

JUSTIN ROSE

JACK RYAN: We'll get started with Justin Rose here at the Houston Open. Justin, you're coming off a T-15 last year. Let's get a couple comments on making your sixth appearance at the Houston Open.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I'm looking forward to being back here for sure. I think last year enjoyed the tournament, enjoyed the golf course. Obviously it turned into a good run at Augusta for me. I think the last couple times I played here I've then went on to play well at the Masters. This is not about next week, but clearly when you're playing so close to a major that's always in the back of your mind. But here this week just to really just fine tune the game and to be out on the golf course with a scorecard in my hand. I think that's really very valuable heading into next week. Been playing well recently, so looking forward to keeping that going.

JACK RYAN: You mentioned you played well recently. This is your sixth start of the season, you had four top-10s. You must feel pretty confident coming in here with your chances to contend and possibly get a victory.

JUSTIN ROSE: No doubt, I feel like if I can keep focusing, I've had a very simple train of thoughts the last few months. I'm not coming in here trying to find my game or do anything new. It's a matter of putting in new wedges with next week in mind, getting used to those, getting comfortable with those.

Yeah, as you said, no doubt if you get into contention, then any tournament captivates your attention. So certainly if the chance presents itself, we'll be giving it 100 percent down the stretch.

Q. Justin, I saw your photo you took on social media of the wedges. What in particular are you kind of working on, is it I'm guessing for Augusta? Is there anything else with the bag setup that you're going to consider changing for next week?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, it's just pretty much fresh faces. I've had one wedge for all of this season so far. Yeah, just basically as much spin as you can get on the ball chipping more than the full shots, but chipping I think that really helps when the greens get quick and this week will be a great place to test them out because the way they mow the fairways the same as Augusta, they mow the grain into you so you'll get good feedback on the bounce or what have you so this is a great place to introduce some fresh wedges.

And 5-wood is the other club I'm just toying around with. I've built one just 3/4 of an inch

shorter with a 10 gram heavier shaft because I wanted one to not go quite as far as the one that I have. I have one going about 245, I wanted it to go about 240, just under maybe, just to close the gap between my 4-iron and the 5-wood thinking about the par 5s next week.

Q. Is it a difficult decision to miss the WGC last week? And coming here, you're one of the few guys even if you didn't have the greatest week, you've had such a run of form that it's not going to phase you at all?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, no, I was pretty happy not to be playing -- match play's a fun event, but I don't think you truly get great feedback on your game. There's lots of guys who didn't play great last week and advanced through the group stage. I think Branden Grace might be 14 under and didn't advance through the group stage. You don't know exactly -- well, you know where your game's at but you don't get a chance to prove where your game's at as well as a four-round tournament.

Then we're all so competitive that when you do lose, you kind of walk away from the week mad, you know? I think there were more clubs broken on the range last week than any other tournament because head to head, eyeball to eyeball stuff is a different kettle of fish. I love the tournament, but for me just the way the schedule works out and the read that I want to get on my game, it was more important to do it the way I have.

Q. Where would you rate your game compared to 12 months ago this time of year?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, a lot better. I was trending nicely, had a nice west coast last year, felt good going into Augusta, felt like I was going through the gears slowly this time last year and obviously began to peak at Augusta, which was lovely. But I'm coming into the tournament generally more confident, I think playing better, definitely putting the ball better than I was last year. But we'll see what that means. It doesn't mean much right now.

Q. What are some of the reasons you come to Houston, why do you like playing here, coming here?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, they do a really good job here with how they set up the golf course. The mowing patterns, that's quite important, just chipping around the greens feels similar. If the wetter cooperates, the greens do get nice and quick here, too, so the adjustment is less going into next week. I don't think you can replicate those greens because they're so slopy and they always putt different. But for me, I think just having a scorecard in my hand.

The other option was to take two weeks off heading into the Masters and I kind of often feel by the time I get to Thursday morning and I'm playing the first hole, two weeks is a long time to not have written down a score that means anything. You can practice all you want sometimes, but writing a score on a scorecard is what we do for a living. So for me it's important to not feel out of touch with scoring really, so playing the week before helps me with that.

Q. You mentioned the putting and it's been significantly improved over the last couple seasons. Is there one area or key that you can point to to kind of spark that improvement?

JUSTIN ROSE: I changed my grip to the claw and I think just got comfortable with that. For me, I don't tinker with my putting stroke like I used to. Sort of I feel it desensitizes it for me a little bit, which I think is actually a good thing. I don't nitpick every single stroke that I make. Before I would feel I would pull it, push it, all sorts of things. Now I feel like it's pretty locked in so it enables me to focus more on what I call skill acquisition, which is read, speed, other skills. You can have a perfect stroke but you're not necessarily going to make putts. It enables me to focus on the art form of putting and not obsess too much about the technique.

Q. Justin, have you been up to Augusta this year?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah. I went after Bay Hill, went Monday, Tuesday after Bay Hill.

Q. The usual?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, it was good to see it. I think it was good to -- twofold really. It's always fun to be there. People say, oh, I played the Masters, I don't know how many times I played it, 12, 13 times. I'm sure you know the course. Well, it's Augusta, why wouldn't you want to play? You have the opportunity. So for me I want to take it.

It was really wet and slow the couple of days I played, unfortunately, so I didn't really get the true feel for how it's going to play tournament-wise, but still it's always a valuable walk. I think after last year especially losing in a playoff, I think it was important just to be on site and just see the place before I have to be there to compete just to kind of get that first walk out of my system, I suppose, and remember the shots that were hit, what could have gone wrong, what could have gone better, where things could have changed. That was obviously just something I needed just to go and do.

Q. What's your outlook going into it given that you've done everything over the years?

JUSTIN ROSE: My outlook is I would like just to win a Masters in my career, whether it's next year, whether it happens five years down the road. Okay, I would like to win more than one given the true choice, but just to win it once would be amazing. I feel like I know the golf course, I've played well. I know my chances are going to come again, so I'm not putting too much emphasis.

My other thought is there's really not one blade of grass that is there that was there last year. So pretty much for me it's a fresh body of work and that's kind of how I'm going into it. The course doesn't recognize what happened last year. Just go in and build a new fresh week. And execution, that's what Augusta's all about. You can't -- you can go in playing well but mentally you've got to be sharp.

Q. Jordan Spieth mentioned last week just about the lack of information that Augusta kind of provides as far as the green books that you have on a week-to-week basis out here. What kind of challenges does that provide when you go from having all that intel to having not as much, and do you kind like a week where you don't have as much information at your fingertips as you possibly had for a Tour week?

JUSTIN ROSE: It creates sort of the mystique and the allure of the place that they don't kind of give that out. I know they've been quite strong on not -- well, certainly this year is creating your own information through digital devices.

But over the years I've collated a lot of information and kind of created my own system really. I've identified where I think the straight putts are to certain pins and I've identified where I think the maximum amount of break is to certain pins, and I can always work in that quadrant of where I am using kind of an express reads or finger system where I feel the maximum is over here at three or four fingers and I know where straight is, so I'm always working. And it's always a ballpark read, you throw up a couple fingers, you go okay, that's 18 inches out, do I like that, can I see that, yeah, I like that. It's just a start for me.

But yeah, over the years I've tried to create all the pins that I've played, what I think the breaks are and just create my own parameters. But even using the books as I use them this week, you know, the information's there but actually learning to use them is the hard thing. Actually putting the pin in the right place, making sure your ball's in the right place, they're very finicky to use.

A couple tournaments I won, I think China and turkey last year didn't have greens books. So it does make me question, you know, where I putt well and where I don't putt well. I can do it both ways. I've learned to be adaptable.

Q. Justin, you've touched on tweaks with wedges this week and obviously the prep leading up to the Masters. What's kind of the one big thing for you to accomplish where you head to Augusta thinking, okay, I'm where I want to be?

JUSTIN ROSE: I'm where I want to be. I guess just getting comfortable with the feeling of knowing I'm going in there as one of the favorites and it's my time really to do it. Just being comfortable with having another look and being comfortable on the leaderboard, and yeah, I think that's the key really. I think game-wise I'm where I want to be right now.

Q. What did you think about Bubba last week saying that he and Phil were already thinking about the Ryder Cup in Mexico City?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think we are too, so that's perfect, yeah. I think both teams are shaping up really, really well. Bubba's had a great comeback. He's such a great player. I played with him at Bay Hill and he's fun to watch play golf. And I think obviously Phil winning as well, I know Phil's so passionate about team golf. It's good, I think it's shaping up really,

really well.

JACK RYAN: Any more questions for Justin? All right, best of luck this week, Justin.

JUSTIN ROSE: Thanks, guys.