

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**JUSTIN THOMAS**

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**ALLIE LeCLAIR:** We would like to welcome Justin Thomas into the Hero World Challenge media center.

Justin, the question we've all been waiting to ask you, how is being a dad?

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It is great. Yeah, it's very hard to explain, but it's -- yeah, it's been unbelievable. It's been somehow a fast but slow couple weeks.

**ALLIE LeCLAIR:** And getting back to the golf, your last professional start you had a T-2 finish at ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP. What do you feel like is clicking with your game right now?

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I feel like I've been making progress, kind of steps in the right direction as the year's gone on.

I feel like I've kind of been getting closer and closer. I feel like it was a big reason I wanted to play this week, I feel like it was one last opportunity to try to win a tournament this year. It's a place I've played decent and played well in the past, but yeah, I just feel like I've slowly gotten a little bit better and better and kind of tightened and sharpened up some things and really waiting for the week to put it all together in one week.

**ALLIE LeCLAIR:** While we're waiting for questions, you had six appearances here at the Hero World Challenge. What do you like about this golf course?

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I mean, it's fun. It can play so, so differently. Like the last two days has been -- last three days has been a different wind direction I'd say than normal with I guess five par 5s, you can get two drivable par 4s, you have a lot of birdie opportunities out here. So if you get calm conditions, you can really, really go low and make a lot of birdies. If you get it like it's been the last two or three days, it can be very windy and can still be challenging on some shots. So I feel like it's just a place you almost have to wake up that day and see what the conditions give you and go from there type thing.

**Q. I think you posted some TrackMan numbers on Instagram and there's some theorizing that you've been doing speed training.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Not really. This is kind of the time of year that at least training in the gym-wise you can kind of do a little more. I'm not necessarily trying to like on this mission to get longer by any means, but it's always -- always helpful. I have a longer driver that I'll mess with at home sometimes to try to kind of dial in to where I could maybe use it some weeks. My trainer, Colby, just kind of likes me a couple times of week basically just hit 10, 15, 20



balls as hard as I possibly can and over time it will end up kind of bringing the rest of the speed up. That's been about the gist of it.

**Q. Justin, do you plan on your schedule being any different, especially the first couple months being a new dad?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** No. It seems pretty similar. I like that I'm for sure in the Signature Events and not relying on my play or potentially an exemption or whatever it may be to get into them. At least from what I've looked at from the start of the year, the first however many months, it seems pretty identical from last year to this year.

**Q. More importantly, does Bama deserve a spot in the football playoff?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Deserve a spot, probably not, but do I think they're one of the best 12 teams, yeah, for sure.

**Q. JT, I know you've been asked this question hundreds of times in the last couple years, from '15 to '22 you won every year. There wasn't a year when you hadn't won. It's actually not been too long, just two years. I know it seems long for you, but why do you think people keep talking about it, one, and two, what do you think of your -- what do you think when you think about it yourself, the lack of a W?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I mean, I think it's -- I'd say it's obviously easy to look at -- it is a negative, not winning and not winning the last couple years, it's not something I enjoy, but I guess maybe if you guys or people didn't expect me to, then I wouldn't get asked, so I guess that's a good thing, right?

I know that I hold myself to higher expectations and I feel like I've proven over the last, like you said, whatever it was, six, seven seasons before that, that I was plenty good enough and am plenty good enough to do that.

I think it's a valid question, but yeah, you do get reminded of it quite often, or I do, but it is what it is, it comes with the territory. I always tell people it beats the alternative. If I was a terrible player and fighting to keep my card, nobody would care that I haven't won in two seasons but playing well and putting myself in contention and expecting to do so, I think that's reasonable. I just plan to hopefully win a bunch this season and stop having to answer that question.

**Q. Justin, there's no other American probably showed more passion for the Ryder Cup than you in recent years, I'm thinking in Paris and on the first tee at Whistling Straits. Do you feel like you need to be paid to play in a Ryder Cup?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I don't think you need to. I understand, it's a weird, a touchy subject and you're kind of damned if you do, damned if you don't. I think it's something that yeah, obviously all of us would play if we weren't compensated. We have been. Now, does that

necessarily mean that it's -- like you could look at it the same way as how it's obviously gotten out of hand with college athletes, like college athletes, should they be compensated for how their name, image and likeness was used? Yes. Is it something that should happen? You have people on both sides. I think this is something very similar. It obviously generates a lot of revenue. This is why I play golf.

And I'm not on the business side of things, but I see both sides. At the end of the day I think, along with the rest of the United States and Europe, we still love the Ryder Cup and we clearly are going to play regardless. I think it could just be something where, you know, some people just feel that that's what it is and, you know, so be it. I hope to be there no matter what.

**Q. Has this been spoken about yet, the possibility of the Americans playing at Bethpage for money, has that been actually put to you guys yet or is that just a report at the moment?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** No, no, it's just a report. Again, that's something that definitely, who knows how -- there's been chatter obviously for however long it is, but in terms of actually putting something in place or whatnot, I think that's something that's more behind the scenes. Maybe it's something I could have had knowledge of, but again, I've learned for me I'm way better off staying outside and trying to play golf. If I hear something, great, but at the end of the day me knowing information like that doesn't make me a better golfer, so why bother?

**Q. JT, beyond the wins and maybe some of the obvious stats, when it comes to Scottie Scheffler, what impressed you the most about his season and his game?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I think it's very under -- just underrated how well he's playing for expecting to play that well. I don't think people understand how difficult it is to win when you're expected to win or when every single person that's there expects you to play well and you expect you to play well and then to still play well. I think expectations are something, it's very, very hard to manage. It truly is just as much of a talent as being able to, you know, control your distance with your wedges or flight a driver or hit it far, whatever it is, is being able to stay present, stay in the moment.

I think -- when I think of the guys that are the best at that I think of Scottie and Xander, they're two of the best when you play with them, they stay present and stay in the moment no matter how the day is going. I think that's -- it's very hard to explain, but it's so hard to do sometimes. It's sometimes even harder when you're playing that well because it's easy to think like well, if I keep playing like this, I'm going to win this tournament, I'm going to win the next tournament and the next one versus truly -- I mean, Tiger always talked about it, every shot's the most important shot you've ever hit in your life and after you hit that one, you go do it again and next thing you know you're like oh, I won again. That's a hard thing to do. To me that's been the most impressive thing from Scottie.



**Q. If I could follow up on the Ryder Cup stuff. As you noted, this has been an issue for a long time preceding your playing days. It's come up from time to time over the years, but it really did seem to create its own narrative in Rome. Is that fair? Is that now proper that that became such a big deal on that Saturday and as someone --**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** What? From what, if you don't mind me asking? What happened on Saturday that created that?

**Q. The whole stuff that Patrick went through, not wearing the hat --**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Like that's a great example. The not wearing a hat because of a logo and not getting paid, that was something that was started by the media.

I've played teams and I've known Pat for a long time and he doesn't -- I mean, sorry, Pat, he's got a weird shaped head, that's why he doesn't wear a hat. You can talk to any team, the Presidents Cup, he went through it, he had a hard time finding a hat that fit his head. When you go to a tournament that you don't have to wear a hat, that's why he didn't wear one.

It's so funny, we all talked about that and joked about that, how big of a deal was made. It's literally not the reason why he didn't wear a hat. But why let facts get in the way of a good story.

**Q. In all honesty, Xander's dad was pretty public that week talking about it, I don't think so much that the players should be paid, but that there's money that was going to the PGA TOUR, not necessarily going to you guys directly. I think it did sort of take on a life, whether it was fair or not.**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I don't know. You can always make arguments, and it's just hard because probably besides a few people, you know, I could say all I want, too, but in reality I don't really know all the information. I don't know how much is going to this and how much is going to that, how much they need for other things. I mean, obviously the PGA of America, that's a huge business and corporation so there's a lot more that goes into just the Ryder Cup and the amount of money they make off it.

Obviously, yes, it's a crazy, crazy amount and if you look at it that way, yeah, it makes sense, but they're also putting on a lot of other events and doing a lot of other things that myself and a lot of my other playing competitors and guys out here, we just don't probably know enough to really bring that much value to it, and argument, I guess.

**Q. Has it been difficult to be away from the little one and have you thought about what it's going to be like this year when there are weeks that you won't see her?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** For sure. I told Jill it was just weird, I mean obviously being with a lot of my friends now that have kids or FaceTimeing them when they're at home and seeing their



kids on FaceTime, it was a really hard thing to explain to Jill, but just seeing -- FaceTimeing with my own daughter was like, it was wild. It was hard to explain and it was like, I don't know. It just is really, really weird. Yeah, you just want to call and see her and see how her and Jill are doing. It's so different than calling your friends just to say hey or calling and, you know, saying hey to Sammy and Sophie Spieth or calling Rick and saying hi to Maya and Ellie.

Yeah, how's it going, but it's so different being -- I don't know, it's just very hard to explain. Fortunately we're going to travel as much as we can together and that's just, you know, that's kind of our lives and how it is and we're going to make the most of it and the best we can.

**Q. I feel like this week is about as good as it gets for a pro golfer and Nick Dunlap is here at 20 years old. Obviously the Bama connection, is it weird being like the big brother and showing him the ropes a little bit?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** A little bit. I mean, it was weird we're staying together this week, it was weird talking to him last night asking what he was going to do for his 21st birthday, that hasn't happened yet. His caddie, Hunter Hamrick, was one of my best friends on the team at Alabama. We roomed together every week my freshman year, so having him in the place too, it's been fun catching up.

Yeah, obviously I was not in the same position as Nick, but I was in a similar position in terms of age and being on Tour. Obviously not a two-time winner and everything is going unbelievably. I feel like I did a really good job at that age, but I think I see quite often and I wish there are things I would have known at that age that just would have been helpful. Like anybody that I'm friendly with at that age, I want to be a resource and help if I can. But it's not my place to barge in, but to kind of know I'm here type thing. It is, it's totally different, but it's not harder than it needs to be, right? It's just golf and you're still trying to beat everybody, it's just at a different level.

**Q. Justin, you had a nice bounce-back campaign in 2024 after some ups and downs in 2023. Were you able to kind of appreciate the good golf a little bit more this past year, maybe more so than before 2023?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I guess. It was more fun, that's for sure. I think -- I don't know, when you get in those grooves and those rhythms, I think it's kind of like Scottie was this year, I mean it's weird, you definitely take it for granted. I took things like Kapalua for granted. Not being there last year, it sucked. I love that place, I love the golf course, it's so fun to play everything.

It definitely just, it kind of is a reminder of obviously how hard it is out here, how deep the talent is and how fine of a line it is. I think it's just more of -- I told Nick Dunlap that when he won at Palm Springs, just on 18 green I was like, remember this. I'm like, look around, just enjoy everything about this because I don't remember -- you kind of black out a little bit, but I



just wish I could have remembered more of what I was feeling how everything was because all those moments are very, very special. Once they're done with, once they kind of get to that certain time frame of where they're in the past, it's almost like they never happened. So a little bit, I would say.

**Q. What do you think has improved the most this year since last year and how do you go about improving it?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I mean, I definitely hit it better, my irons were better. It's wild, it really wasn't like crazy different, especially statistically. It's a little thing here and there. It's finishing off a tournament a little bit better, it's a putt going in here and there. That's just what's crazy.

I think, yeah, I totally agree that a couple seasons ago for me was really, really bad, but it definitely wasn't as bad as I think it probably was made out to seem. It just kind of staying making things more simple, just not making them harder than it is. I would say just more confidence, but the confidence comes from playing better and being able to execute shots and feeling comfortable out there.

So it's kind of like with one comes the other. It's not -- like you always say, you can't just be like OK, I'm going to be confident today. If you're playing bad, you can't be confident. You've got to work hard enough and figure it out enough to where you do get that confidence back.

**Q. Scottie shared with us that when he has conversations with Tiger talking about family, being a parent, kids, what has Tiger imparted with you with some words of wisdom as now you being a dad?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** He's been unbelievable. I mean, yeah. It's definitely I've seen a new side of him. I mean, it's just been really cool. He's so -- he's always checking in wanting to see how I'm doing, how Jill's doing, how Molly's doing.

He knew when Jill's surgery was and he called the night before asking how everybody's doing. I hung up and I just looked at Jill and she said, I bet you didn't think that was going to happen when you were growing up. I'm like no, I didn't.

He loves his kids so much and he knows how special family is. He just knows even still being a competitor, like just the love you have for your children is so different and you don't necessarily have to lose your competitive drive, and if anything it could get even more. It's just about separating the two, but also just enjoying it and everything.

I think he's just, you know, he's been great in terms of -- he's like no, you go spend time with your family, you do this. When I just want to talk to him, he's like no, take all this in, the special moments or whatever, so he's been really, really cool during all of this.

**ALLIE LeCLAIR:** Thanks so much, Justin. Have a great week and good luck this weekend.

