there that messed with my stomach anyway, but just super dehydrated and just felt off. And then again in Atlanta kind of to end the year, that Sunday when I got done, I got in the locker room and I just threw up everything I had eaten the entire day. It seemed like every time it gets hot, I'm so tired at the end of the day, I'm tired when I wake up in the morning.

So I just wanted to get it looked at. I had blood work and food sensitivity tests done in the



past but never really had a plan. Usually it's just done with someone and here's your paperwork of it and have at it. I got with Dr. Ara and he's just given me a plan of what to do. Unfortunately, a year of gluten free and six months of dairy free and do some retesting and see how it is.

I'm three months in and I definitely feel better and I feel like I have more energy when I wake up, my body's been feeling great, I've been moving really well. I'm just one of those guys like if I don't at least try it. Obviously I'm hoping it works because it sucks not being able to eat anything good, but if I don't try it, I won't know if it works, you know what I'm saying? Hoping that it's something that's going to help me a lot and just a little trial and error kind of thing.

Q. What do you miss?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I want a pizza like you cannot imagine. Like I would do some really messed up things for a pizza just doused in ranch.

Q. What do you like to eat now that you didn't like before?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Sometimes I'll just suck in and get a nice breath of fresh air. It's not as bad. I'm very, very fortunate. There's a chef, Chef Parker who we use quite a bit. Rick, Jordan, Duf and I, Cantlay, we've used him quite a bit over the years and definitely easier with him. If it's on the road or if you're on a vacation, it's definitely difficult, I have to be that guy that tells the waitress or waiter of what's going on. A lot of steak, chicken, fish, rice, vegetables, I can have most salads, some dressings, just have to be careful of what's in it.

Q. And PGA Championship dinner, are you going to have a special menu?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah. I mean, obviously I'm not going to be able to indulge in everything like everybody else, but I'll have some gluten and dairy free options for me.

Q. Justin, simple question: Why do you love golf?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I love the individual part of it. I like that there's nobody to blame or nobody to pick you up or no one to bring you down other than yourself.

I like the fact that you can just go out and get it. It's finding what you need to get better at, it's the challenge of trying to get better.

I don't know. I've never been asked that before, that's a great question. I just, I love everything about it. There's nothing better than when you put a lot of hard work in and you start to see it paying off and you get yourself in contention in a big tournament like this or in a major championship and you execute those shots and make those putts and handle that moment like you know you can, and how you've been practicing and you pull it off and you're the one holding the trophy, that's why I love golf.



Q. JT, talking about finding your old form again, just wondering with maybe Mental Health Awareness month, I'm wondering what role mental health, mental strength plays in your success and if there's anything that you do off the course that kind of flexes that muscle and helps with that.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it definitely is a huge part of it. For me it's getting the confidence and just the inner self belief is a big part of it. Seeing those good things happen and having the belief that they will happen is definitely a part of it.

But I talk to somebody, I use a sports psychologist in all areas. I'm not just talking golf, talking about life, anything that can help me kind of get things up and out of me versus I think it's a very stereotypical thing for guys to do is just to kind of push things down and not -- you know, not, whether it's talking to buddies or talking to whoever about it. Over the course of time that stuff can build up and wear on you. I'm trying to get better at that just like I'm trying to get better at my wedge game and my putting. Seems like it's a never-ending cycle of things that you can improve on.

Q. Justin, looks like Joe LaCava's going to Patrick Cantlay and it's more than just this week. He's had offers I'm sure over the years. Is this kind of maybe a sign that this might be a while for Tiger? Can we read anything into that, especially given your relationship and all? Tiger signed off on it, so just curious like what you think and what that means.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I mean, the thing about Joe is he's -- I mean, he's as loyal as loyal gets. The amount of time that he spent, yeah, at home when guys would -- I mean, there's so many guys out here that would have him caddie in an instant. When he was loyal to Tiger and Tiger's probably telling him go caddie, go do whatever, and Joe, that's just not the kind of guy Joe is.

But at the same time, very similar to Bones, he's competitive and he's a caddie. I mean, they love to caddie and they love to win golf tournaments and they love being in that moment. I'm sure that weighed into his decision as well.

Obviously I don't know the details and don't know how long it is or what's going on, but I know that that's something that would never ever, ever be done if Tiger would not OK that. That's not the kind of guy Joe is, kind of guy Tiger is and same with Patrick. There definitely was some kind of conversation that went on there.

Yeah, I know Joe and I know he's competitive. And yeah, I definitely was trying to steer away from him today after the Rangers got blown out last night, but I'm glad to have him back out here.

Q. Have you had any conversation with Tiger, do you sense that he feels positive about what just occurred? Maybe even from a quality of life standpoint, but from a golf standpoint, too, whether it's way down the road or not?



JUSTIN THOMAS: I haven't really felt that out. I mean, my -- I don't want to say my role or my job, it's just me wanting to be a friend is just checking in on him and see how he's doing. I don't want to be a week after surgery and say, hey, man, when do you think you're going to tee it up again? No offense, but that's y'all's job to ask that question, not me.

I just want to be there as a friend and make sure he's doing all right. If I can do anything for him or the family, that's just what I want to do. Whenever that time's right to go more into it, we can, but I'm not too worried about that now.

JOHN BUSH: Justin, as always, thank you for your time.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Thanks.

