

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 4, 2020



DUSTIN JOHNSON

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Dustin Johnson into the virtual interview room, making his first start since having to withdraw from the CJ Cup at Shadow Creek.

Dustin, how's your health and the state of your game?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: My health is good. The state of my game is undetermined.

JOHN BUSH: All right. We would like to ask you real quick if you can take us through your thoughts on your previous season, winning PGA TOUR Player of the Year honors after winning the FedExCup and three Tour titles. Just comment a little bit about what an extraordinary year it was.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it was a really good year. It was obviously, especially at the end of the year I really played well. For that kind of from the PGA through the TOUR Championship, I really played some really good golf. Even in the U.S. Open I played very well. So yeah, obviously to win Player of the Year, it's a great honor, and it's voted on by your peers, so it's something that means a lot to me. Yeah, it's just a great honor to win that.

JOHN BUSH: And before we open it up to questions, Dustin, you have two top-5s in five starts at this event, but obviously we're at a new golf course. What are your thoughts on Memorial Park and the type of game it may suit?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: You know, the golf course is good. It's a big golf course, it's long, so I mean, I think -- and you've got to be on your game. The greens got a lot of slope and undulation in them, so you've got to hit it in the right spots if you want to have any kind of look at birdie. If you miss greens, you're going to have a really tough time making pars, especially if you're in the wrong spot.

So yeah, I mean, the golf course, I think it's going to play fairly difficult. It's a long golf course, you hit a lot of mid to long irons. You don't get many wedges in your hand out here. Yeah, I think you're going to have to golf your ball around here if you want to shoot a good score.

Q. Dustin, glad you're doing well. Can you take us through a little bit of how it went, what you dealt with with COVID? Was it worse than you thought, and also just how it impacted your preparations for the Masters. Obviously you missed two tournaments you were planning on playing.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it wasn't that bad as far as I didn't get really sick. I felt kind

of -- I felt like I had a cold for a few days and then after that I didn't -- so I was pretty much asymptomatic. A little fatigue and things like that, but I couldn't really figure out if that was because I was stuck in a hotel room for like 11 days not doing anything or it was COVID that made me feel that way. I didn't leave the room for 11 days, I was just laying around kind of doing nothing. It was one of those things almost too I was like waiting to get sick because you know you have it and you're sitting there just -- but for me it was very mild and obviously I'm very thankful for that.

Yeah, it definitely puts a wrench in your plans on what you were trying to do. Obviously I was planning on playing Shadow Creek and Sherwood, those two events. Yeah, I had a lot more time off than I was planning on.

Q. When were you able to start hitting balls again and sort of get back after it?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I waited until like last Monday really, so it was kind of two weeks, yeah, just over two weeks before I started practicing again. But then obviously not playing or doing anything for two weeks, the first day I didn't hit balls for very long because I got kind of tired. Then kind of practiced a little bit more each day. Yeah, it's been going pretty well so far.

Q. Going back to the previous question, during your time off, did you try and think back to where or how you might have picked this up in terms of routine changing? And secondly, if you were a player going to Augusta that had to be tested, considering what you went through, would you be nervous waiting for the result?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Absolutely. The only good thing that came out of this is I know I'm playing next week at the Masters. Yeah, I would be nervous, for sure. It's one of those things where because I had no idea where I got it from, obviously I thought about it and tried to figure it out. I had every person that I had been around, people that have been in my house, you know, any person that I would come in contact with, my friends, family, people that work for me, every single one of them got test. Not Paulina, the kids, everybody, not one person had it.

I mean, the only thing I can figure is I got it in Vegas just from -- I don't even know how I got it there, but that's the only place I could have got it because not one person I was around had it. And nobody got it from me, either.

Q. Dustin, if I could take you back to the last Masters as you're leaving that Sunday, what were your thoughts at that point? You had such a terrific back nine. Is it frustration from coming close or just happiness about the charge you made?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it was -- I mean, I played really well. I played well all four days, just Saturday and Sunday I played really good golf, I didn't make enough putts. I hit it well enough, I put myself in the right positions, obviously on the back nine I made a little bit of a charge on Sunday, which was a lot of fun and I enjoyed it. Still had a putt there on 18. I had

a few putts there on a few of the other holes on the back nine. Hit some good putts, just couldn't get in the hole.

Obviously, yeah, it was a lot of fun and exciting. Unfortunately, I came up one shot short.

Q. I don't know if there's any carryover to how much that makes you look forward to this one now knowing how close you have been.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, the last couple Masters I played well and kind of been in contention. I enjoy playing the golf course, I think it sets up well for me. Obviously no matter how much I like it or how great it sets up for me, I've got to play good golf if I want a chance to win. I do love -- I love going to the Masters, I love playing in the Masters and I always look forward to it.

Q. Dustin, can you just take us through 11 days in the hotel room, what you did to pass all that time?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: That was more challenging than being sick. Obviously stuck in a room for 11 days is not fun. I watched a lot of TV, but even then I ran out of stuff to watch. Yeah, it was really boring.

Q. Were you able -- were you able to work out at all or do any chipping or anything?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, I didn't leave the room.

Q. I mean in the room.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No. The most movement I made was to the shower and then I had a little outside area, so I would go sit outside for a little bit. That was it.

Q. And then Memorial Park, any courses on Tour that you would compare it to, that it's similar to?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Not off the top of my head.

Q. Is it deceiving at all having so few bunkers, is that a different look that you guys may not be accustomed to?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, there's still some bunkers. Yeah, there's obviously a lot of holes that don't have bunkers on nit but the ones that have are well placed.

Q. Dustin, your relationship with Jim Crane through the Floridian, I just wanted to know how important that was for you to be here for this inaugural event here and the redesigned Memorial Park golf course?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, Jim, obviously he's a good friend of mine and I play a lot of golf with Jim at the Floridian. He's a big supporter of the game. Yeah, what he did here I think is wonderful. Yeah, obviously it's important for Jim to get a lot of nice -- a lot of good players here and to have a successful event. I think with the field here this year, I think he's done a great job and I'm sure he's very proud of that.

Q. I know he's a competitive golfer.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Absolutely.

Q. Can you give us a quick critique of his game?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Jim's a really good player. He's probably a scratch golfer, so he can golf it.

Q. Thank you, sir.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: He hits it really well. If he putts well, he's going to play good.

Q. What is it like -- I know you've been down this road before, but to carry the No. 11 golfer tag in the rankings, what is it like to have that maybe as a target, if you will?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, I don't know, to me it's not really any different than any other number. Yeah, it's ranking, but for me it doesn't really feel any different.

I feel like going into a tournament, no matter what tournament it is, especially over the last four, five, six years, I've kind of always had a bit of a target as far as I've been one of the best players at the tournament. Yes, I enjoy being No. 1, it's a very big accomplishment and it's where I want to be at all the time, but obviously there's so many great players in the game right now, it's very difficult to stay at No. 1, but it's something that drives me to practice harder and practice better and try to get better all the time.

Q. Does it ever hit you -- I know you're focused on playing well shot by shot, tournament by tournament, but saying you're the No. 1 golfer in the world, does that ever hit you in any kind of crazy way or are you kind of used to it now, it's like water off a duck's back?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I've gotten used to it. Obviously at the beginning it's a little bit of -- you know, it's fun and it's kind of a little bit kind of -- yeah, it's kind of hard to grasp, but I've been in the situation for enough time now to where it's not that hard to believe. But yeah, definitely at the beginning it's a little surreal.

Q. I'm just wondering, do you consider this the best stretch of golf that you've played before this happened with COVID?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: It was pretty good, it was pretty good. I was pleased with the way I was playing. I was very consistent every day and I like the way I was striking it, I like the way I was doing everything really, so yeah, I was very pleased with it. Yeah, it was probably equally as good as '17.

Q. And what are you hoping to accomplish or see in your game this week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: For me, it's just getting reps is all. If I hit a couple good shots, I'll be happy. Yeah, it's more about just getting some reps and playing and practicing and obviously getting ready for next week. Obviously I've had way more time off than I wanted coming into Augusta and so for me it's just kind of being out here and practicing and like I said, just getting some reps in because I definitely didn't plan on having this much time off.

Q. And what shows -- did you binge any shows during that 11 day stretch?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: There's probably one you can name that -- there isn't one you can name that I didn't watch, I don't think. I ran through all of them.

Q. What was the best?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Probably my favorite show right now would be Yellowstone.

Q. Does playing in front of few or no fans affect your thought process or does it just feel like practice?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, for me it's honestly, I really enjoy the fans, especially when I'm playing in the tournament. Don't miss them that much during practice days just because it's much easier to get stuff done. But during the golf tournament I miss them. For me, I like the fans, it helps me focus. It took me a little while to get used to having no fans out here, especially the first few days, but come Sunday, whether there's people or no people for me I feel exactly the same, especially coming down the stretch.

JOHN BUSH: And you'll love this, we'll take the last question with Doug Ferguson.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah.

Q. I was thinking the same thing. That was kind of my same question. I wanted you to go back to Harding Park more so than Winged Foot. Was that awkward as much as you tend to feed off energy of fans, was that awkward to play that back nine without them and what do you think it will be like at Augusta?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, it's definitely strange, especially at a major on a Sunday. Especially for me because I've been in the situation, I've got a lot of experience in that situation, so where a lot of the guys that were playing haven't done that or haven't been there and experienced what it's like to be in a major, especially come the back nine on a

Sunday. It's a -- even teeing off really, it's a whole different ballgame when there's 40, 50,000 people there.

And then yes, Augusta will be very different next week just because obviously I've played it with no people there just for fun and then obviously playing during the Masters, even practice rounds is -- you know, the golf course, it looks like a different golf course. It will be -- I mean, it's still going to be good, it's Augusta, it's the Masters, I'm going to enjoy it, but the look's going to be quite strange.

Q. When someone says what are the roars like at Augusta, what comes to mind for you whether if it was for you or someone else?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, yeah, it's unbelievable. You can almost -- you kind of know, especially after being there for a while, you can tell like what kind of roars they are, whether someone made an eagle on 13 or 15 or a hole-in-one on 16, like you know -- you kind of know what they are and who did it without even looking at a leaderboard.

JOHN BUSH: Thanks, Dustin.