

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
May 8, 2024

JUSTIN THOMAS



MODERATOR: Another press conference here at the Wells Fargo Championship, welcome in Justin Thomas.

Justin, just thoughts coming in (inaudible) thus far?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm very, very excited to be here, a place that I really enjoy, have a lot of fond memories of. I liked this course from the first time I played it my rookie year. With it now being an elevated event and where it is in the schedule, yeah, I'm excited to be here this week.

MODERATOR: And a lot of talk on new greens, tee boxes. What are your thoughts on some of the changes to the course?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I've only seen nine holes, I'll check out the other nine today. Yeah, I mean, I'm sure -- I know this isn't the weather they were hoping for. The fairways yesterday were extremely soft, ball was kind of just sticking right where it landed. Then because the greens are new, they're extremely firm. So they're definitely not near as fast as they have been in past years so it's a little bit of an adjustment there.

You can only do so much. They can't do anything about the weather, but the course is in good shape per usual and hopefully they can speed the greens up a little bit as the week goes on. I'm sure it will be a challenge as always.

Q. Where do you feel like you are in the process of kind of getting back to where you were after last season?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm playing plenty well enough to win tournaments, it's just about putting it together and doing it at this point. I just am trying to stay patient and keep my head down, look forward and just keep trying to improve and get better and better.

I feel like I had a little stretch there after the start of the season where I just didn't have the results for how I felt -- I was playing pretty solid, I just wasn't getting anything out of my rounds. It was nice to get something out of kind of a so-so week at Hilton Head. It's getting closer. It's just one of those things that unless you're the one at the end of the week holding the trophy, it's kind of hard to put it in perspective. I feel like I'm close to that, I've just got to stay patient and let it happen.

Q. And what was it like being back at Valhalla with a major championship about to be there?



JUSTIN THOMAS: It was great. I hadn't played it in a long time. I hadn't played it in eight to 10 years to be honest. I remembered more than I thought I would. It hasn't changed a lot, more so just some new tees and cleared some trees out to make it way more spectator friendly. I feel like you'll be able to see throughout the course more, which I thought was a great look.

But yeah, it was great. I mean, I have some pretty cool memories of Valhalla and I'm excited to hopefully make some of my own but on the other side of the ropes for a change.

Q. J.T., looking ahead to next week, what would it mean to win it there and how much support do you think you'll have?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I hope I have a lot of support. I mean, I can't -- I can't even relate to what it would be like. I'm sure it will be quite a challenge for me next week to kind of deal with it all. That's why I'm trying to not look forward at all. I have a huge event ahead of me here this week that I'm trying to play well and try to contend and get a chance to win. Once this week's done, then can focus on next week, and hopefully I can let you know Sunday afternoon next week.

Q. J.T., apologies if you've addressed this before, but how do you feel about playing a big Signature Event the week before a major? Would you rather take the week off or do you like to get the creative juices, the competitive juices flowing when you're going up against the best Tour fields?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. It's weird, I've always -- or for the most part I've said I like to take weeks off before majors and the two majors I've won I played the week before, so maybe I'm just going about it completely wrong. But I think especially I already kind of felt that way, but after playing at Valhalla Sunday and Monday, this is great prep in my opinion. It's a lot of drivers, it's a lot of long, mid irons, so I think in that aspect it will be good.

For me personally, I think I would rather play. I think it's very dependent on the golf course. I don't want to play a place that is totally and completely different or maybe a crazy travel from one coast to coast, time change, whatever it might be, but something like this where we're not far away, it's going to be good to kind of get in the competition and hopefully get as ready as possible for next week.

Q. Just wondered if (no microphone) that 2000 season, especially Valhalla ever came up, if he ever shared anything about what that was like. I mean, that week he won in a playoff and it was his third straight major and that had never happened since Ben Hogan, and obviously he went on to win the masters the following year. Just maybe how crazy his life might have been or just the level of golf that he was playing at that time, if he's ever even shared insight with you or if you've picked his brain about it at all?



JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I've talked to him plenty about Valhalla. As soon as I bring it up, he always jokes that I was probably still in diapers or something like that, it was so long ago.

I always remind him he was one lip-out away from losing to Bob May in the PGA and not having the Tiger Slam.

I haven't really. I think I've asked him plenty and talked to him plenty, but it's one of those things I think I've asked him plenty of questions similar to that where you feel like you want to just get like a notebook out and write down everything he says, you think he's going to give you this elaborate answer.

But I think you see that a lot in like coaching and sports, it's like sometimes the best to ever do it are the worst at explaining how they did it. To him it was very easy at the time. I'm sure you talk to MJ and like how he won all those rings and how he was able to dominate everybody, like he makes it sound pretty easy when you ask him how he did this. I think Tiger's pretty similar to that. When he was going about it, it didn't seem very difficult, but he was just better than everybody else and it seemed pretty easy at the time. I don't really get anything out of him if I try to in that aspect.

Q. Talk about being patient and getting the results that you're looking for. How close do you feel to being the player you were when won here at the PGA or at Southern Hills, do you feel like it's right there? Do you feel the same?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, the quality of my golf and my game feels more complete than it did then, I would say. It's just about getting in the right head space and executing when you need to, just plotting my way around the golf course better.

I think I took for granted how good I did that there for a couple years. I just would accidentally find myself in contention in tournaments way more often by not forcing the issue or not making things harder than it needed to be. That's what I would say more what I'm trying to kind of get into because, like I said, I feel great about my golf. I really have kind of toward the end of last year but especially the start of this year and as the year's gone on.

Yeah, there's always things that I feel like I want to get better at and feel like I can improve, but I know -- I feel extremely confident that I'm playing well enough to win any week I play, it's just about putting it together and actually doing it at that point.

Q. Just on 16 here, moving the tee back, what does that bring back into that hole?

JUSTIN THOMAS: What are we going to have in?

Q. Like what does it bring back to that hole as far as the requirements, especially off the tee?

JUSTIN THOMAS: In my opinion it makes the tee shot easier, I think. Yeah, I understand



why they did it, they didn't want people sending it over the bunker anymore, but if you have the wind direction to hit it over that bunker -- a year like this it's not going to make a difference because of how soft it is, but last year and I've had plenty of years where it gets firm and if you fly it over that bunker, it's going to go 350 to 370 kind of thing. But at the same time, if you are doing that, you can hit it through the fairway. If you pull it slightly or you get it turning with the wind or whatever it is, left runs out way quicker.

Now, obviously you have a lot of room right, but I've pulled drives that have gone down there whereas now from that back tee, yeah, we can't cover the bunker, but nobody's going to be going through the fairway. I think it's something you're probably going to see less birdies, but I think you'll see, you'll see less drives that get in trouble if that makes sense.

I think in a perfect world, for me I would have liked to see the same tee, just move the bunker back. I know it's never that easy. And also you don't know. We'll see how it plays this week and then in the PGA, whatever it may be and maybe it's perfect. It was a hard hole before and it will still be a hard hole now, I would say.

Q. So next time the pros will be in North Carolina will be down the road at Pinehurst. What kind of thoughts and memories do you have from playing Pinehurst 10 years ago and what kind of expectation do you carry into that? You talk about majors that are (inaudible) but this is obviously the next time you'll be around here.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it was my first major as a pro, qualified for the U.S. Open there. I mean, my golf wasn't very good at the tournament, so the highlight of my week was probably the practice round of Jordan and I taking money off Rickie and Phil. That was unfortunately the highlight of my week. But I learned a lot and I like the golf course, I thought it was pretty cool. I just think I was a little in over my head and was a little starstruck and honestly just didn't handle the moment great.

But I don't remember the course that well. I think once I get there I'll remember little things here and there. But I remember a pretty good variety of holes, which was kind of cool. Yeah, hopefully they can get the weather permitting because it's a fun place I think when it plays firm and fast. It's a nice little stretch here for North Carolina.

MODERATOR: Any final questions? If not, I think we do have one special guest over here. Joshua, have you got a favorite golfer?

JUSTIN THOMAS: The J.T.s?

