

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**August 15, 2018**

**HENRIK STENSON**



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**DOUG MILNE:** We'll go ahead and get started. Like to welcome Henrik Stenson, defending champion of the Wyndham Championship.

Henrik, thanks for joining us for a few minutes.

**HENRIK STENSON:** Thank you.

**DOUG MILNE:** Making your fifth start here at the Wyndham Championship and I think we agree that you shot a final round 64 last year to get the job done. So with that said, coming into the week strong, 50th in the FedEx, a number of top-10s we'll talk about so far this season, but just some thoughts being back here and defending this week.

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, it's always great to be back at an event you won the previous year. Got good memories, of course, and it's a nice golf course, it's in very good condition. It's not as hot as it was last year so it's a little bit more pleasant out there today and hopefully this week.

No, all good. Just trying to pick up a bit of form, a bit of momentum heading into the Playoffs. Yeah, it's always hard in this game to know how you're going to perform and how you're going to play, but we keep on working away and hopefully we'll have a good week.

**DOUG MILNE:** You're enjoying a good season. In 13 starts you've had five top-10s, including the Masters and U.S. Open, 5th and 6th place finishes there. How are you feeling with the game coming into the week?

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, we've not been playing our best these last couple of weeks, for sure at Firestone and PGA, but we're working away, like I said. And you're never that far away, even though at times you might feel it. I think it's trending in the right direction and, yeah, I hope I can turn it around result-wise this week. When you're working on things and the swing and your putting and so on, sometimes it takes a couple of weeks for it to sink in and get back to the way you want it. Yeah, we'll see. I'm positive.

**DOUG MILNE:** Good, okay. On that note, we'll open it up and take a few questions.

**Q. Henrik, there's been a lot of international winners at this event, especially in the last 20 years or so. Do you kind of consider that just kind of mere coincidence or is there maybe -- this course maybe favors a little bit some of the international players?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** No, I haven't really analyzed that as much as you have obviously,

SO --

**Q. Probably overanalyzed.**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Possibly, at times. It's easy to do that. As much as not analyzing at all, you can do too much.

No, I don't know. We've got, of course, a strong participation on the PGA TOUR of international players, so a big number of them are going to be here and they're going to have as good of a chance as anyone else. I don't know if the course favors any type of player other than you've got to stay out of the rough and you've got to hit a lot of greens, hopefully position the ball underneath the hole and then make your fair share of putts. I don't know if that's an international way of playing golf or not, but you've just got to play pretty solid off the tee and into the greens and putt well.

Last year I had a very high wedge percentage conversion of making birdies from the fairway. Yeah, I got to 22 under and so I must have made my fair share of putts and played really solid. So that seems to get the job done whether you're from the States or anywhere else in the world.

**Q. And I did want to ask you just kind of assess your health right now. I think you had an elbow injury?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, it's been bothering me for a while there and I couldn't play the Scottish Open. Got me into The Open unprepared and didn't really have a chance to compete the way I wanted in that. But it's fine, I can practice and I can play without any problems as of now but I can't really go after it in the gym fully. The main thing that we can play and practice without having any problems there, so it's getting better.

**DOUG MILNE:** Tom?

**HENRIK STENSON:** Here we go.

**Q. Henrik, the Playoffs start next week and you've got a long stretch here, maybe four, five weeks in a row. How do you prepare for that physically and mentally?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** I think the key is not over-practicing here during these weeks. I put a lot of hours in the previous two weeks and of course that's going to take its toll, but sometimes you end up in a bit of a squeeze because you feel like you need to practice, you need to work on your game, but at the same time it's going to cost energy. So from here on it's going to be some energy conservation going forward and not trying to be out there for too long. And I'm going home in between tournaments most of the Playoffs. Yeah, just get that extra day or two nights and a day or two at home. Yeah, just trying to break up the weeks a little bit and not do more than you have to.

**Q. You mentioned going home between tournaments and stuff, there's a lot of travel involved in that. Is that tiring at all? And a related question, they fly you up in a Honda jet to this tournament, what was that experience like on the Honda jet?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** It was good, I had the same pleasure last year. It's a beautiful little aircraft, it's good for five people and it holds a lot of luggage. Yeah, it's nice, a little ride up from Orlando with Peter yesterday. Yeah, I enjoy that. That's a pretty stress-free way of traveling. Yeah, being able to do those kind of things, otherwise -- but I totally agree with you, if you're going to spend a lot of time in airports and a lot of travel, then there's a balance on what's worth the effort to going home and so on. When you can travel in convenience, in a convenient way, then it certainly makes it easier, as you can see from my left sleeve here.

**Q. Henrik, how much of your attention is divided between playing well as well as working on your standing with the European Ryder Cup team?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, I would like to -- I would like to qualify for the team, of course. We've got this week and next week here. I've had a look at the two lists and there is quite an interesting scenario that could play out if Thorbjorn Olesen jumps over Tommy Fleetwood on the European points list, then all of a sudden the last spot on the world ranking list for us is pretty much out of reach.

Yeah, it could turn out to be -- right now it's a very open race on the world points list. There's a few guys, Poulter, Casey, Olesen and Rafa Cabrera Bello, they're all within a few points, I think. So they're kind of battling out for the first automatic spot as of now. But if Thorbjorn were to overtake on the other list, all of a sudden that last spot is miles ahead in terms of points. Yeah, we'll just see. I'll just try and play well these two weeks and we'll see where it puts us.

**Q. Just wondering why you think that you and Justin will be broken up, though, right?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** You never know, you never know. I mean, I've played four Ryder Cups, it's probably the most fun I've ever had out on the golf course. It's the atmosphere and the team spirit and everything else, it's great fun. So of course I want to be there for Paris. And like I said, there's still a chance for an automatic qualification; otherwise, I guess I'll just sit around the phone and see if it rings.

**Q. And I want to ask you about the FedExCup Playoffs. If you remember what you thought when you first heard about the creation of the Playoffs and maybe how your approach has changed in the last decade or so? Obviously winning one helps a lot, too.**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, I think it's been pretty much the same now the last, I don't know, five -- yeah, five to 10 years there's not been a whole lot of change. In the beginning there was not much movement in terms of the volatility or the changes the first year or two, it

was pretty slow moving. Then went to a very -- to a change in the system which kind of made massive movements and then backed off a little bit, and since then it's kind of had a good balance. It gives both the guys who played solid throughout the regular season and the guys who are a little bit further down, everyone's got the chance.

No matter where you're coming in, you've still got to prove yourself over again because you have so much points in the first couple and then after that still at East Lake, anyone in the top-5 can win it by winning the tournament.

So it's not over until it's over, for sure, and you've just got to keep on playing well. Whether you start the FedExCup Playoffs as No. 1 or No. 70, you still have a chance to win it. I think we're seeing the FedExCup champions come from many different ways. For me, I think I was like 9th in regular season in '13 when I won it, but then I came very close to winning it in '15 when I was 43rd. So I've been in two different positions going in there and almost been making it No. 1 regardless of my starting position.

**Q. History shows it's going to take 17 to 22 under to win this tournament. So when you know that it's going to take a low score like that, what's your mindset as you begin the tournament and how much pressure does that put on you knowing it's going to take a score like that to win?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, being 3 over after nine on a Thursday is never really going to cheer you up, is it? So I hope I'm not in that situation.

There's still I would say five, six holes out there that you've got to be pretty cautious with and par is not a bad score on any pin position on those holes. Then you've got to make plenty of birdies on the other ones.

So, yeah, at times if you don't get it going it could be a little bit more frustrating, and if you feel like you're not making the birdies but a lot of other players are. So let's not hope we end up in that situation, let's just try and -- I've got my game plan. Obviously played really, really well here last year, so I'm not really looking to change anything in terms of the strategy or the game plan. Just got to get the putting going a little bit. I don't feel like I've been putting bad in terms of how I've hit the putts, but I haven't made any putts really in six rounds here in Akron and the two I played at at the PGA Championship. So got to roll a few in this week if I want to get close to those numbers.

**Q. Is the course playing that way, is it playing to a 17 to 20 under?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, yeah, I think so. The greens are good. They're possibly a hair quicker than last year, I don't know, or very much the same. It's crucial to be underneath the hole for the majority of the approach shots because if you're on the high side, they're pretty slippery going down the hill. But they're receptive, so you can position your approach shots into those places that you want to be if you play well. Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if we see that 17 to 22 under again.

**Q. Describe the feeling last year, you're on the 18th when it was all over, holding up the Sam Snead trophy, you just beat 100-some other guys. Can you put that into words? What's that like to be a champion of an event?**

**HENRIK STENSON:** Yeah, it's very special. I would say winning at the highest level of professional golf, it's not something we get to do a lot. I've had a great career, but I only won six times on the PGA TOUR, so it doesn't happen that often still.

Yeah, it is a special feeling and it's not often we get to do it, so you really enjoy it and that's why you work hard and it's that much more fun when you do succeed.

It was a tough win. He pushed me all the way to the end. I made four birdies, I think, in the last six holes and I thought I had a two-shot cushion. I'd missed and he birdied the 18th, he almost holed the second shot last year, so I thought I had a bit of a cushion coming up there. But I walk over the creek down there and I come up and it's like, Really? He just made another birdie, so I needed to get up and down to win it and managed to do that. Yeah, it's always very special to win.

**DOUG MILNE:** Henrik, thanks for your time.

**HENRIK STENSON:** Thanks.