

**ROUND 3 INTERVIEW**  
**August 4, 2018**



**JUSTIN THOMAS (-14)**

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**MODERATOR:** Like to welcome Justin Thomas to the interview room. 3 under today, three-shot lead heading into tomorrow. Just thoughts on your round overall and having the lead going into the final round.

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I played well again today. I didn't get off to the start that I have been the last couple days, but made a good birdie on 2 after a not very good drive, but I got away with one. Made a couple bogeys there on the par 3s with a pretty easy bunker shot, so that was a little upsetting. But overall I really, really played well in the middle of the round and made a lot of key birdies.

**Q. You're playing with Rory tomorrow. He talked about you guys practicing together a lot last week. Can you run us through that and how it will be tomorrow sort of going head to head with him?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It will be fun. Rory and I have played together a lot. We've played together a lot in tournaments, but never in this kind of situation, so it will be different. We'll both be doing our own thing. I'm sure we'll chat here and there between shots, but he's out there doing his thing and I'm out here doing mine.

But last week, yeah, we were both home in Jupiter and we just happened to be kind of practicing around the same time and just kind of catching up and trying to practice before we could beat the thunderstorms. That was about it.

**Q. He also said he's sick of finishing second this year and wants to obviously get it done. What are you going to have to do to make sure that he stays second or third?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Sounds like just beat him. I mean, it's very cliché and obvious, but yeah, I just need to beat him. I'm in a position where I can play smart, I don't need to play really conservative. I mean, if I hit good drives, I'm going to have wedges in my hands to where I can attack and make birdies. But for the most part, I just need to go out tomorrow and have a blemish-free round and feel like the field's going to need to kind of chase after me a little bit, which can be done on this golf course, but it's definitely getting a little firmer and faster.

**Q. You talked about your putting yesterday. Is that a feeling you have coming into the week that it was going to turn around, you were going to have such a good putting week, or is it a matter of it just kind of happens?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It just happened. If you would have watched my warmup yesterday,

you would not have told me that I was going to shoot 6 under and make everything. I was very frustrated, I didn't know what to do. I told my dad I don't know what I'm going to do out there. I was having a hard time -- my tendency with my putting is to just kind of let the shaft lean going through and I don't release the putter. That's when I miss those putts to the right and it's hard when you're out there to trust. I feel like I was putting like this yesterday (gesturing) and it's hard to trust that sometimes.

So I had a hard time with it, but I mean, I was like, what am I going to do, just go out there and keep missing putts? I may as well try something different. My dad kind of said something before I went off that helped a little bit. He's like, you know, no matter how you feel or what you're doing with your stroke, you still have to hit your lines and you need to have the right speed, so just go out there and try to focus on trying to roll it down that line with your speed, and that's what I did.

**Q. I want to ask you a couple questions about the fourth hole. There's probably a dozen or so guys that went long on that. A, was that any type of example of two days of soft and maybe getting a little more aggressive than you should have? And secondly, on your putt, how crucial, even though it's early in the round, to make that to keep from slipping further behind?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, it was -- that's funny you said that because I literally said that to Jimmy walking off the green, I was like, hey, we need to start playing for bounce-outs here. It's not as soft as it was. Some greens were softer than others in spots, but overall, you get a green like that where it's kind of sitting up or you get a green like 12, they're getting a little crusty and they're getting some bounce to them.

So it was like, hey, we can't just kind of, "see pin, hit pin" anymore. We need to focus where we're landing it, we need to be a lot more cognizant of that. I was lucky to get that up and down because it didn't cost us a shot. But yeah, that was a big putt because it definitely gave me some confidence after I missed a very makeable putt on 3, which would have been a great save for par. So yeah, that was a nice save there.

**Q. How much tougher does it make this course when it's just a little bit firmer than it was the first two days?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It's a lot, it's a lot harder. The hardest part is probably just kind of chipping around the greens and those wedge shots. You know, when you miss a green -- the last couple days or the first two days, Phil, obviously Phil has Phil's short game, but he's taken the pin out on chips that are usually very, very difficult, but that is because the greens are soft. He wouldn't be as aggressive and be able to kind of attack these chip shots if they weren't as soft as they were.

Needless to say, they're still not firm, but they're definitely trending that direction. Especially when we tee off tomorrow, we're definitely going to have to pay attention to that a little bit and see how the ball's reacting.

**Q. Three days ago you sat in that exact seat and spoke about the need to get back in the heat of the battle on a Sunday. How does it feel now that you've at least gotten that box checked off?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** It feels great. I felt like I had been close. Like I said, the results and the scores didn't show. I'm just happy to finally play this place well. Obviously I have a day left, but I played three really good days of golf. I'm glad I played it well for it to move next year. We still have a day left to just keep sticking to our game plan. I'm excited for the opportunity tomorrow. I guess it's been a little while in my eyes, but have a lot of really good players that are going to be chasing me down so I need to play well tomorrow.

**Q. Justin, speaking of good players up at the top, you've got yourself, Jason Day's up there, Rory's up there, and then you mentioned the course is speeding up and drying out a little bit. Does it have a little bit of a major championship feel right now?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I just think this golf course in general kind of has a major championship feel. This place could host a major in a heartbeat if it all worked out. If these fairways -- first off, if the fairways were firm, it would be impossible because you couldn't hold them. I mean, you get U.S. Open rough and these fairways fast and firm, it wouldn't be very fun, honestly, because it's pretty hard to hit fairways. Which, by the way, Kyle Stanley hit 11 fairways today. I will never know how that's possible out here, and one of them he hit in the first cut. It's just such a hard driving course. When it gets firm and fast, I think my first year I played here it was like that a little bit. It can be get pretty fun out there because, like you said, it does have a little bit of that major feel.

**Q. Two things: Did you and Rory just practice last week or did you play any matches, and if you did, who won and were any of them for \$10 million?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** No, no. I think if we had a match for \$10 million, we would just shake on it and split it. I think that would be the smartest decision for us. No, I didn't play any golf last week, I just practiced. I don't know what he did, but we just kind of ran into each other on the range.

**Q. Secondly, what was your number on 2 and was that an easy decision?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I had -- we guessed -- 242 is what Jimmy got.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I don't know. It was a pretty good number. I landed about 12 feet from the hole. It wasn't necessarily an easy decision. It was one of those where I'm looking at it and I'm kind of churning in my head like, all right, what do I need to say to convince Jimmy to let me do this kind of thing? I was like, What do you like here. I was like, you like 5-wood? He was like, I never thought anything else. I'm like, perfect, don't even have to say

anything.

It was one of those I just had to over-slice it. Obviously, if it comes out straight and hot, then I'm screwed. But it was sitting up enough to where out of that first cut I could get some spin on it and get it curving, and because it was holding up against the wind, somehow it happened to be the right club.

**Q. Yesterday you shot 64 to get yourself into a title contention, and today 67. Are you surprised you are taking a three-stroke lead to the final round with a 67?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I guess you could say, yeah. If you would have told me that at the beginning of the day, I probably wouldn't have believed you, but I'm glad that it happened, that's for sure.

**Q. The conditions of the course obviously dictated the higher score?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, they had some good pins out there, too. They had some difficult ones. You get a hole -- obviously at 16, but that was a hard pin today, that was a hard pin to wedge it to. If you come up a little short with some spin, it spins all the way down, and if you try to fly it all the way past it with the greens getting firm, it's going to bounce over. So you just take a little hole like that, or even 11 if you miss that fairway, or 10. They had some hard pins out there today, and I'm sure with 11 under leading after two rounds they're going to continue to set it up tough.

**Q. You just said that your caddie -- you were expecting from him to agree with you. So how often it happens that you rely on your caddie or your own validation?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I rely on him a lot. My dad, Jimmy and myself had a good talk on -- was that Tuesday, Monday? No, Tuesday. Tuesday we went out and played. I played by myself, walked nine holes.

We had a big talk just to kind of what -- to make sure everybody on the team was doing what they needed to do for us to play our best. That's myself included. I asked them if I need to practice anything better, if I need to become better in one, if they didn't see maybe hard enough effort from me, if my attitude wasn't as good as it could be.

But also I said the same to my dad. I'm like, hey, dad, I need you to do some of these things, and Jimmy, I need you to step in a little bit more.

We had a couple instances at the British where we learned from. They were tough, but we learned from them. Because of that, you know, we kind of -- I think that's good to have every once in a while. I rely on him a lot. He's a huge, huge part of this team. He's the other half of me.

So he's been great this week. I told him that on 18 that he did a great job today. We talked

through 16. We were just kind of at a weird number where 3-wood was too much and 5-wood wasn't enough. I could have cut a 3-wood, but because I was on the downhill slope, he was like, let's not do that. Which we could have done that yesterday and not hit it in the water, but we learned from it and hopefully we'll continue to do so.

**Q. That was actually a part of my question, but it seemed like out there you guys were talking for like four or five minutes on 16 about your second shot. What was the conversation?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yeah, I just was -- I was a little too close for 3-wood. The hard part is it was -- I had 267 front, 281 hole. I mean, a 3-wood I can comfortably fly 280 and I felt it just would have been a perfect -- if it would have been a normal lie with that wind, it would have been a perfect high cut 3-wood, land it in the middle of the green. It just goes over, I'm chipping up, or if it goes in the bunker, whatever. But I'm on a downslope, ball's above my feet and all I could picture was trying to hit a high cut and just nuking one right over the bunkers and I didn't know what was back there. It would have been out of bounds.

My wedge game is really good right now and I felt I wasn't going to have outside of 12 feet if we laid it up. If I would have been 10 yards closer, I could have hit had a 5-wood. If I'd have been five, 10 yards farther back on a flat spot, we could hit 3-wood, but we just were in a tough spot.

**Q. I didn't see the shot on 8. How do you play that one to that front pin to get it close?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I was in the fairway so I had a wedge in my hand. It's actually a pretty easy wedge shot, you just have to get your yardage right. You have to land it basically between the front and the hole because the front all kicks down, and then kind of past the hole it slopes up a little bit.

So I think I had about 109, I think we had, and we tried to land it like two short. We figured with everything I was playing 103, 102, 103 and it's a very comfortable sand wedge, just kind of take a little off of it. I like cutting my wedges anyway, so I was able to kind of cut one in there and knocked it close.

**Q. Secondly, has your grandfather ever been at a tournament you've won?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** Yes.

**Q. Which one?**

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** He was at my first professional win in Columbus. The Web.com.

**Q. And secondly, whatever times you spend with him and you've got a golf club in your hand, does he ever -- I don't want to say give lessons, but does he ever weigh**

in?

**JUSTIN THOMAS:** I think he used to. He doesn't as much anymore. I think he sees that my dad and I have a pretty good thing going on.

He cracks me up. He just showed up on the range today. I have no idea how he got in. I don't know how he got a seat. He's just sitting there on the range.

He had ice cream and a Dr. Pepper for breakfast before I played yesterday and the Kisner and Chappell kids were all mad because they couldn't have ice cream for breakfast. He's just -- he's awesome. I love spending time with my grandma and grandpa. They crack me up just listening to them talk. So it's cool having them here and it would be really, really special to win with them here.

**MODERATOR:** Perfect. **Thanks for coming in, Justin. Good luck tomorrow.**