

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW
April 1, 2018



IAN POULTER (-19, won 1st playoff hole)

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome 2018 Houston Open champion Ian Poulter into the interview room, his third PGA TOUR victory.

Ian, it's been a long road for you to get back in the winner's circle on Tour. I know that's very important for you. To win for the first time in a stroke play event on Tour and to do it on Easter Sunday, just comment on what that means.

IAN POULTER: Yeah, it's been an amazing week. It's been a roller coaster ride, I'll be honest with you. Coming in a little frustrated after last week, but knowing my game's in form. I said to Paul Dunkley, my agent, and James and Terry, my caddies, I said, Look, I'm unsure whether to come or not, I need to get some rest Monday, Tuesday. I was exhausted from last week, but obviously Tuesday morning I made the decision to come and play.

It was a good decision to come here this week, to be aggressive right from the start to try and force my way in. You know, the win just doesn't mean getting into Augusta, there's a lot bigger things on the horizon. It's been a long road the last couple years with injury, questioning whether I've got a PGA TOUR card or not, and then obviously having some form and not quite finishing off in the past.

So to get my first stroke play victory is a big one, to get the exemption is a big one, to move up in the world ranking points is a big one, to tell Thomas Bjorn, hey, I'm here, my game's in shape. So there were lots of motives to come here this week to play well and I'm obviously extremely pleased to have got the victory.

JOHN BUSH: And you mentioned out in the media interviews about coming so close last year at the PLAYERS Championship. With this win you move up to 20th. So just talk a little bit as you just mentioned about your goals now for the rest of the season.

IAN POULTER: Yeah, my whole goals have been reassessed and I said that to Paul Dunkley, Terry and James, my two caddies. I said, you know, my game feels really, really, really good, I'm very close to winning, I just need to hole a few putts.

So 20th in the FedExCup points, that's huge for me. You know, to be able to reschedule tournaments now for the next couple of seasons is really big. 2019's going to be a big year reshuffling of the tournaments. Obviously for me I can plan my whole schedule now and that's really important to be able to do that. To be able to go back across the pond to play some European Tour events obviously with the Ryder Cup in mind in September, this now allows me to be able to do that as well.

So it's been tough, it's been a long road and obviously we're here.

Q. I know all week you've been talking about when anybody mentions the Masters, not going to talk about it, not going to think about it, but how much on the back nine did it come into your mind at all?

IAN POULTER: No, it really didn't. I tried to be really focused today on, A, being extremely patient. I knew the guys from behind were going to come forward and they did. It was windy today but it wasn't too windy, so I always knew guys were going to make putts, they were going to come forward. I had to be patient, so that was another key thing.

And the other one was obviously not to think about what if. It's horrible to get in that scenario -- what if, what if, what if. It's easy to get distracted. There were many goals this week, and obviously to be able to play the way I played down the stretch, be patient, hit good golf shots and take my opportunity when I had the opportunity was big.

Q. Was there a point where you thought you might not play here? Was there a window where --

IAN POULTER: Yeah, Monday when I was at home. I always need some time off. Last week was -- you know, match play, you play a lot of golf in a short period of time and you're under pressure a lot so it's very draining. So yeah, I had all of Monday at home to reflect, think about it and sleep in.

Q. Ultimately, what turned your mind back to yeah, I'm going to Houston?

IAN POULTER: The way I was playing, the way I was playing. I was playing such good golf that I felt I wanted to carry that forward.

Q. Ian, given what was at stake, all the things you laid out and given where you stood Friday morning, where's the last three days rate among the best golf you've played in your career?

IAN POULTER: It's right up there, it really is. To be 120 whatever I was, 123 overnight Thursday night, it's not looking good, that's why you pack your bags. And to turn this around the way I did was -- you know, it was hard work and it takes a lot of mental strength to be able to do that. Disappointment kicks in at some stage. But you know what? At times you have to dig deep. When you want something bad enough, then you have to go right down to the bottom and grab hold of what you can to come back up. So I was really pleased I did that very well this week.

Q. Along those lines, when you made the putt, it was over and you did the fist pump, where does that moment stack up in your career?

IAN POULTER: Well, after the playoff?

Q. Yes, after it was over with.

IAN POULTER: After it was over. Yeah, I mean, it's right up there. Every win is extremely emotional, this one being one of the biggest emotional roller coasters I've had, not knowing whether to play, packing my bags on Friday morning, and I've really been able to turn it around. This was a big win for me, and yeah, it was a big moment.

Q. Do you have your arms around now you're going to Augusta?

IAN POULTER: Haven't even thought about it yet, I have to be honest with you. Henrik, we were supposed to take off four minutes ago so I'm happy to keep him waiting. We're flying back to Orlando tonight. Henrik got his practice rounds in last week at Augusta and he's obviously flying up Tuesday morning.

So yeah, I need to unpack, I need to have some chocolate with the kids tonight when eventually I get home and repack for Augusta. So it's amazing.

Q. I need to ask this, what's your dad's name and where was he calling from?

IAN POULTER: Terry is my dad's name and he's in the U.K. I can imagine he's just booked his flight to Augusta.

Q. I assume he's been before with you?

IAN POULTER: He's been many times before, and I did speak to him early in the week and he said, "Listen, if you get it done, I'm coming." So I guess he was just calling to tell me he booked his flight.

Q. You've had disappointments in your career obviously.

IAN POULTER: A little bit.

Q. Do you kind of feel for a young guy like Beau and did you say anything to him?

IAN POULTER: I said to him "well played" because he played really well. He didn't get off to the best of starts. I obviously was pretty strong on that front nine. But he's got a long career ahead of him. I'm 42, I'm a lot older than he is. I'm not sure how old exactly he is.

Q. You turned pro the year he was born.

IAN POULTER: Okay. Yeah, you know what, he's a great player, he's a tough competitor. To make four birdies on the bounce there around the back nine to take the lead was pretty impressive, so I just said to him "well played."

Q. What did you see on that putt at the end of regulation, the birdie putt, and did Beau's help you at all with your read? And also the second question, I thought I heard you say something to PGA Radio, were you going to be doing commentary for SKY next week?

IAN POULTER: I was, yeah. I was always going to Augusta National, it was just a case of when I was going to August National.

First question, I had a great read from his putt, that's why I walked right in behind him to take a good look, and obviously he thought he holed it. He was off and running, he took his hat off and putter was in the air ready to give me the first pump and rightly so. It was a good putt. I thought he holed his putt. But with me being three foot to the right, a little bit closer, I knew my putt would break slightly from that angle. So I hit a great putt, good read, and obviously it was very helpful seeing his putt.

Q. Ian, you mentioned obviously Henrik's waiting for you on a plane right now. You have a great camaraderie you and the other European players. Getting to play with Rosie in the third round, have you heard any encouragement from any player in particular to really spur you on this weekend?

IAN POULTER: All of the guys, to be honest with you. Got great friends. When you play Ryder Cup with those guys, you become extremely close. So to have that level of support from the guys is really encouraging and it's nice. Guys were saying nice things to me today, text messages last night, go out and get it done. It's really pleasing. So there's a few texts that come through now, it's my wife calling. You know, it's good to have the backing of your fellow players.

Q. Given where you stood on the leaderboard through about seven or eight holes, was it difficult coming down the stretch to not think back to some of the ones that have gotten away in recent years?

IAN POULTER: No, not really. I mean obviously getting your nose in front is a good thing, but you have to weather the storm sometimes. I always knew there was a possibility of the guys closing up. They did a bit more than close up, they got their nose in front, but I just had to keep doing good things. I felt I hit pretty much every shot I wanted to hit apart from a chip shot on 15, which was kind of in between whether to kind of bump it up the bank there or try and fly it on the front. Caught myself in the middle. That's the only poor shot I hit today, the rest of it was pretty flawless. So I did everything I wanted to do, I stayed patient. So when you've got a lead like I had and it kind of dwindles away, you've got to be real, real patient.

Q. From where you were last year where you thought you were without your card to then finding out basically a week later that you and Brian Gay both did indeed have your card, what's this last year kind of been like when you run the gamut of emotions from that to what happened last week at Austin? Is it tough sometimes to stay positive, or how do you kind of get through those moments and just kind of keep --

IAN POULTER: Yeah, it's tough. When you're down, when you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, when everything seems to be kind of going wrong, it's hard. It gets you down.

But it's not the first time I've kind of gone through some rollercoasters. That's as low as I've ever been. That's as far down the world rankings as I've been. Questioning whether you've got a Tour card or not isn't very good. It's not very good for your mental strength, it's not very good for your psyche.

But to reassess, to reform the team, Paul Dunkley, my agent, has done an incredible job simplifying my life to get me back on track, it's been amazing. The journey continues. I've had 19 good years on Tour and I guess I've got another couple coming, so there's life in the old dog yet.

Q. You mentioned Thomas Bjorn, sending a message to him. Among your personal priorities, how important is it for you to be on that team in Paris?

IAN POULTER: I obviously would like to be there. I think I've got some good golf left in me, I proved it this week. That's a long way off still, I still need to perform well between now and September. But now I can plan a schedule, hopefully take some rest at times during the season. I was staring at an extremely busy summer calendar. I'm going to shorten that right now, which is great. Now I can really kind of focus on the events I really want to play, take some rest in between, have a bit of time in Europe with the family and hopefully save enough energy come September if I make it.

Q. When you were at your lowest about a year ago, specifically would it have been like 12 months ago?

IAN POULTER: About then.

Q. So pretty much a year ago right now?

IAN POULTER: March last year, yeah.

JOHN BUSH: Ian, congratulations.

IAN POULTER: Thank you.