

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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JUSTIN THOMAS

JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Justin Thomas into the interview room here at the Hero World Challenge.

Justin, making your sixth start here at Albany, just an opening comment on returning to play in Tiger's event.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm always happy to be here. It's a very -- it's a fun, fun week. It's obviously not relaxing, laid back in the terms of golf, it's very competitive, but just the week as a whole, I don't know what it is, maybe just being in the Bahamas, and it's obviously very close to home for me in south Florida.

Yeah, I enjoy coming here. I feel like it's a nice time of year where you can kind of stay sharp. The course is forgiving enough where if you're maybe working on some things or trying some equipment, whatever it may be, I feel like in the past I've kind of tinkered and tried some stuff. I feel like it's an enjoyable week.

JACK RYAN: What are you looking to accomplish? Looking ahead to 2024, what are you looking to accomplish this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm sure the same thing all the other people in the field are, trying to accomplish going home with a trophy.

Yeah, I just want to play well, get myself in contention. You never know what you're going to get out here in terms of conditions. If the wind doesn't blow, you've got to shoot a million under, but if the wind does blow, it can be very, very difficult. You kind of just have to take what you get with the weather and make the most of it.

Q. Thoughts on fourth and 31? Where were you, where did you see it? And you're playing with Tiger, I saw. What's it mean to have him back out here playing?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, the football question, I was -- it was like I wasn't even like -- I don't want to say I wasn't excited, but I feel like when it's that farfetched for that to come through, you almost kind of -- you hate to say you don't have hope, but it's just reality, statistics, you're not likely going to get a fourth and 31 when you only have one play left to win a game or stay alive.

I was pleasantly surprised. I was in my house watching it on TV and I definitely had some choice words that don't need to be repeated or really probably ever heard anywhere for Alabama and maybe some Auburn fans that I saw on TV, so I was very happy about that.



I'm very pumped to have Tiger back this week, I think we all are. I know he misses hanging out with us, and the competitor he is, he doesn't enjoy not being able to get out here and compete. This is a great -- like I said at the beginning, it's a great week, lot of fun, but you've got the best players in the world, so I know he's excited to tee it up, too.

Q. Have you played at all with Tiger at home?

JUSTIN THOMAS: We played a couple weeks ago, yeah. We've both been busy in different aspects.

Q. How did he look?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I happened to play with him the first time he played after Augusta, which was pretty wild to hear and think.

No, it was good. I think we, depending on the time -- the time frame, I mean, you can definitely -- you can definitely hit some shots this time of year if you're not either leading up to a tournament or playing much golf that are pretty interesting because we take some time off. Obviously my time off is under different circumstances than his was, was more mandatory.

No, it was good. Obviously he's never going to be as sharp as he wants given the amount of -- that he's gone through with his body and whatnot, but at the same time -- I'm sure he said it earlier and he's always going to say it -- he's not going to tee it up if he thinks he's going to come out here and embarrass himself. He wants to play well.

Q. How was your experience in South Africa? How did you enjoy that trip and how did you think you played?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I loved South Africa. I think this is -- it's really -- it's great for many reasons, but I like the new schedule setup for that reason. I think it's -- it's really, really cool and it's a great honor to be able to go travel the world and play.

Obviously we'll go to -- go play in the U.K., Open Championship and Presidents Cups maybe here and there, Ryder Cup. Personally, I always had a hard time skipping a FedExCup event if there was one going on. So something like a Sun City or Wentworth or whatever it may be, I in the past had a very difficult time swallowing that, that I would skip a FedExCup event.

So I was very pumped to go over there. It is definitely not a golf course that you want to play coming off of a week vacation like I did, not touching a club, because it is very tight and penal.

I was very pleased with how I played. I played really well. I managed my game really well



and got it around. You know, given Max and, what, I guess Thorbjorn a little bit, other than those two, I was kind of right in the thick of it. Just a couple days I didn't really get it going. I thought overall it was a very positive week, which is good because it was a long flight to go over there and play mediocre. So I was glad to come out of there with some confidence.

Q. I don't know if you spent any time after the Ryder Cup sort of dissecting not just what you did but kind of what the team did. How much do you sort of attribute that to maybe not playing as much not heading into the matches, whatever the case may be, to what other players have said, it's just hard to win over there?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think it's a lot of things. I have definitely found after being on the two losing Ryder Cup teams versus the Presidents Cup or Ryder Cup teams that I've won that you spend a lot more time afterwards thinking about what could have gone differently. It's just the fact of the matter. If you win, you don't think anything is wrong. You think oh, it's great, we did everything we should have, we prepared how we should have, we got rest how we should have. But it's like when you lose, you start overanalyzing and overthinking, in my opinion, everything.

I would definitely say if we had it over, there would probably be some guys that would have played maybe a little closer to it, but again that's easy to say because we got our asses kicked. It's pretty easy to go back and say we wish we could have done some things differently.

It is, it's hard to win. I think I would love to see a scenario down the road potentially where maybe an unbiased or neutral maybe organization sets up courses for the Ryder Cup. I think it's just looking, you know, at the last handful of Ryder Cups, how lopsided they've been. I think that's part of it is the home course advantage, right, but I think there could be some times where it could be fun just to have someone set it up and kind of play the course as is.

No, like all of us on our team, I just wish we would have played had a lot better.

Q. I know this is a relaxing week, but you are in kind of a unique position with the top-30 in the world. Is that on your mind at all going into next year?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's definitely in my mind somewhere back there. I just know that if I do all the things I feel like I should and play -- continue to show some progress and get better and better, then I feel like all that will take care of itself.

I know firsthand after last year playing to try to accomplish and get to a certain number isn't always the -- actually, it isn't the best option. It's just not -- you know, I should be coming out here and trying to win golf tournaments and make as many birdies as I possibly can and make as few bogeys as I possibly can and try to have a lot of fun.

I don't need to be here this week looking at how many points is this or what do I need to do to stay in the top-30 in the world, try to move up here or there. If I just play good golf, it all



takes care of itself. I know it's easier said than done, but it is true in terms of mindset.

Q. Maybe the answer is similar to that, but obviously we asked you so much all this year about your form and all that, but now that time's settled a little bit, what do you think you've learned most throughout the past year?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Just to keep -- simplify it. Keep everything -- I think it -- something that helps me can also hurt me in terms of I'm willing to do anything to try to gain a little bit of an edge, but there are some things that I probably try or do that aren't necessary.

I'm just someone that I at least want to have the boxes checked. I don't want to be 15 years down the road and be like, dang, I really wish I would have tried that, that could have been something that helped me.

Is that good, is that bad, I don't know. That's unfortunately one of the things you'll never know the answers to. I think it's something I've really harped on with my team is just like, hey, guys, everybody needs to keep everybody accountable. I'm a grownup. If I'm doing something that nobody thinks is helpful, tell me. We need to just keep this simple and just go out and play golf. Don't play golf swing, don't try to overdo or complicate things. Just there's a time and had a place for it, but when I'm out there trying to compete and win golf tournaments, that's definitely not the place for it.

Q. As somebody who is close to Tiger, I mean, how have you kind of seen him, I don't know, step in the last few months and kind of use his influence to help the game?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's been great. It's been a lot. It's inspiring.

I think he definitely takes it very serious. A lot of -- lot of time on the phone, emails, Zoom calls, phone calls, whatever it may be.

He doesn't take it lightly. Obviously he's spoken to it, but it was an honor for him to kind of get the torch passed to him from Arnold and Jack. So I think he's looking at it as he wants to kind of pass that to whatever the following generation is.

I'm sure there's some kind of scenario in his head where he's like, you know, yeah, whatever Charlie wants to do, that's great, but I'm sure he has some visions in his head of, oh, I would love to have Charlie be playing out here, and then the kids he's playing against.

It's bigger picture. I think as little as he's playing, it's very clear that the decisions he's making and thoughts that he has isn't for his own good, it's for the betterment of the game.

As a fellow -- as a player who's out here, I mean, someone of his stature and someone with his accomplishments, he doesn't need to be taking the time to do that. He could very well just be posted up and come play whenever he wants. But he takes it seriously. He wants the game of golf to continue to grow and be in a great spot.



Q. Do you know yet what your January schedule looks like? If you were sort of hovering, you know, maybe in doubt about getting into Pebble Beach, and I guess you could still get a sponsor invite as well, would you change it to, you know, there's obviously several ways now that you can play your way in with a top-30 probably being the easiest, right?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, yeah. I don't know, it's one of those things, and right now I'm planning on starting the year in Palm Springs, which I'm excited about. That's a tournament I played in the past. I think it's a great event, it's a cool event. Just with going to Kapalua and then starting in either Torrey or Phoenix, it just hasn't worked for me. Obviously not being at Kapalua this year, it's an event I'm excited to go to and works.

Yeah, there's a lot of things that are up in the air that I don't know what's going to happen. Yeah, in a perfect world I'd love to play Pebble, Phoenix, L.A. I really -- yeah, I would love to do all of that and be part of it, but it's just one of those things again that it's all going to take care of itself. I just need to worry about what I can control and do and let it all happen.

Q. J.T., are you still on your diet that we --

JUSTIN THOMAS: No.

Q. No?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No.

Q. What went wrong or what led you to not do that anymore?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I did -- it was -- when I started it was -- I was supposed to go six months of dairy free, a year of gluten free. So I just -- I think like the six months was right when I was over in the U.K. for Scottish and British and I'm like I'm not going to start this back up in the middle of a tournament because I didn't know how my body was going to react. Literally not having anything for six months, I thought there was a chance my body would freak out. After shooting about 400 the first two days at The Open Championship, when I got to Minnesota I got a gluten-free pizza like on Monday or Tuesday and I swear I could have cried, it was so good.

And honestly, I just -- I slowly implemented dairy again the next two weeks and I didn't feel any different, which I was shocked, to be honest. I was pleasantly surprised. I called Ara, who I've been working with. I'm like, I'm having gluten, I don't feel any different after having this again, so I'm going to have it and see how it is. And here we are.

Or if you ask Brian Harman, basically if you just play like crap for a year, having to diet, then you just go back to it. That's what he told me.



Q. Just another one of those things you chalk up trial and error, maybe it didn't work, or do you feel like it did do some of the stuff that you wanted?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It wasn't exactly during my best stretch of golf, so I would say if I had it over, I would not do it. Yeah, it's one of those things, I don't really give 50 percent too much. I feel like if I'm going to do something, I'm going to do it. I'm going to want to know how it is. Yeah, if you guys hear of me doing that again, tell me to stop.

Q. Justin, to take you back to the Ryder Cup and possibly a neutral organization running it, the venue, et cetera. If you look at the two matches you've played in Europe, Paris and Rome, what do you feel disadvantaged you in that respect?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't -- I just think that -- it's weird, like I don't think you can necessarily stand, you know, on every tee and you're like, oh, well, this is better for Europeans because of this or this is better for Americans because of this. Every single Ryder Cup you go to, it's like when it's in the States, the fairways are huge and there's not much rough. Then you go to Europe and the fairways are really narrow and there's a lot of rough.

So clearly there's something. Like playing the French Open there, at Le Golf National, I knew that golf course was tough. It was very similar for the French Open as it was for the Ryder Cup. I didn't play Medinah, but I remember watching it on TV, or Valhalla, watching it on TV. How there was zero rough and fairways were big, how penal the rough was this past Ryder Cup. It's nothing crazy.

You would argue, which I totally agree with, just play better, hit the fairway, hit the green, make the putts. Again, it's something that I don't know if other guys feel the same way, but it could potentially just change some of that disparity maybe.

JACK RYAN: All right. Justin, thank you very much for your time. Best of luck this week.

