

ROUND 2 INTERVIEW
August 3, 2018

JUSTIN THOMAS (-11)



Q. What was working for you so well today?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I played well overall. I putted a lot better today or I made more putts. I gave myself quite a few opportunities, but not as many as I did yesterday, but I was just able to capitalize on more of them today. I just, you know, I had one mistake there on 16, which is a bad mistake by both Jimmy and myself, the decision that we made, but we were able to get away with the bogey, so it's all right.

Q. What was the decision?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I hit it right off the tee and then I just hit a bad shot, my second shot, and it hit the tree. But I had like I think 284 hole but 273 front and I can comfortably carry that with a 3-wood. So we hit 3-wood and it just wasn't necessary. I mean, I wasn't going to make 4. If I lay up, as good as my wedge game is right now, I'd probably make 5 but I don't make worse than 6. I just pushed it too far right and hit it in the water and we were lucky to get up and down for 6, but that was a stupid decision.

Q. Conversely, making that bogey, how maybe did that help you carry on with your round?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it helped a lot. Especially a par 5, you never want to make a double, although it is a difficult -- a lot harder par 5 than others. But yeah, just saving one shot there and making a putt that was a difficult putt, it had a lot of break on it. So both that and saving a shot gave me some confidence.

Q. Justin, growing up your generation almost unanimously said that they wanted to be like Tiger Woods. Why do you think people didn't want to be like Phil Mickelson?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a good question, and I mean it's no disrespect to Phil at all, but Tiger was just winning more. I mean, like I said, it's zero disrespect to Phil, but it's like any eight-year-old kid, right now he probably wants to cheer for the Warriors. It's fun to cheer for the person that's winning the most.

Phil did unbelievable things. And too, it's like they were rivals so I feel like you either choose one or the other kind of thing. The Yankees-Red Sox or Alabama-Auburn. You don't choose both, you choose one or the other. I think the fact when I was seven years old and I watched him win the PGA in person at Valhalla, that definitely had a big impact on me.

Q. So if Phil had won that, it might have been a different story?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it could have. I mean, like I said, it's not like I hated Phil or I rooted against him by any means. I like him and I really, really respect him and I really, really respect what he's doing right now at 48. I think people forget that a lot, that he's playing at a very high level very often at 48 years old.

You know, Jimmy asked him going down the first hole the first time he played in this and it was '93 and that's when I was born. So that's pretty strong to be able to play in this every year for as long as I've been born, and he's still playing at a very high level.

Q. Why do you think he's able to do that? What's your sense?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Most importantly, staying healthy. A lot of people his age don't stay healthy. He takes what he does off the course very seriously, he takes what he does on the course very seriously, but he had a good enough beginning middle of his career to where he's able to pick a schedule, he's able to travel a little bit better than others, he's able to do things that are better for his body, but he also understands what is and is not good for his body. You know, like I talked to him and he has a routine that he does after every round and nothing's going to get in the way of that, but that's also why he's playing pain free at 48 years old versus some others.

Q. Can you see yourself doing that dance ad like he did?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Absolutely, not. One, I'm a lot better dancer than that. Two, I would never put that on national TV. (Laughs.)

Q. Can you talk more about your putting? You mentioned like a year ago you made a putting change, I think it was exactly a year ago. Can you talk, refresh my memory about exactly what that change was?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I just changed grips.

Q. And was this the best putting day you've had in a while?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was definitely one of the better putting days I've had in a while. I just hit a lot of quality putts. That's what's most important. Days like yesterday, I've had days where I've missed more but putted better, if that makes sense. To me, the last -- it can be frustrating on the last day if you have a chance to win a tournament and you're hitting a lot of good putts that don't go in. But those first couple days, if you're hitting a lot of good putts that are burning edges or lipping out, you know they're going to fall. To me, that's not as frustrating as what I was doing yesterday, just hitting bad putts, and as soon as I hit it, I know it doesn't have a chance. I did hit some good putts, but overall I just felt like the ball wasn't starting where I wanted to and today, just for some reason, I rolled it a lot better.

Q. You changed mid tournament last year?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, I changed at the PGA. First time I ever used that grip, yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, used a Super Stroke, I just put it on.

Q. You've been noted as a good closer and you're in the position now that you're going to either be tied for the lead or maybe one stroke back depending what happens this afternoon. Is this course comfortable enough for you that you feel like you can do it again?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I feel that I can get it done on any golf course, but the thing about this place is it's -- it's so demanding that you can -- I mean, you can shoot 74 just as quickly as you shoot 64. If you're just not hitting well, you're not playing well, you can shoot a high number.

And I was saying that to my physio yesterday that I think with these soft conditions, that's why you're seeing such a big discrepancy of scores, because it's so soft that if you're playing well, the greens are good enough you can go shoot 6, 7 under, but if you're playing bad, you're still going to shoot 2, 3, 4, 5 over. That makes it tough, but at the end of the day, it doesn't matter where you're playing, you just have to execute the golf shots.

Q. Rory said yesterday you had a nasty streak.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I had a what?

Q. A nasty streak.

JUSTIN THOMAS: A nasty streak? What's that mean?

Q. I don't know. What do you think it means?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know.

Q. He's talking about from a competitive standpoint, a little bit of a nasty streak, not towards anybody. But the fact that I have to explain it to you is troubling. Not to people.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm just competitive. I mean, I'm fiery. I've said that before. It's just, I don't know, I don't -- I wish that I didn't portray to others how I look. I mean, I have a very, very serious, mean look on my face, yeah. I make a weird face when I follow through, too. I don't know, it's weird. Not like I can change it. Maybe I'm just ugly, I don't know what it is. I don't know, I'm very -- I take it very seriously and I want to win and I love to win. But yeah, I don't ever mean to kind of come off as nasty to others. Like you said --

Q. (No microphone.)

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, yeah. I just, I guess maybe I expect a lot of myself, but I've gotten better at accepting, I would say, than I have in the past. But yeah, I'm just very passionate, I guess you could say.

Q. Do you like looking at pictures of yourself?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, but I have a phone and the internet so I see them.

Q. He said you have to have that to compete out here. He said he has it, too.

JUSTIN THOMAS: He does. I don't think you have to have it. I mean, you look at -- yeah, I mean, it's -- there's so many different personalities and just characteristics of people out here on Tour and so many other different people that have been successful. I don't know. The thing about it that I've learned is that you can't try to change who you are. You can definitely better yourself, but if it's going to -- if it's going to change the kind of golfer you are, then I wouldn't change and that's kind of what I've stuck with.