

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 13, 2019

DUSTIN JOHNSON



SHARON SHIN: I would like to get started. Please help me welcome in the 2017 champion of the Genesis Open, Dustin Johnson. Dustin is making his 12th consecutive start at this event and he holds six top-5 finishes.

Dustin, if we could just get some opening comments about your return to Riviera.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's a golf course that I really like. It's a place that I enjoy playing at. I always look forward to playing here every year. It's just a special place for me and it's one of my favorite golf courses that we play on Tour.

SHARON SHIN: Great. And we made or the tournament made a special announcement today with the Genesis Open having elevated status, limited field, a higher purse and a three-year exemption. What are your thoughts on that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I think it's great. I consider this one of our biggest events on Tour. It always has a great field on a great golf course. It should have elevated status.

SHARON SHIN: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Let's talk about Saudi for a minute before we talk about Riviera, but thank you for your comments. How did you find the course there and what was the experience like? And congratulations.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Thank you. Obviously I enjoyed it. I won. But yeah, the experience was good. I really didn't know what to expect, I had never been there before. But nice hotel, food was good and the golf course was just fine. I mean, that's really all I'm looking for when I'm going somewhere.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Hopefully I answered your question.

Q. Dustin, do you expect to get 72 holes in this week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yes, I think so. This course takes water pretty well, and it only looks like it's going to rain today and most of tomorrow, then it looks like we might be okay. But who knows. Yeah, we're going to get 72 holes in, I would say yes.

Q. Very quickly, what did you learn about McEnroe, playing alongside him today?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I played with John a few times. It's not the first time I've played golf with him. He can play all right, though. He could maybe use a little more club when we're going into greens, though, when it's cold and wet.

Q. Do you tell him that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I just let him get frustrated and laugh.

Q. Are you old enough to have remembered watching him play much?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I'm not that old.

Q. I know, but have you seen clips of his moments on the court besides his great play, but his less civil ones?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It's very similar on the golf course.

Q. And with the weather, the heavier air, you asked Bryson about it obviously, but does it change your strategy on No. 10 if it's going to be a little heavier air and playing a little longer, or do you still try to go for it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No. I mean, I don't know if you necessarily try to go for it because over the last 10 years, how many guys have actually hit a ball that went on the green off the tee? You could probably count on your hand, if that many. So just try to hit it into a good spot, which is very hard to do, too.

Q. What is that spot?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Just left of the green, green high. It's a very small area, but that's where I'm trying to hit it.

Q. Dustin, do you consider yourself, the core of who you are as a player, old school or new school? Old school being feel, timing, knowing your tendencies, and new school taking advantage of all the technology available?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I'm not real sure, but yeah, I definitely play with feel, so I guess more old school, feel and timing, everything that you said, that's more how I --

Q. And for our PGA Junior Leaguers, we have Special Olympic students and blind and disabled, three keys to becoming successful, successful at golf, successful at life in general for the kids?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Three keys?

Q. Three keys.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Practice, preparation. Well, that kind of goes along with practice. And just knowing your game and yourself and how to -- what to improve. You're kind of the only one that can dictate that, just knowing yourself and practice and preparation.

Q. Will coming from such a different climate to here, how long is it going to take you to feel comfortable with your ball flight and which club are you going to see the biggest difference in temperature change and humidity change and this type of grass and all that for this week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Hmm?

Q. How long will it take you to get adjusted from coming from where you came from to this?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I played last week at Pebble, it was worse than this.

Q. Oh, okay.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, this is actually nice compared to last week.

Q. Kind of heading in that direction, be curious when you get to Mexico City next week how much time you usually spend on the range with a TrackMan trying to get the altitude numbers. How does that differ from the amount of time you spend on the west coast --

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I've got my numbers for Mexico.

Q. But in terms of distance control when it's sea level, when the air is heavy, is that at all comparable to what you went through at Mexico at some point in your life?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, playing here, been doing it for a long time, but when the temperature's cool and damp, the ball just doesn't fly as far. You know, for me it's a lot of feel. You know it's going to go shorter, so whatever your stock number is, it's not going to go that far.

How short it goes just kind of depends. I don't know. I just basically go off of feel. Seems to work pretty well.

Q. Tiger just spoke about the difficulty of conquering this course. Obviously you've done it. What makes the course so difficult and how influential has Tiger been in your interest or desire to play this tournament?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I don't play tournaments based on what Tiger's doing, just kind

of what golf courses I like to play. I enjoy being here and playing this tournament. This golf course is right in front of you, there's not really any trouble, but the greens are pretty small, they're slopy. If you miss the greens, you have a tough time, and if you're not playing out of the fairway, you're going to have a tough time because you have to hit the green.

You know, for a golf course with no trouble and it's right in front of you, it just always seems to play difficult, but I think that's just because of the small areas where they put the flags and the speed of the greens, it just plays tough.

Q. What for you presents the biggest challenge playing two weeks in inclement weather?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I think the biggest challenge is, well, for last week was playing with all those clothes on, which for me it was probably the hardest part, just getting -- being able to swing properly with 18 layers on. I felt like my swing was a little shorter than normal. That's just what happens in the cold.

This weather's fine. Last week it was just about 10 degrees too cold.

Q. Dustin, you know the USGA is trying to make the rules simpler for people. Do you think they're succeeding or not succeeding in doing that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Honestly, I really don't know just because right now it's so new and it's confusing for us just because we've been doing it one way for such a long time that, yeah, right now it's definitely confusing or it doesn't seem like they simplified anything. I think once we get used to the new rules, maybe ask me in six months, I don't know. For me right this second, it doesn't seem like it's simpler.

Q. Does the game seem fundamentally different to you with the flagstick in the hole when the ball's rolling in off the putt?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It's definitely strange just because, I mean, for 33 years of my life or 34 years of my life you always took the flag out when you're putting. So it's weird, but that's another thing that will, you know, in a year from now no one will even think about it.

Q. Have you had any rulings this year involving a rule that is new or that you had to call someone because you weren't sure because of the change?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah. Well, the plugged ball that's buried, even though I know the rule, I still call the rules official because it feels weird taking a club length from a plugged ball because we've always dropped it just right next to where it plugs.

I'm not going to complain about it because it helped me a few times, especially last week because the ball would plug everywhere. So definitely I wasn't complaining about it, but I still had to call a rules official to ask.

Then the new rules would have helped me in Hawaii in the hazard where I hit the wrong ball.

Q. If like a real estate person has to get a license to sell real estate, shouldn't you guys as Tour pros be required to go to a rules seminar? What would you think about that?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No. They post them in the locker room if you really want to know, but that's why we have rules officials, too. They go to them.

Q. Dustin, being a feel and experienced player, there's an element of the technology that's available now was kind of diminishing the value of experience and savvy for 40- to 50-year-old players competing at the same level. There's been talk about possibly scaling back the equipment. Can you weigh in on that a little bit?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't think there's anything wrong with the equipment or they need to slow it down. We're not hitting it too far, our scores aren't too low. I mean, I don't see -- the game's hard enough. But I mean, if that's what they want to do, it's not really going to affect me. I think it would just give me more of an advantage.

SHARON SHIN: All right, Dustin, thank you for your time and good luck this week.